

Accepted By God

Matthew 11:25-30

Theme: In Christ we are accepted by God entirely on the basis of his sovereign grace.

Background: Matthew 11:20-24

Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

- Jesus pronounces judgment on the towns of Galilee. The sin for which they remain unrepentant and for which Jesus is judging them is unbelief. Don't ever think that unbelief is something less than sin. Unbelief is not merely the natural consequence of not being given enough evidence. Romans 1 makes clear that outside of Christ, man's natural disposition toward God's truth is to twist it and ultimately reject it.
- If you roll back a little further (**vv. 11-18**) you notice that Jesus confronts the people with their response both to him and John the Baptist. Basically Jesus says, "You rejected John the Baptist because he was an ascetic. He didn't drink. He didn't dance. You then rejected me because I did drink and I did dance." In other words, Jesus is saying, "You refused to believe the prophets of God. And now you refuse to believe the Son of God."
- And for this stubborn unbelief Jesus pronounces judgment in some pretty frightening terms. He speaks directly to the condemned; to those rejected by God; those who have preferred their sin and unbelief to the free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

A Seismic Change

- Beginning in verse 25 Jesus turns his attention from the condemned to those whom the Father has graciously accepted.
- What distinguishes those accepted by God from those Jesus describes in the previous passage? Tread carefully here. Jesus is not offering a list of duties to perform in order to become acceptable to God. Quite the opposite.
- Jesus' emphasis is on what *God* has done; God's sovereign will. So what Jesus names in this passage is the fruit seen in the lives of those whom the Father has graciously accepted. And don't confuse the root with the fruit. What Jesus is naming here is the fruit of God's gracious acceptance. The root is being accepted by God. The fruit is what Jesus points to.

1. Those accepted by God believe the word of God.

"At that time Jesus declared, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will'" (vv. 25-26).

- "These things" that the Father has hidden from some and revealed to others are those truths related to the gospel. So, Jesus not only acknowledges that the Father hides His redemptive truth from some but he praises the Father for it.
- "I praise you for hiding the gospel from the worldly wise and instead revealing it to children."

2. Those accepted by God receive the gracious mediation of the Son.

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (v. 27).

Objections to Election

A. It's Unfair

- Jesus acknowledges the Father as “Lord of heaven and earth.” As such, the Father has all the rights and freedom of the Sovereign. He is Lord of all the created order and as such has the right and responsibility to open his Word to some while closing it to others. In fact, this is precisely why Jesus taught in parables (**Matt 13:10-14**).
- God is not obligated to treat all sinners the same way. Jesus makes the Father known to those He chooses. To object to this is to object to the very things that make God, God. God does just exactly as he pleases and it is always right and always good and always just. When God chooses not to reveal himself to some members of sinful humanity, he does so in a way that is never unjust and in no way diminishes human moral responsibility. The marvel is not that Jesus hides the truth from some. The marvel is that graciously chooses to reveal the gospel to so many.

B. It removes the rationale for evangelism

- In reality, God's sovereign election liberates evangelism. God promises in his Word that one day the throne of Jesus will be surrounded by men and women from every language, tribe, people, and nation. Evangelism and mission cannot fail precisely because God has ordained the proclamation of the gospel as the chief means by which he will gather in his elect.

3. Those accepted by God respond to the gentle invitation of the Son.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (vv. 28-30).

- The same God who sovereignly chooses his people also sends out the invitation to all who will hear: “Come to me and find your rest.”
- Is this a contradiction? Absolutely not. The secret things belong to God. What *we* know is that the call to come to Jesus is universal. God draws untold millions to himself in a way known only to him. What *we* know is that the message of Jesus' call is something to be proclaimed to all the peoples of the earth, to all who are weary.

For Further Reading:

- Chosen For Life by Sam Storms
- Putting Amazing Back Into Grace by Michael Horton
- The Five Points by John Piper