

Why Jesus Deserves Your Trust (John 10:22-42)

Matthew Williams

Trust doesn't happen automatically. If you take two random strangers, introduce them to one another, and say, "Alright guys, I want you to completely trust one another," what's going to happen? They can try their best, but they're simply not going to trust one another the way a husband and wife happily married for 50 years trust one another. Why not? Because trust must be gained. One person must do and say things that prove the trustworthiness of their character.

Why do we choose to trust or not trust someone based on their actions? Because we know what someone does, especially over time, reveals who that person really is and whether they are worthy of our trust. Luke 6:45, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

Our relationship with God works the same way. Though he has every right to require us to trust him simply on account of who he is, he doesn't say, "Just trust me. Take a leap of faith. Despite all you've seen and heard, believe me." No. His works give us sturdy reasons to trust him. He speaks and acts in a way that reveals the truth of his identity, the trustworthiness of his person.

By the time you reach the middle of John's gospel in Ch. 10, Jesus has done all manner of works in public. He's turned water into wine. He's cleared out the temple. He's cared for a despised Samaritan woman. He's healed an official's son who was about to die. He's made a man walk who had been lame for 38 years. He's fed a multitude with five loaves and two fish. He's walked on water in the middle of a storm. He's given sight to a man born blind. He's taught crowds of people with grace and truth. He's confounded the Jewish authorities with biblical wisdom and penetrating insight.

Some trusted Jesus accordingly. Others rejected him. Jn 10:20-21 captures the general attitude. "Many of them said, 'He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?' Others said, 'These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"

The collective Jewish response to Jesus culminates at the end of Ch. 11 in widespread rejection. But before we get there, as opposition continues to grow,

Jesus graciously seizes an opportunity to explain one more time why he deserves their trust and ours. He asks the Jews to honestly evaluate his works, to consider his words and deeds. Why? **Because the works of Jesus compel our trust in Jesus by revealing his divine identity.**

Jesus came to do something far greater than add to our box of religious knowledge. Jesus says what he says and does what he does to show us who he is and compel us to trust him accordingly. Jn 20:30-31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

What Jesus does (his signs or works) show us who Jesus is (the Christ, the Son of God). And who Jesus is compels us to trust him accordingly. The context of Jn 10 is polemical, but the goal is pastoral – confident trust in Jesus. And the Lord himself helps us get there by making two connections between what he does and who he is.

1) JESUS IS SOVEREIGN IN SALVATION BECAUSE HE IS THE CHRIST (vv. 22-30)

As always, historical context matters. V. 22 tells us it's now winter in Jerusalem. The Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah is at hand, commemorating the rededication of the temple in 165BC after the Maccabean revolt against the pagan ruler Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar to Jupiter. The feast testified year after year of God's faithfulness to sanctify his dwelling place.

This year, however, something was different. This time, the true temple, the Son of God incarnate, entered the physical temple to sanctify his people that through faith in him we might become living temples of the Spirit. But there's an obstacle to his sanctifying work. It was an obstacle back then and it remains an obstacle today. The obstacle is unbelief, our refusal to trust Jesus. V. 24, "So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'"

Other than his conversation with the Samaritan woman in Jn 4, Jesus never comes right out and says, "I am the Messiah," or in Greek, "I am the Christ," the long-awaited deliverer of God's people who will make all that is wrong in our life and

world right. His reticence was wise. By the 1st century, the Jews had come to interpret OT promises of a Messiah in political and military terms. If Jesus just started throwing the title around, he would have been completely misunderstood because he didn't come to start an uprising and deliver God's people from the Romans. He came to lay down his life to deliver us from a far greater enemy – the power of sin and death.

So he doesn't answer their question directly. Instead, he focuses on their failure to respond with faith to all he has plainly revealed about his identity through his words and deeds. V. 25, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me." I've answered your question in a thousand ways. Yet you refuse to believe me! But he doesn't stop there. He keeps going to explain the ultimate reason for their continued unbelief. V. 26, "You do not believe because you are not part of my flock."

Scripture never presents the Lord as a benevolent merchant in the town square, meekly offering salvation to any who decide to stop by. The God who created us is not engaged in some sort of cosmic dance with mankind, as if we were equal partners responding to one another in kind. No. He is the God who fashioned the heavens, who calls the stars by name. Isa 40:26, "By the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing."

He is the God who declares "the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose...I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it...Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, you who are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory" (Isa 46:10-13).

Human unbelief is not a fixed variable with which God must cope out of some sort of obligatory deference to the freedom of the will. He is Lord over our faith. He is Lord over our unbelief. He's a Sovereign King, a Sovereign Savior. The Jews around Jesus didn't believe him because they didn't want to believe him. But that didn't mean what they wanted or didn't want to do was ruling some small part of the universe. No. Without diminishing their responsibility in the least, Jesus asserts that the ultimate reason they didn't believe is that they were not numbered among those whom God had chosen to grant the unmerited gift of saving faith.



Friend, if you refuse to believe Jesus, God will justly hold you accountable. He doesn't make anyone rebel against his authority. He doesn't prevent anyone who wants to believe in Jesus from trusting Jesus. Justice does not demand that God mercifully intervene in the hearts of all who fail to cry out to him for salvation. If anything, justice demands we all die on account of our sins.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, draws this one and that one back to himself, pulling them back from the brink of hell (toward which we are all born running) by giving us a new heart that is willing and able to trust Jesus. In the mystery of his will, he chooses a people for his own possession from eternity past, a flock whose very existence is unexplainable apart from divine mercy.

Rom 9:18-20, "So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?'"

The Apostle Paul, no less than Jesus in Jn 10, brings us face to face with the humbling mystery of the sovereignty of God. Those whom God justly passes over for salvation receive exactly what they deserve. The sovereign purpose of God prevails in their judgment. Those in whom God mercifully intervenes receive everything Jesus deserves. The sovereign purpose of God prevails in their salvation. V. 27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

To hear Jesus' voice is to grasp the good news of the gospel, paying attention to all Jesus has done to save us from the eternal wrath of God through his life, death, and resurrection. To be known by Jesus is to be a chosen object of his covenant-making, covenant-keeping mercy before you were even born. And to follow Jesus is to respond to the salvation he freely offers us with the obedience of faith. So what's Jesus saying? The ultimate reason anyone hears him, is known by him, or follows him, has nothing to do with them and everything to do with God. It's because they are one of his sheep.

In the words of J.C. Ryle, "They are his by gift from the Father, His by purchase, his by calling and choice, and His by their own consent and heart submission. In the highest sense they are Christ's property; and just as a man feels a special interest in that which he has bought at a great price and made his own, so does the Lord Jesus



feel a peculiar interest in His people." The true source of our salvation has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with the sovereign grace of God.

Yet we must not respond by wringing our hands over whether we are part of the flock of God or not. If you feel the depth of your guilt, if you long for the joy of forgiveness, for a love that does not depend on your performance, and a satisfaction of soul only your Creator can provide what does the Bible say you must you do? Acts 16:31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

But remember this, Christian. When someone does not believe, the sovereign purposes of God still prevail. God's plan for the universe is not held hostage by sinful men. Even our sin and unbelief fall under his divine authority, exalting his sovereignty to the highest degree without undermining our responsibility in the least. That means your child's spiritual condition, your parent's spiritual condition, your friend's spiritual condition, does not ultimately rest on your faithfulness or competency in the work of discipleship. They are not sovereign. You are not sovereign. Jesus is sovereign.

And if you're a Christian, the sovereignty of God in your salvation should both humble your pride and provide a wealth of spiritual comfort. It's like a cool drink or a ray of sunlight in a dry and weary land. Why? Because the God who began a good work in you has promised to bring it to completion.

What does Jesus say to you in v. 28? "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." If you are one of Jesus' sheep, the same hand that upholds the universe is upholding your faith, enabling you to trust Jesus and keep on trusting Jesus until the day he brings you home.

There are mornings I wake up and feel like a functional atheist. "Lord, are you really there? Why don't I feel the same trust and delight in you that I felt 12 hours or 12 months ago? Are you for real?" You open the Bible or try to pray and all manner of spiritual doubts and fears flood your mind. A voice in your head says, "What kind of Christian are you? Where's your faith? You don't trust in Jesus. Do you think you would feel this way if this whole salvation thing was for real? Stop kidding yourself."

Friend, you are not the Christ. Jesus is. And neither the strength of your faith nor your ability to generate faith in the first place is the basis on which you will be saved. If it were, your faith would become a work of merit and you would in some

small way deserve a slice of credit for your own redemption. But that is not God's way. That is not God's plan. His sovereignty both encompass our unbelief and ensures the perseverance of the feeblest faith until the day Christ returns.

Don't look at the measure of your faith and despair. Look to the strong arm, the mighty hand, the sovereign power, the decisive mercy, the faithful word of Jesus, and with trembling awe rejoice! If Jesus is holding on to you, there is no power in the entire universe, your own stubbornness and spiritual apathy included, that can snatch you out of his hand. If the Lord sees fit to exercise his sovereign power by giving you great faith, all will be well. If the Lord sees fit to exercise his sovereign power by preserving a flickering wick of faith, all will be well.

The Lord is your keeper. You are not. Your faith does not uphold you. Jesus does. That's not an invitation to spiritual apathy. It's a summons to trust in the Lord, to trust in Jesus. Why? Because he is the Christ. That's his identity, not yours. That's who he is, not you. Jesus is sovereign in salvation because he is the Christ. That's the first connection Jesus makes between what he does and who he is in a way that compels our trust.

2) JESUS DOES THE FATHER'S WORK BECAUSE HE IS THE SON OF GOD (vv. 30-42)

On the heels of explaining his absolute sovereignty in salvation, Jesus gives us an amazing window into the nature and work of the triune God. It's not just God the Son who holds onto his sheep. It's also God the Father. All things find their source in him, including the preserving work of the Son. V. 29, "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

The Son keeps his own because it is the mission the Father gave him to accomplish. He's not doing his own work. He's doing the Father's work! As Jesus said in Jn 6:39, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." He had a self-conscious awareness of and commitment to being the Father's chosen means of fulfilling his redemptive plan.

Thus it's not only the faithfulness of the Son who guarantees your perseverance in the faith, Christian. It's also the faithfulness of the Father. Jesus' work is the Father's work! And as Jesus is careful to note, the Father is "greater than all." He's greater than your fears, greater than your foes, greater than your strengths, and greater

than your weaknesses. The supremacy of the Father's power guarantees the success of the Son's saving work in your life.

"Oh, that's cool. What's for lunch?" What's for lunch? Friend, the security we provide for the President of the United States doesn't hold a candle to the security you have in Jesus, and not just security in this life, but for all eternity. In a world that idolizes personal health and safety, this we know. Our true security doesn't rise and fall on the tide of Covid cases or vaccination rates. Col 3:3, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Though not one in personhood, the Father and the Son are united as one being, for they possess the same fullness of divine nature. But they are also one, as Jesus says in v. 30, in action. The role of the Father is different than the Son in keeping with their eternal order of their relationship. Yet their unity in action is such that whatever the Father does, the Son does. And whatever the Son does, the Father does.

Herman Bavinck is right. "All the works of God *ad extra* have one single Author, namely, God. But they come into being through the cooperation of the three persons, each of whom plays a special role and fulfills a special task, both in the works of creation and in those of redemption and sanctification. All things proceed from the Father, are accomplished by the Son, and are completed in the Holy Spirit." It's why Jesus could say in v. 32, "I have shown you many good works from the Father."

Suffice it to say, Jesus' assertion in v. 30, "I and the Father are one," doesn't go over very well with the Jews. The words of Deut 6:4 doubtless echo in their mind. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." In their minds, Jesus has committed blasphemy. V. 33, "You, being a man, make yourself God." Is Jesus a man? Yes. Is he making himself out to be God? No. Why not? Because he is God. V. 30 is one of the clearest assertions of deity in the entire gospel and a reminder that Jesus doesn't leave it up to us to decide who he is. He tells us who he is. I'm the eternal Son of God.

His response to the Jew's immediate attempt to stone him is twofold. First, he points out a glaring inconsistency in his accusers' logic. Ps 82:6, a part of the law of God they claim to honor, describes human judges in Israel as gods. "You are gods,

sons of the Most High, all of you.” It’s the psalmist way of describing the divine origin of their authority and office.

So Jesus concludes in vv. 34-36, if it’s not blasphemy to refer to sinful men as “gods” in a limited sense, how can it be blasphemy for me to say I am the Son of God? After all, I’m the perfect Judge to whom their authority and office pointed all along. I’m the one (v. 36) “whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world.” If they rightly claimed a divine identity, surely I should be able to all the more!

Don’t miss the way Jesus handles the Old Testament Scriptures. He rests the entire weight of his argument on a single word. Why? Because “Scripture cannot be broken.” If God himself attributed the highest authority to the smallest part of his written Word, should we not follow suit? Do not neglect the absolute importance of every single word in this book, whether through lazy ignorance or active disobedience.

Second, Jesus directs his accusers’ attention back to the testimony of his own good works, good not merely in the sense of being morally acceptable but rather reflecting the manifold excellency of God himself. V. 37 summarizes his point. “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me.” Why would Jesus say that? Because of the connection between what God does and who God is. How do we know who God is? Through what he does – especially in his work of redemption.

Jesus basically says, “Guys, this isn’t complicated. If you pay careful attention to the works I’m doing, to the miracles I’ve performed and the content of my teaching, the conclusion is inescapable. I’m doing the Father’s work. And that should tell you something about my identity. V. 37, “The father is in me and I am in the Father.” As Andreas Köstenberger observes, the “continuity of their work” reflects the “perfection of their communion.” Jesus does the Father’s work because he is the Son of God.

He even goes so far as to say, “If you don’t believe me (the words I’m speaking), believe the works!” Recognize that everything I’m doing and saying proclaims, testifies, reveals, confirms, and bears witness to who I really am. The reason I’m doing things only God can do and saying things only God can say is because I’m God.

One of my boys once asked me a very insightful question. “Dad, why do we read the same Bible story again when we already know what’s going to happen?” Have you ever wondered that? Jn 10:38 provides a splendid answer. It’s not enough to simply know who Jesus is in a categorical sense. “Oh yeah, I know him. He’s the Son of God.” He is, friend. But there’s an ongoing, progressive force to what Jesus says next. “Believe the works, that you may know *and understand* (or continue to understand) that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

Faith in Jesus isn’t a destination at which we arrive. It’s a lifelong journey of understanding and enjoying the weight of his divine identity more and more. The greatness of God is unsearchable! So too is the glory of the Son. Persist in meditating on the works of Jesus as God has preserved them for us in his Word that you might continue to grasp and marvel at the person of Jesus. Pay attention to what he says and does because his works reveal the truth of his identity. Jesus does the Father’s work because he is the Son of God, and as such, he is supremely worthy of our trust.

CONCLUSION

The second half of Jn 10 is all about connecting what Jesus does and who he is. What does his sovereignty in salvation tell us? He’s the Christ. What does the fact that he does the Father’s work tell us? He’s the Son of God. Don’t trust Jesus “just ‘cause.” Trust him because his works reveal he’s the Christ. Trust him because his works reveal he’s the Son of God.

On both fronts, his works bear witness to the truth of his divine identity. It’s why the ministry of John the Baptist makes one more appearance at the end of Ch. 10. For John was the first witness to the truth about Jesus. Jesus did works (or “signs” as v. 41 calls them) that John never did. Yet everything John foretold about him years prior proved true. Many people believed in Jesus accordingly.

But their trust in Jesus was not a blind leap and nor should yours be, my friend. Genuine faith is informed reliance. A faith compelled by works that reveal the trustworthiness of his identity to our fearful, doubting hearts – again, and again, and again.