

Are You A True Disciple? (Faith Bible Church)

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True Disciple 2008

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How can we know that we are a true disciple of the Lord Jesus and how can we follow the Lord Jesus as a disciple once we become one and that's what the Bible teaches us. Brother Paul, come and open up God's word to us tonight.

Let's open up our Bibles to John 1. It is a great privilege for me to be here as always, a great privilege to be able to address people regarding the person of Jesus Christ and our proper response to him. We're going to look at discipleship tonight, possibly in a way different than you've thought of discipleship before but in a way that after viewing some things of the church over the years, I feel it is a necessity to address. I want us to look in chapter 1, verse 1,

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Let's go down to verse 11,

11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I come before you in the name of the one about whom I have just read, the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, and Father, I praise you for him and ascribe unto him glory and honor and power and riches and wealth and worship and praise. He is before all things and will be when all things are gone. The world was made by him and through him, for him, in him and it was your good pleasure, Father, that has seen it to be so. Father, I pray that Christ would be honored, that the Gospel would be preached, the deception would be torn away, that truth would come, that you would bear witness to your word. Father, those that are here that do not know you, that they may come to understand that they do not know you and that those who do know you would be affirmed in their faith. Father, all these things that I have asked you are great and mighty things and beyond the reach of the arm of the flesh. Men can accomplish nothing in a kingdom that is spiritual. I pray, Lord, that the Holy Spirit would accomplish a work here tonight that he would give birth, that he would convict of sin and righteousness and judgment, that he would strip away like old paint from a block of wood, that he would strip away the apathy, the heresy, the false teaching that creates sleepers instead of vibrant, living children of God. Father, please help us. Pour out your Spirit. Strengthen us. Give us wisdom or leave us bare and cause men to see that men are just dust, that there are no great men of God, only weak and sinful and pitiful men of a great and merciful God. Either way, Father, get glory for yourself. Get glory for yourself, O God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Speaking primarily, of course, to young people tonight but knowing that I am speaking to everyone, many things of great importance ought to be said. First of all, you are a product of your culture. There is no way of escaping it. You were raised, born and raised in a certain time in this world. You were born and raised in a certain place. You were born and raised and brought up in a certain type of Christianity. You are contemporary and you are greatly influenced by all that is around you. Just look at your glasses, your clothing, your hairstyle. Everything about you demonstrates that you are a child of your culture. Well, that goes father than just the physical, you are also a child of your spiritual culture: a time of postmodernism, a time when everything is relative, when there are not many standards, when man seems to be the center of all things not only in the world but in the so-called church and that everything that is done is done for you. You are raised in a Christian culture that takes the Gospel of Jesus Christ and reduces it down to a few little spiritual laws that if you accept them, you are mightily welcomed into the kingdom. There is a sense that you have been raised under a great deal of spiritual fraud and heresy where clichés written on the back of Christian T-shirts have more power than the preached word of God because the word of God is simply not preached. So we want to lay bare the lies that are so often believed today, tear apart the clichés that are nothing more than clichés and have no power to save you and talk about Christianity as it's revealed in Scripture.

Now, as I've done many times before, I've said a mouthful already, haven't I? I've challenged everybody. I have thrown off the gloves and literally told everyone to join me in the ring. How dare I? I mean, I'm not that young but I'm not that old and wisdom wasn't born with me and it certainly won't die with me so how do I stand up today and tell you that most of everything called Christianity today in America is wrong? I can appeal

to Scripture. I can, but then again, so can everyone else. But I will appeal not only to Scripture but to this: if you'll step outside of your culture and your error in which you live, if you step outside of your day and you look at the history of Christianity, you will see that American Christianity does not conform to historical Christianity. You will see that it is quite a twisted perversion of the true Gospel, of the true preaching of the word of God. You have to understand, if you compare yourselves by yourselves, you are not wise but if you stand outside of your age for just a moment and you look at Scripture and you look how godly men and women down through the ages have interpreted it, you will see that you have deviated, not in just peripheral things but you have deviated in everything and you have deviated primarily with regard to the Gospel, reducing it down to almost nothing and, in a sense, blaspheming the very one who is the subject of the Gospel.

Now, I'm not here to play with you tonight. I'm not here to entertain you. I'm here to love you by telling you the truth. I want us to look at one of the most misunderstood passages in the entire Bible in verse 11, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." Now, the first thing I want you to see here is to interpret this verse 11 in the context of the first 5 verses. Look at this one who has come to earth. Look what it says about him. It says that he was in the beginning. It says that he was with God. It says that he was God. Do you understand that? This is not some small enterprise. This is not just some minor personality stepping out on the stage of history. This is not just a teacher or some prophet. This is the God of the universe, the center of all things, the Creator of every breath you breathe. The Maker of heaven and earth who has every right to claim absolutely everything, not only from the world but from you. I believe it was Abraham Kuyper who said, "When Jesus Christ comes back, he will stretch forth his hand and he will say, 'Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine. It's all mine.'"

"He came unto His own and His own did not receive Him." Immediate context, I think, probably speaking about the house of Israel that rejected its own Messiah. But it can be taken farther than that, knowing this that when it says that, "He came unto His own," we only have to realize that everything was his own. Everything. Everything good. Everything right. Everything pleasant and excellent and beautiful. Every breath breathed was his. Was his. Have you ever come to that, just sat down and thought about this for a moment: you claim so many things for yourself, so many rights, so many privileges and do you not realize that every breath you breathe is his? Every beat of your heart is his.

"He came unto His own and His own did not receive Him." Then it goes on, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." Now, to receive him. This seems almost, in the first chapter of John, that we've reached an impossibility. I mean, this almost seems like an absurdity because he starts out in verse 1 saying that this one who came as God, he was in the beginning with God. It says that, "all things came into being through Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, the very essence of life and this life was the Light of men," and now you're going to receive that? You are told to receive that? That's like trying to force all the oceans of the world into a thimble, especially in the modern cliché language of, "You need to receive him into your

heart or not just into the heart, into your heart of hearts." I'm sorry, I'm here to tell you tonight he won't fit.

Now, what is twisted about all this? Now, young people, listen to me: sometimes young people seek to be radical for radical's sake. You want to be subculture, counterculture. You want to go wild. You want to rebel. You want to kick against the goads. Well, this is a good place to do it. Look what has been handed down to you and then I hope tonight we'll expose the lie of it. What does it now mean to receive Jesus? To receive him? Because it says here, "But as many as received Him." What does that mean? And don't come to me with theology, I want to look at your theology through the practice. Let's go to any evangelistic meeting that's going on anywhere in America almost tonight, what will it mean to receive Jesus? Well, the preacher will stand up and he will tell several stories because you're young people and, of course, you can't appreciate or love truth so we have to entertain you. Then after gaining your trust and all those other things to manipulate your emotion, then something will be said of Jesus dying for you. Of course, you won't know what that means because it's not explained. You'll be told about your sin but not much because more important than having your sins taken away will be this: Jesus came give you everything your hearts ever desired. Is your heart broken? Come to Jesus. Do you want a new life? Come to Jesus. Would you like everything to change? Come to Jesus. Do you want the emptiness taken away? Come to Jesus.

Then if you come, with the lights dimmed and your head bowed low, after raising your hand, if you come forward, how will you be told to receive Jesus? "How many of you would like to receive Jesus tonight? Well, then repeat this prayer after me." Now, look what we've done. We have taken this magnificent exposition of John, all this glory and reduced it down to, "If you want your life fixed, pray this prayer after me and if you do it, you will be assured that he has come in." This is not at all evangelism and it's not what John is speaking of and it is the very reason why most young people your age have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, who confess God but with their lives deny him, who are religious but unconverted, have no power over sin, no desire for godliness and must be kept together in droves in your youth group by entertainment.

Now, let's look at this passage. What does it really mean? Well, first of all, you can't understand it unless you look at the one of whom he's speaking. Go with me, for a moment, hold your place and just go with me for a moment to the book of Colossians 1:15. I want you to look at the centrality of Christ, the sense in which we say that the universe is Christo-centric, that everything revolves around him, that it was the Father's good pleasure to do everything he has ever done through his Son and to exalt his Son and give his Son a name that is above every name. It is to understand that this universe was not built for you, it was built for him. Everything for him. It says in verse 16, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth." By him. Everything. Every star. Every grain of sand. Every drop of water melting off the glacier. It was created by him. Every angel. Every being whose glory we cannot comprehend and if we could comprehend, we could not describe with human language. Every creature in heaven was made for only one reason, for him, the one you call Jesus. Do you see that? Everything for him, "visible and invisible," and not just minor creatures, "thrones,

dominions, rulers and authorities." Whatever in heaven and on earth that was granted authority was granted authority under him and for him, for his glory, for his service, for his good pleasure. "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." This is the one.

What I want you to see tonight is that Christianity has somehow twisted all of this to make Christianity about you. Let me give you an example from modern day preaching. I've heard this so many times. A preacher will evangelize people by saying this, "You've got a good life. You've got a wonderful life. You've got a wonderful wife and children and you have a nice home and a good job. You just lack one little thing, you need Jesus to make your life complete." That is as close to blasphemy as blasphemy can be. What you need to understand is that apart from Jesus Christ, everything in your life is absolutely absurd. Here in Colossians when it says that, "All things were created by Him," it can also be translated, "All things work created in Him," and what you need to see is that Christ is absolutely everything and outside of him and the mind of God there is nothing. Outside of Christ, everything is absurd and vain, smoke and mirrors, wrong. So when we talk about receiving him, we're not talking about receiving a little helpmate. We're not talking about receiving a friend. We are not talking about you and Jesus got your own thing going. We're not talking about someone who can be received by some incantation or tiny little prayer. What does it mean to receive him? To receive him?

Now, I want you to look, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." We see 2 things here: they received him, they believed on his name. Now, what does that mean? It doesn't mean that they simply believed that if they said the right thing or invited him into their heart that they would be saved, it means they believed in his name. They believed everything the Scripture said about him. Not that he was a Savior to save you from hell like some ticket handed out at a circus. Not that he was simply a lifeline that you would take once and for all and then forget about it because he's tied around your waist. That's not what it means. To believe on him is to believe on the full orb of what Scripture says about him, that he is absolutely everything. He's not a part of your life, he is your life. And not just your life in a microcosm, he is the life of everything. Outside of him you have no life. Outside of his will you have no will. He's absolutely everything and don't tell me that in America he's preached that way because I will either tell you you are deceived or deceiving. He is not. He is set forth before people like some ticket, something to do once and for all. How many times do I preach to people on the streets and hear them say, "I've already done that." You've already done what? "I've already prayed that prayer." That's not what I'm talking about. "I repented," as though it was a flu shot that they did once and for all and took care of it. That's not what it means. It means to believe on this Christ who is presented in Scripture as absolutely everything. Savior. Lord. Master. Life. Everything. To believe.

And what does it mean to believe? Because we remember that the demons believed and even trembled and so they've got it one up on most Christians in America, don't they? Because most Christians in America believe and don't tremble. So faith is worse off than

that of demons. What does it mean to believe? To cast yourself upon him. To put no hope in any other person or thing. You say, "I've done that." You've done that for what? "For my salvation." What is salvation to you? So many people say, "Well, I've done that. I believe he is the Savior who will forgive my sins, who will take them away and take me to heaven." Oh, but now you're parceling him out. You're taking only part of him. Do you believe the full person of who he is? Are you casting your life upon him? That's what discipleship is. Discipleship is looking to the Christ and saying, "I throw everything that is my life upon him. I cast everything upon him. My future in this world, my well-being in this world, the well-being of my soul, the after life, everything I cast upon him and live under his direction. Now I walk as he tells me to walk. I think as he tells me to think. I do as he tells me to do. I separate as he tells me to separate. I follow his will because it is not the one who says, 'Lord, Lord,' that will enter into the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of God."

Discipleship is believing him for everything and faith is intricately tied up to the commands of God. When you disobey God, do you know what you are doing? You are refusing to believe him. Let me give you an example that would be applicable to young people. When he says, "Do not be unequally yoked," that is not just a command but it requires faith. "I believe Jesus Christ when he says, 'Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever.' I am a disciple. I believe his word and therefore I obey it." Do you see? "Separate from that which is unclean." "I will do that. I will go into the word of God. I will discover what Christ deems unclean. I will believe him when he makes that command and I will follow him." Belief is not just this tiny credal prayer. It's not just, "I believe he died." The demons believe he died. But it is this thing of throwing yourself upon him, of resting in him and if you're truly believing in him and resting in him, you are hearing his commands, you are continuing in his word. That is discipleship.

I want you to look for just a moment, hold your place and go over to John 6. Jesus said in verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.'" What does it mean to receive Jesus Christ? It means literally that he becomes the very sustenance of your life. You feed upon him. He is your strength. He is your confidence. He is your nutrition. It is a daily communion with him: feeding upon him, walking with him, receiving him. It is not a little prayer that you prayed one time in your life and you got the job done.

Now, let me ask you a question. Well, before I do, let's go to the book of Revelation just quickly. Hold your place but go to Revelation 3:20. I want to show you something. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me." Now, is it not true this verse is used as much as any verse in the Bible in evangelism? The sinner will open up his heart and ask Jesus to come in and it's usually used with John 1:12. There is a problem: 1. Jesus is not knocking at the door of the sinner's heart, he's knocking at the

door of a church. I know that's a minor detail but it is quite important. He is not asking to come into someone's heart. Have you noticed that? You know, I asked an evangelist about that one time. I said, "Sir, you use this text but in this text Jesus is not knocking on the door of the sinner's heart, he's knocking on the door of a church." He said, "I know but it works." It works for what? It doesn't matter if it works, the question is: is it biblical?

But I want to just for a moment, let's take and say for just argument's sake that this passage is indeed referring to Jesus knocking on the door of someone's heart to come in. Well, let's just look for a moment. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me." So even using this text that is so taken out of context, look what's going on: the evidence that someone has truly received Jesus Christ is that afterward they continue in communion with Jesus Christ. How many people out there today believe they are saved because one time in their life they prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come in and yet when you look at their life, there is no ongoing communion with Christ? There is no daily fellowship. There is no weekly fellowship. There is no monthly fellowship and yet they are soundly assured that they have truly received him because one time they prayed a prayer and a religious authority like a pastor or an evangelist said, "You are now saved if you prayed that prayer correctly and sincerely."

You see what we've done, we have taken a passage, "those who receive Him," and turned it into nothing more than those who ask him into their heart and then what happens? This is what happens: most of the people I preach to on the streets when I ask them, "Are you saved?" They say, "Yes." I ask them, "Why?" They either say one of 2 things: 1. "I made my decision for Christ." Or, "I prayed and asked Jesus into my heart." Do you know what they are doing? They are trusting in a once-and-for-all decision and the sincerity thereof. They believe they are saved because when they prayed that prayer, they were being as sincere as they possibly could be. How many of you were led to Christ with a prayer and you prayed that prayer so many times to make sure that you did it right or you were sincere enough when you did it? Do you really think that's what Jesus means?

I can remember at the University of Texas, one day after hearing the Gospel for a couple of weeks, I'm standing in the copy room at the undergraduate library and all of a sudden, I mean, this girl came up to me and asked me to a party and I said, "No, I'm not going," and all my friends were listening to me. She goes, "Well, why?" I mean, I was a drunkard, I was as wild as you could be and all of a sudden something just went...I said, "I'm not going because I'm a Christian now and I'm going to follow Jesus Christ," and when I saw the look on my friends' faces, they were in shock. They were looking at me like this, "What on earth is he saying?" All of a sudden a light just clicked on and I went, "My goodness, that's exactly what I'm going to do. Jesus is the Son of God. He died for me. I'm going to follow him." And I'm preaching on the streets the next day, just witnessing to people, just joy unspeakable and then some guy came up to me and goes, "When did you pray that prayer?" I said, "What prayer?" "When did you ask Jesus to come into your heart?" I said, "I don't know what you're talking about." Then he led me

through the prayer and then for the next 3 months of my life I'm praying that prayer, "Lord, if I didn't say it right last night, if I wasn't sincere last night."

Some of you are laughing because you've done the same thing. Do you honestly think that's what it means to receive Jesus? To pray a prayer right? Are you going to base your eternal destiny on your sincerity in praying a prayer and asking Jesus to come in? Is that what it means to receive Jesus? No. What does it mean? It means that you hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that Christ, the perfect God, became perfect man and he walked on this earth fulfilling the law and then he goes to that tree according to the plan of God and on that tree, he bore your sin. And that as he bore your sin, he suffered all the punishment, all the divine wrath of God in your place. And when he cried out, "It is finished," he meant he paid it in full and he rose again on the third day and he has been exalted to the right hand of the Father and now whoever believes in him will not be disappointed. Whoever believes in him will be saved. Whoever receives him.

You say, "Well, you've told us what it doesn't mean to receive him, what does it mean to receive him?" Let's go back to John 1, look in verse 13. Who receives him? Who believes in him? Those "who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." You see, listen to me: the Bible teaches that all men are born in sin. You've heard that. The Bible teaches that all men are spiritually dead. The Bible speaks many times, Jesus saying, "You cannot come to me. You will not come to me because your deeds are evil." Men are spiritually dead. You can preach the Gospel to them all day long, you can manipulate them, you can lower the music, lower the lights, you can tell them stories about their grandmother in heaven weeping because they are still unconverted, you can do everything but you cannot raise the dead with such manipulation. What has to happen? Salvation is a work of the Spirit of God that when the Gospel is preached and the Spirit of God is working in your heart, what happens? He makes you alive. He illumines your mind. You begin to see things in a way you've never seen them before. Has that happened to you?

Has the Spirit of God so worked in your life that he began to change everything about the way you think? After all, repentance in its beginning is to change the way you think. A person like myself who loved sin, who loved vice, all of a sudden, through the preaching of the Gospel, a light is dawning. "This is horrible what I'm doing. I'm guilty. I'm a wretch. This is dangerous. There is judgment. There is condemnation. There is wrath and I deserve it all. God is just in judging me." But then there is more light and it shines upon the face of Christ. "There is a Savior. I cannot save myself but there is a Savior. It is Christ. He died. He rose again. He did it for me. Could it be for me?" Then in desperation throwing yourself upon Christ, believing him.

But then here's the kicker: how do you know you believe? How do you know you have received him? How do you know that when you cried out to him and said, "O God, save me," that he actually did? Because we all know countless people who have cried out to God and yet there seems to be nothing. How do you know that you are truly a disciple? Well, let's go on from here to John 8:31, "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him," this doesn't mean necessarily they believed in him unto salvation, it

doesn't mean anything of the sort. It was those who were beginning to identify with Jesus as the Messiah, those who had gathered around him and said, "Yes, this is the Christ. This is the Messiah. We have seen his miracles. We have heard his words. We know what he's doing. This must be the Christ."

Now, Jesus who did not entrust himself to anyone, he turned around and this is what he said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine." Now, this is something that is very important: so many people today claim to have been born again, so many people claim to be Christians, so many people say, "I'm saved," and when you ask them why they say, "Well, I asked Jesus to come into my heart. I prayed a prayer." But what is the evidence that God really saved them? Jesus says here, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine." What is the counter of that? "If you do not continue in My word, then you are not disciples of Mine." It doesn't mean that a person can actually and truly be born again, believing in Jesus Christ unto salvation and then somehow lose their salvation by some wrong deed or lack of faith. What it means is this: salvation is a supernatural work of God and he who began a good work in the true believer will finish it and the evidence that you have truly believed in Jesus Christ is that you continue in that faith. The evidence that you have truly repented unto eternal life is that you continue repenting. The evidence that you have truly received him and his word is that you continue in him and you continue in his word. That's what's going on here.

Now, so that you realize that this is not just one isolated text, just go over to the writings of Paul for a moment in 1 Corinthians 15. He says in verse 1, "I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved." So how are we saved? By the Gospel of Jesus Christ and by believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But this is the evidence, he said, "by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you." Now what is he saying? Is he saying that someone can truly believe unto salvation and fall away and be reprobate and lost forever? No, that's not what he's saying. What he's saying is this: the evidence that you have truly believed unto eternal life and that you are saved is that you continue holding fast to the words of Christ and the words of Christ revealed through the apostles.

I had a man write me several months ago, it was almost a year ago, a famous evangelist and he said, "Mr. Washer, I just want you to know that last night 22 people were miraculously saved," or he said something a little bit different like, "entered into glory or became part of the family of God," or something, "through that little prayer that you're always talking bad about." So I wrote him back and I said, "I had no idea you were charismatic." He wrote me back and he said, "I'm not charismatic." Then I said, "Well then, apart from some supernatural revelation from God, how do you know those 22 people were truly saved?" I said, "Sir, the Bible teaches that the moment a person repents and believes, they are saved and that they can have a strong assurance in their heart even that very moment to their salvation but there is yet greater assurance that comes as they continue on in the faith and the evidence, the outward evidence that a person has truly believed in Jesus Christ is that they continue on in that belief." The evidence that

someone has truly received the word of Christ as in John 8, he says here, they continue in his word and prove themselves to be disciples.

Let me ask you a question: since your conversion, do you have a new relationship with the word of Christ? Do you? I'm not talking about going to church or youth group or Christian music. I'm not talking just about reading Scripture either or Scripture memory. I'm talking about something much deeper because look what he says, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." He's talking about if you are truly disciples, you will enter into a relationship with the word of God that will result in sanctification. It will result in life changes. You will grow in holiness. And the writer of Hebrews says that "without holiness no one will see the Lord." It doesn't mean that you work yourself into a state of holiness so to be saved, it means that if you have truly been saved, he who saved you will begin to work in your life through the word of God sanctifying you, changing you, conforming you to the image of Christ and making you more holy. So, do you have this kind of relationship with the word? You claim to be Christian. Maybe your pastor calls you Christian. Maybe your mother and father call you Christian. Maybe the other people in your youth group call you Christian but let me ask you a question: according to what Jesus is teaching here, would he call you Christian? He would say, "Do you continue in my word so as to know the truth and to be set free more and more from the power of sin?" Do you? Does that describe you?

Now, let me stop here for a moment because I don't want to set something on your heart that would wrongly condemn you. I am a Christian. I have great assurance that God has done a work in my life. Over these last 25 years, he who began a good work seems to continue doing that. Now, that's not always manifested by blessing. Many times it's manifested by discipline but he works in my life. Now, I'm a preacher, depending on how loosely you define the term. Sometimes I just want to get into the word and devour it and sometimes I can see progress in holiness from the word working in my life, other times, I don't even want to get out of bed and I struggle to read the word and when I don't read the word, man, my heart is just torn to pieces and I feel so empty and I struggle. So I want you to see that what I'm talking about, the true believer being one who continues in the word, I'm not talking about perfection. I'm not talking about the ability to just run like a Spurgeon from the day you were born again. But what I'm saying is this: those who believe have been born again by the very power of God, a power that created the universe has recreated you. There will be noticeable changes and one of those noticeable changes will be a new relationship with the word of God that teaches you.

Look at this for a moment, he says, "You will continue in My word and you will know the truth." Is it not true there is rampant ignorance in the so-called church today and in youth groups? Rampant ignorance? I remember I was over in Zambia about 3 years ago and I was at a Bible conference there in Lusaka and there were about 700 Africans from Namibia and Zambia and different places and they were all there and I saw this group of teenagers and they were sitting down at this table, there was about 10 of them, and they were in the most heated debate. I thought, "What on earth is going on?" I thought they were going to pull out whatever, guns or something and start shooting one another. They

were in a hot debate and I thought, being an American, knowing American teenagers, that probably they were discussing who is the greatest Christian band or what's the hottest X-box or Z-box or whatever it is you guys use nowadays. Well, I walk over there and I'm kind of listening in trying to figure out what the problem was. Do you know what they were arguing over? Teenagers? Infralapsarianism as opposed to supralapsarianism in the decrees of God. I know, you're going, "I don't even know what that is." That's my point. That's my point. There is rampant ignorance which proves we're not continuing in his word.

I was teaching years ago to a youth group, this was probably 20 some years ago and I got up and I preached and the youth leader got up and accused me of heresy and ran out the door and I'm thinking, "Well, I've done it now." I didn't even know what I did. So the pastor called a meeting with me. I go in there, fear and trembling. The youth director is there, the pastor is there and the pastor goes, "Okay, Brother Paul, there's been a charge of false teaching against you." I said, "Okay." He said, "Okay, please tell us what Brother Paul said." The youth director got up and he went like this, Baptist Church, the youth director gets up and he goes, "Pastor, you're not going to believe this. Brother Paul, now I love him, but Brother Paul said that Jesus was God." The pastor goes, "He is God."

Now, it says in the promises of the Old Testament regarding what would happen in the church, that every true believer, one of the marks of them is that they would be taught of God. Now, let me ask you a question: is there any evidence in your life that God is teaching you and that God is teaching you through his word, not just in some Bible study on Friday night but God is teaching you in his word? He is teaching you about him and in that truth that you are not only learning but walking in, you are being set free from the power of sin? You say, "I don't have a clue what you're talking about." That's just my point. Look at what we've done. Just look. Isn't there a reason why Jesus in his spectacular Christian manifesto, the Sermon on the Mount, stands up and warns his disciples, "You, my disciples, many of you will come before me on that day and say, 'Lord, Lord,' and I will say, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.'" He wasn't talking to the world, he was talking to those who said they believed on his name and that's why he has given these countless warnings. He said, "You are true believers. You do have eternal life and one of the evidences will be if you do is that you will continue in my word." Are you, I beg you to scrutinize your life tonight, to ask yourself: has my relationship with the word of God changed? Is God teaching me through the word? Do I have a desire for the word? And am I growing in holiness? Can I see any progress? That's a great question, isn't it? Is there any evidence?

I want you to think about this: the other night, our man who works in music in the church, he was teaching a group of people and my wife was in the group and someone mentioned the song, "The little Lord Jesus lie sleeping in the hay," whatever that song is and the music man, he wanted to make a point and he said, "Little! Little! Has anyone ever read the Bible? We ought to say the massive Lord Jesus." Now, it really just doesn't work out right but you get his point? I want you to think about something: this massive, infinite Creator of all things, it is taught today that he can be received through a tiny little prayer and never change a person's life at all. It is taught that he who began a good work in the

believer won't necessarily finish it. It is taught, even maybe among you, that you can live just like the world, look like the world, love the things of the world, everything else, but you've got Jesus. That's not true. Now again, I want to reiterate something so important: we are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ and not of works lest any man should boast but salvation is a supernatural work of God whereby the very nature of a human being is changed. They become a new creature. They become a child of God. And the evidence that this miraculous thing has happened is they begin to continue in his word and grow in his word and more and more are set free from the power of sin. Is that you?

Now, let's go on and look at another test. Go to John 15. A test of true discipleship. Verse 1, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away." What does that mean? Verse 6, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." Matthew 7 agrees with this teaching. Do you see what he's saying? Someone who pretends to be a branch, someone who considers himself a branch, someone who tells the world he is a branch, someone who has been told by religious authorities that he is a branch but he bears no fruit, he will be taken away by the Father and he will be burned. That's what it's saying. It's not saying that everyone who prays the prayer is going to heaven, it says that everyone who doesn't bear fruit is damned. Why? Because we are saved by fruit bearing? No, because fruit bearing is the evidence of truly having believed unto salvation. Do you bear fruit? Do you? Because he says in verse 8, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." Do you bear fruit?

Look at what he's saying. Look at this verse, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so," in this way, how? In bearing fruit you, "prove to be My disciples." That's the same thing he's teaching. What? A tree is known by its fruit. By its fruit. By its fruit. I go into Baptist churches and other churches, Lutheran churches, all sorts of evangelical churches and I come into contact with young people who have been so deceived. They bear no fruit yet they are assured of their salvation, as sure as sure can be. They are never pruned by the Father. There is no evidence of God working in their life. They can flagrantly be involved in sin and have no conviction of sin and then participate in the youth group on Sunday morning with no problem whatsoever and they are still assured that they are truly born again. That is not true.

Jesus said, "By your fruit you prove to be My disciples." Then he goes on in verse 16, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you." How can we be assured that the true Christian will always bear fruit? First of all, because salvation is a work of God. That true disciple did not choose Jesus so much as Jesus chose him and not only chose him but appointed him, predestined him, ordained him to do what? To go and bear fruit. That's what it says in Ephesians 2, we are his workmanship. He has created for every believer good deeds that he would walk in, that he will do. You see, here is what I want you to see: salvation is more about God than it is about you. It's more about God's reputation and God's glory than anything else. God is demonstrating something in the land that he is powerful to

save and that everyone he truly saves, he will truly transform. He is demonstrating his power by what he does in the life of every believer. That's why it's absolutely absurd to think that a man can truly be saved and then live in a constant state of carnality. It's absolutely absurd because it's saying that God who had the power to begin the work does not have the power to finish it and that's not true.

So what is one of the great evidences that a person is truly converted? They will bear fruit. They will bear fruit. Now, let me ask you a question: do you bear fruit? Let me ask you a question: do you bear secret fruit? Hidden fruit? What do I mean by that? Not that it's hidden from the world but that it's fruit that flows forth from your character and not from your circumstance. It's when you are alone and no one is with you, do you bear fruit? Or are you only religious in your youth group? On the days of your church gatherings? When you are alone at school, when you are a long way from the religious, do you bear fruit? Do you walk in holiness? Do you desire God? Can the fruit of the Spirit according to the book of Galatians be seen in your life? Is there any evidence other than the fact that you claim to be a Christian? Is there any evidence that you truly are?

Look at the sovereignty of God here. "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit." He's saying, "I want you to know something: you are my work. You are my branch. You reflect my power. You are the instrument I will use to gain glory for myself. I will do a work in you and not only will I be working in you, the Father will be working in you. For those of you who are truly my disciples and bear fruit, the Father will prune you and cut you and discipline you and do everything that is absolutely necessary so that you bear more fruit." If you can run wild like a dog off a leash, if you can live in the world and play religious on Sunday and Saturday nights when there's a youth group, if there is no evidence of God disciplining you and convicting you of sin and trying you and testing you and working in you, then be afraid. Be very afraid for he has said that everyone who bears fruit, the Father will prune and everyone who does not bear fruit, the Father will take away in judgment. How many of you tonight would be taken away in judgment? Regardless of your confession, regardless of what you say with your mouth, there is no fruit.

Now, let's go to one more test, John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." One of the greatest evidences of truly being Christian, of truly being born-again, is that your affections will not only be turned to the Lord but they will be turned to the Lord's people. You will have a deep, abiding love for the people of God. Prior to my conversion, I hated Christians. I made fun of Christians. I scoffed at Christians. I mocked Christians. On the day of my conversion, everything changed. I wanted to be with Christians. Let me ask you a question: do you want to be with Christians? If you say yes, then I have to ask another question: what kind of Christian?

I was hearing the testimony of one fellow who was saying that a dear friend of his was in the Christian music scene, and that many, many of the "Christian" musicians and instrument players and such, many of them are lost and call themselves lost but they are

very talented musicians. One of them told a friend of mine, "Man, I tell you, I love playing in this Christian band because, man, the Christians have the best parties." But at the same time, I mean, you see the same thing, don't you around you? Sometimes you could say, "Yes, I love being with Christians," but the question is: what kind of Christians? Those who love the world just as much as you and that's why you like being with them? Or do you love to meet together with other believers and speak about Jesus? Do you ever get together with other young people just to talk about Christ? You adults, I would say the same thing to you. Very rarely have I ever seen Christian fellowship after a church meeting. If that's what you want to call it, you've got a bad idea of what fellowship is. Christian fellowship is not getting together and talking about football in the church. Christian fellowship is talking about Christ.

Do you get together in the name of Christ? Do you serve other believers in the name of Christ? Do you have an abiding love not only for the Christ, not only for God, but for those who are born of God? Do you desire to be a servant to them? To grow in your usefulness to the body of Christ? Let me give you an example. You know the passage in Matthew 25, the judgment of the sheep and the goats and that passage where it says that, "I was in prison and you didn't visit me. I was hungry and you didn't feed me. I was naked and you didn't clothe me." And do you know what's so sad? That passage is now taken as the basis for why we ought to have prison ministries and why we ought to feed the poor and clothe naked people. Well, I believe we ought to feed the poor and clothe naked people and have prison ministries but that is not what Jesus is teaching at all. Not at all. He's not saying, "I was a pedophile in prison and you didn't visit me." That's not what he's teaching. What is he teaching? In countries where I have been, when you are thrown into a prison, you will die there if someone doesn't bring you food, clothing, medicine from the outside. It's not provided in prison. So the idea here is this: someone in the congregation, maybe a couple of brothers or a leader is captured, persecuted, thrown in prison for the cause of Christ and yet you love that brother so much because of his identity with Christ that you're willing to go to that prison and bring him clothing, bring him water and medicine. That's what it means. Knowing that you too are probably going to be captured and imprisoned but you don't care. Jesus said that one of the greatest evidences that will even be used on the day of judgment to prove true conversion will be the fact that you loved the brethren even unto the sacrifice of your own selves. Do you love that way?

Now, let's look for a moment, young people, today discipleship and everyone is radical because they wear Christian T-shirts or have a Jesus tattoo or 12 earrings in their ears for the signs of the 12 apostles and all sorts of things. "I'm radical for Jesus." Radical for Jesus? Being a true disciple? You continue in his word, growing in his word, all the days of your life, entering into a more and more intimate relationship with the word of God. And in entering into that greater and greater relationship to the word of God, you are knowing more and more about him and in your knowledge of him, it is not only intellectual but it is practical and as you know him, you are gaining greater and greater strength against the power of sin. You are growing in sanctification. You are becoming more like Christ over the years of your life. Radical for Jesus means that you have been chosen by God to bear fruit and you do prove to be a disciple because you do bear fruit.

Being radical for Jesus is laying down your life for the brethren. Loving and learning to love. As a matter of fact, I can tell you this: over the 25 years of walking with Christ, I can say the one thing that he works hardest to do in my life is to teach me to love. You say, "You don't sound very loving tonight." Don't you see? Just look with me for a moment, we live in a country where 65% of the people claim to be Christians, born again, we kill how many babies a day? 4,000? We're so immoral that our enemies outside this country despise us and loathe us and call us the people of the devil. When someone dares to investigate the claim of someone who has just said, "I am a believer in Jesus," and starts to ask them exploratory questions, they answer with things like, "I prayed that prayer. I asked him to come into my heart. What's the big deal?"

How much preaching have you heard on this one question: how do you know that you are truly Christian? If you're like most youth and I don't know if you are, you've heard almost nothing. Now, look at what we do and I want you to think about this for a moment. Have an evangelistic meeting. A preacher preaches. The lights are dimmed. The music is played. The people pass forward. The people have raised their hands. When they pass forward, they are asked, "Do you want Jesus into your heart?" Very little is spoken about discipleship, sacrifice, crosses borne. If they say yes they want Jesus, then they are told to repeat this prayer after the evangelist. Or maybe they come forward in a church and they are counseled for what, 5 minutes? Then after they are counseled, what happens? They are presented in front of the church, "Look at our new brother or sister in Christ." Then what happens? Then countless hours of discipleship and everybody wonders why this person doesn't grow. "Why do we have to go after them all the time. Why are they living in sin? Why are they doing this? We need more discipleship, more discipleship." All the discipleship in the world will not turn a goat into a sheep. Look what we've done. We've spent 25 years trying to disciple a lost person because we spent 5 minutes dealing with whether or not he's saved. Where is, "make your calling and election sure," like the apostle said? Where is, "examine yourself, test yourself to see if you are in the faith"? You know nothing of the burdens and what it is to be a preacher to know that you stand before countless people almost every day of your life and many of them will go to hell. And many of them will go to hell because of the evangelical preaching they've heard. They are insulated from the truth. They snicker. They laugh. They do not realize that they are bound for hell.

It is so much easier to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a jungle where nothing has ever been preached because there is nothing that will insulate a person more from the truth than a lie, a religious lie. If you do not bear fruit, be afraid. If you do not act like a Christian, be afraid. If you have a form of godliness but your life denies everything about God, be afraid. If it is required that you have entertainment and all sorts of things in your youth groups in order to keep you there, be afraid. If you do not love the word of God, be afraid. I plead with you don't leave this place tonight. I won't meet with you for 5 minutes and then go to Denny's. We'll sit here all night if necessary. We will pray. We will cry out to God. We will go through Scripture. But don't walk through that door unless the Scriptures affirm that God has truly done a work in your life. Truly done a work in your life.

Now, some of you may be saying, "Brother Paul, Brother Paul, I struggle with sin. The word of God, sometimes my heart is so dull to it." Come and talk to me because that could be a great evidence of having been born again, the fact that your heart is so moved by sin, the fact that you know that you should desire the word of God more and put away the vanities and the trifling things in your life. Some of you are sitting there cold as a stone. "How dare you talk to me in that way?" How dare I? Only the love of God can make a man this bold, that's why I talk to you this way. I don't want you to go to hell. But you see, countless people sitting all over America believe they are saved because one time they prayed a prayer and asked Jesus into their heart. Some of them actually did get saved and the evidence of it is they are bearing fruit and growing. Most of them hold onto a prayer and the sincerity of their own heart. They never bear fruit. They never grow. Nothing has happened. Where are you?

Now, I'm going to give an invitation. What kind? After this service, if you need to talk about your soul, come up and talk to me. We're not going to dim the lights and we're not going to play music. You come up and talk to me. I'll sit here all night. Now, don't come up and talk about infralapsarianism or supralapsarianism. Come up and talk to me if you are troubled about your heart. There are other pastors here too who will talk to you all night, go through Scripture. Please, don't leave here tonight. I think this will go down in history as quite pitiful reaching but at the same time, the Holy Spirit can use the braying of a donkey to save a man's heart so please don't leave here tonight if your soul is trouble and if your soul is troubled, come. And if your soul is not troubled because you have unspeakable joy in Christ, praise the Lord. But if you know you love the world and live in the world and your soul is not troubled, be terrified. Be absolutely terrified.

Let's pray.

Father, I come before you asking for help, asking that the Holy Spirit would grant clarity. O Lord, please work in the hearts of the young and the old alike. Help them, Lord, and they will be helped. Trouble them until they are troubled enough and grant them comfort in Christ. For those who are in Christ, grant them joy unspeakable. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.