

# Are You a True Disciple?

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Last week we studied the New Testament teaching on baptism and we had a baptism, two baptisms actually last week over in our baptistry. Next week, we're going to study communion and the reason that we're doing these things is because the Lord has given us two rites, you could say, r-i-t-e-s, two ceremonies given to the Christian church by which we are to remember him and to publicly manifest the reality of new life in Christ. In baptism, you have someone coming forward acknowledging that they have received Christ, that they have been born again and that they are now dead to their old man, buried in Christ and raised to newness in life. In communion, we have an ongoing repeated rite that the Lord has given to us, we'll look at this next week, designed to help us remember that our new life comes from the fact that Christ gave his body and his blood for the salvation of our souls. He willingly offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to turn away the wrath of God from sinners like you and like me and that by receiving him as indicated by taking inside the bread and the cup, by taking Christ internally into our hearts, we are showing that we belong to him, that we share in that life that he died to give to those who would believe in him so we're kind of doing bookends of baptism and next week communion. Well, in between it seemed to me that we needed to ask a really important question, one that applies to each one of us here: who is it that is the true disciple that should receive church ordinances? That have the prerogative? That have the privilege of participating in the church ordinances? Who is a true Christian, in other words? What does a true Christian look like? And, you know, the answer to that question might not be as obvious as it seems. If you think back to Matthew 7, Jesus said that on the final day there would be many who stood before him in judgment shocked to find that they were being sent away; that he was not receiving them into heaven, instead he was casting them into eternal hell having never known them and they'll say, "Lord, Lord, did we not do all these things?" And he'll say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you."

Well, that shows us that not everyone who calls Jesus Lord is a true disciple and it shows us the urgency of knowing the answer to that question. Those of you who are in Christ today, you are going to see a reflection of your own heart in what we have from God's word today. Those of you who are perhaps in that most dangerous of categories thinking you're a Christian when you're actually not, I was in that position so I'm always sympathetic to people who are self-deceived, you're going to see what it is that you need to look at in your own heart and look for from the words of Christ that would mark you out and show you the path of true discipleship; and those of you that are here and you

know that you're not a Christian, we're going to lay before you the path that leads to eternal life.

What's before us today is nothing less than standing between heaven and hell, suspending, as it were, earthly time for a moment to consider eternal matters of great consequence and it's a delight to have you with us here today in the room and on our live stream as we contemplate and answer the question: are you a true disciple? And what we're going to do is we're going to examine an episode in the life of our Lord from the Gospel of John 6 and I would invite you to turn to John 6 for our text this morning. John 6, I'm going to begin reading in verse 64 and then we'll kind of like an accordion, expand out and back into the context as we go. Jesus is speaking to many people who had been following him and he said,

64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." 66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." 70 Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" 71 Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

Now, when we taught on baptism last week, we opened up with the closing words of Matthew 28 where Jesus told the church to go and preach the Gospel to all of the nations, making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and so at the core of the reason that the church exists is to make disciples and it seems obvious that when Jesus speaks and when he's speaking in the context of disciples, that he is speaking to promote that which would further the ends of the discipleship to which he calls us. And as you look at our passage, verses 66-71, Jesus is talking to the 12 really at this point, there are a couple of statements that he makes. In verse 67 he actually asks a couple of questions as you look at it. Jesus says in verse 67, "You don't want to go away also, do you?" And in verse 70 he asks another question, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" He's asking questions of the men that are in front of him.

Now, can we settle something simple right off the bat here and just recognize that Jesus did not need them to give him information? Jesus is omniscient, in fact, the passage earlier in verse 64 said, "He knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe." And so understand, this is such a simple point but it's very important for receiving the passage properly, understand that when Jesus is asking these two questions in this passage, he doesn't need them to give factual information to him that he doesn't already possess. He is asking these questions for the benefit of their souls. He is asking

these questions to draw out the reality of what true faith looks like and you can see that in the way that the disciples responded to his questions and we see in the disciples' response, the seed form, the elementary basics of what true discipleship looks like. You know, it's very easy to step over these things and just try to talk about things of external morality and what you should or shouldn't do in life or how you can have a better relationship or, you know, can I do this or can I not, and just focus on externals. What you need to understand as a preliminary matter is that the heart of being a true disciple starts inside, it starts with something internal and that's very important to understand.

Now, the word "disciple" simply refers to somebody who is a learner and many people in the context of John 6 had been following him. They saw, we won't take the time to look at this, you'll remember from your own Bible reading enough of the details, you'll remember that they had seen him feed thousands of people with just a tiny bit of food; they had seen and understood that he had walked on water. And so all of a sudden they realized that here was a man who had supernatural power and they wanted him to be king. Now, you might think that's a good thing. They see that Jesus is somebody powerful, they want him to be king, what's not to like? Well, what's not to like is the fact that they didn't understand true discipleship. They didn't understand the spiritual reality of the kingship of Jesus. The truth of the matter is that for many of these so-called disciples in John 6, they simply wanted Jesus to provide them with the physical things that they knew he had the power to do. You know, in the days prior to modern food delivery, modern refrigeration, day to day food was a central feature of life needing to pursue that. Well, if you had somebody in your midst who could just say, "Breakfast," and breakfast shows up, well, wouldn't that be cool? That would make life so much easier. But Jesus wasn't playing their game. These first century Jews who were following him who wanted him for the physical things that he could provide, they were the early proponents of the health and wealth Gospel, "Follow Jesus for what he can give to you." And Jesus wants nothing to do with false disciples like that.

Look at verse 65, he says, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." He says, "There are some of you who do not believe. You're not after Me for the right reason. Your heart is not right," he says. "You don't believe in Me in the way that I require for you to be My true disciple." Well, that kind of ticked them off. They didn't want to hear that they were dependent on God to draw them. They didn't want to hear that Jesus had a different – watch this – that Jesus had a different agenda for their lives than they had for Jesus. They still wanted to be in control and when Jesus said, "No, it doesn't work that way," they showed the reality of their heart.

Look at verse 66, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." What this is saying, all that this is saying here in this context is they abandoned Jesus as their teacher. It's not that they were saved men who walked away and fell away from true faith. They were never saved to begin with. John had just said two verses earlier that there were men among them who did not believe and so when we see men who did not believe who seemed superficially attached to Jesus walk away, we understand that there's a context to that. We're not troubled by that. "Oh,

did that person lose their salvation?" No, that person was never saved because they were a false disciple. They were a disciple on their own terms rather than the terms that Jesus would lay down, and when Jesus lays down the true terms, when Scripture is opened and the true nature of discipleship is opened up, then you're in a better position to answer the question for yourself, "Am I a true disciple or not?" And that's what we see going on here in this passage. Jesus takes the occasion of multitudes walking away to turn to a much smaller group of disciples and to probe them and to lead them into what true faith and true discipleship looks like. We get the benefit of his teaching pattern here this morning 2,000 years later.

What are the marks of a true disciple? Are you a true disciple? I'm going to give you two principles to examine your heart with and we'll see these from the Scripture that's in front of us here this morning. Two words that I want to give to you, the first word is allegiance, which I'll explain; and the second word is reliance. Allegiance and reliance. What is the allegiance of a true disciple? Do you have that kind of allegiance that Christ requires?

So the first point: the allegiance of a true disciple. The word "allegiance" refers to "a duty or an obligation that you have to a master." You feel internally a sense of responsibility to follow, to be loyal, to manifest fidelity to this one. We would say in some places, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America," simply saying, "I give my loyalty as a citizen of the country to what it represents"; the sense of, "I give my loyalty here." Well, we're talking about a much more important and strategic loyalty and obligation here and look as Jesus unfolds this, look at how you see this in the passage. This is one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible. I know I say that about every passage that I preach in, but it's true. Look at what Jesus calls forth from the disciples in response to many walking away. They walked away, they weren't walking with him so Jesus turns and says to the twelve, he had gone from a megachurch to a house church and yet he was undeterred by that; undeterred by the fact that thousands had just left. The program of God, the intentions of Jesus were right on target. Nothing had changed. He was not worried about the fact that people had walked away, he turns to the true disciples and asks them this penetrating question.

Look at what he says there in verse 67, look at it with me with your open Bible in front of you. Verse 67, "Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?'" Do you see the word for "want, desire"? He's pulling out, "What's in your heart? What do you desire? What do you want to do?" He's isolating what the motivations, what the affections of the heart are as he speaks with them here in the context of discipleship.

Now, once again, Jesus is not asking for information. He doesn't need them to tell him factual things that he doesn't already know. He's omniscient. He knows all things. So we're not thinking of Jesus here as somebody who is discouraged and saying, "Oh, guys, you don't want to go away too, do you?" That's not the spirit of the question at all. Jesus has a particular point of instruction that he is inculcating in them. In fact, in the original language, the very question anticipates the answer, "No." He's saying, it's like he's saying, "You don't want to go away, do you?" with the expectation that they're going to say, "No, we don't. We want to stay." So you get a sense of the mind of Jesus here. He knows what

they're going to say and he's after what is inside their heart. He's drawing the disciples out to confess with their mouth the things that perhaps at this point in their lives are still just kind of being formulated in their minds. He's bringing clarity to them.

Notice how Peter responds. I love this verse. In this verse you see the allegiance of a true disciple. You see the heart of one who truly belongs to Christ. "Simon Peter answered Him," in verse 68, he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." Do you sense, do you feel, as it were, there is a tinge of desperation in the words of Peter here. He says, "Lord, where else would we go? If I left You to follow another teacher, all I could do would be taking an infinite step down. There is no one like You, Jesus. You are a teacher who has the words of eternal life. Anywhere else we would go would be human rhetoric from sinful men that cannot save us. Lord, Your words matter to us." And he's speaking on behalf of the disciples here. Notice that he says in verse 69, "we"; he says in verse 68, "we." He's speaking on behalf of the disciples here but also articulating his own personal response. He's saying, "Jesus, Your words are unique. There is a different quality. Your words come from a different realm. Your words impart spiritual life. No one else is like that. There is no other human teacher like that. So, Lord, where would we go if we left? We would walk from the presence of light into oblivion. So no, Lord, we're not going anywhere." And you see his allegiance being manifested there.

Notice the supremacy of what Peter has done here. It's really remarkable when you think about it, especially if you think about it from the context of what we're used to in the Christian church today: superficial commitment. I'm not talking about Truth Community Church now, just in the broader church. Superficial commitment. People come and go as they wish. Life doesn't go the way they want, they turn to something else: they turn to sin, they turn to booze, they turn to drugs or whatever after having had some kind of superficial attachment to the church, and Peter saw that same spirit manifested by the thousands that were walking off into the horizon as they went away. And yet notice that Peter was not concerned with the popular opinion. Peter wasn't concerned with the difficult sayings of Jesus. There is a fundamental cornerstone loyalty in his heart that says, "Lord, everyone else may leave but I'm going to stay. Why? Because You have words of eternal life." There is a fundamental allegiance in a disciple – watch this – a fundamental allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ. To Christ himself. Not to a set of rules. Not to boastful self-righteousness that, "I do the right things and don't do the wrong things." There is an allegiance that Peter is displaying here to Christ himself and it's given to his word. One of the ways that you can test yourself, do you have the allegiance of a true disciple, is to ask yourself: do you have a love for the word of God? Do you have a love for the word of Christ? Because one of the things that God does in the heart of a true disciple is he implants in the heart, in the affections of that person's inner being a fundamental love for the word of God that treasures that above all else. That's what a true disciple looks like.

Look over at 1 Corinthians 2 where the contrast is made very plain. 1 Corinthians 2. As you're turning there, can you imagine, think for a moment about those thousands that walked away from Jesus, can you imagine the eternal grief that they were bringing on their souls when they walked away? They had Christ right in front of them giving them

the words of eternal life and they turned their back on it and said, "That's not for me. If You're not going to be what I want You to be, I don't want anything that You have." How utterly foolish to walk away from the fount of eternal life and to step into your own eternal destruction. It's sad, isn't it? It's tragic. This is awful to contemplate.

Well, in 1 Corinthians 2:12, you see this defining attitude toward the word of God laid forth in a contrast between the natural man and the truly saved man. In verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 2, Paul says, "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." A true disciple can be known by his receptivity and even his obedience to the word of God. He believes it. He loves it. He follows it. Not so that his works could earn him salvation, but because of a divinely implanted desire that works itself out in an ongoing defining priority of life. Allegiance. Loyalty. Submission to the word of God. And part of that, part of the way that you're going to recognize that is by whether you desire it enough to read it, to understand it, to grow in it. That's part of the allegiance of a true disciple. Verse 14 by contrast of 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

Let me give you a picture from my own life that might help you understand what that condition in verse 14 looks at; I probably mentioned it before but that's okay, most of you wouldn't remember. I remember before I was a Christian being in my little apartment where I lived alone in Bloomington, Indiana, and I opened up a Bible because I thought I should read a Bible and because it seemed like the right thing to do. So I took this little Bible and opened it up to John 17 and just kind of at random, and I began reading Jesus' high priestly prayer as he's praying to God on the eve of his crucifixion and as I read that, I might as well have been reading Yiddish. I had no idea what this was saying. I had no idea what it meant. It was complete gobbledygook to me. I didn't understand what Jesus was saying, when he was saying it, why he was saying it. It made absolutely no sense to me. Why? Because although I called myself a Christian at that point in time, I was a natural man who could not understand the things of God. So I said, "Well, this is a waste of time." I casually flipped it over onto my dresser top. Oh, I can't tell you how much I hate remembering the fact that that came out of my life. Not only just not understanding the word of God but just so casually dismissing it. At that time in my life, I was just like those thousands who just walked away from the word of Christ and it didn't even matter to me. I said, "This isn't worth my time." Wow, really?

Well, the time came, time goes by, the Lord actually saves me. I open up the Bible, I read it and all of a sudden the lights are on. I understand it. Echoing, reverberating within my heart is the repeated words, "This is true! This is true! This is true!" And it took me a few hours, maybe a few days, to realize, "I need to give my life to this book." There was a complete revolution, a completely remade inner man inside me that – watch this – here's the whole point, it's not about me: the new man could be recognized by that new love and

that new ability, facility, that new ability to read and understand the word of God, and it had a claim, it captivated my affections in a way that has never let go.

You see, that's the allegiance. To one degree or another, that's the allegiance of a true disciple. Not every true disciple needs to have the same kind of high point experience that I just described in my own life; that's just what happened in my life. But somewhere in the life of a true disciple is a recognition that this book came from God and that this book is true and that, "I love this book, and I want this book to shape my mind, and I want to read it and I want to know the Christ that this word reveals." Somewhere in the heart of a true Christian is that unending, unceasing beat. Bomp, bomp, bomp, bomp. God's word. God's word. Beating. Beating through and giving spiritual life and diffusing throughout everything that shapes your mind and priorities. That's what a true disciple looks like. There is an allegiance to Christ that is shown in an allegiance to his word, a love and a devotion to his word, enough so that you say, "When this word speaks, I want to obey. It's not just that I'll follow it until it says something I don't like and then I'll make my choices, as long as it agrees with me I'll agree with it." No, that's not true discipleship. True discipleship is, "I believe and agree with this word no matter what else I might think." There is a fundamental, central, defining capacity in your heart that says, "This word is my life."

One other thing I want to say to you about this, I'm saying all of this sympathetically to you just because I want your soul to be well with the Lord, and for you not to be deceived like I once was. That was a miserable condition to be in. It claimed to be in the light and yet stumbling around, walking in darkness. What a sad place that was in my life. What we're talking about here, beloved, is something that's far different, it's far more than simply going through the motions of a daily quiet time and just checking something off as a work list. "Okay, read my Bible. Took the trash out to the curb. Dusted the bookshelves." It's not like that where it's just something external that you do. We're not asking about that, we're asking about what do you love? Where is your allegiance? Where does your loyalty lie? Do you see the difference? Something completely different than just going through a motion. No, for a true disciple, the word of God owns his affections. That's why Peter said, it was burning in his heart, "Lord, where would we go? You have the words of eternal life. The things that you speak I want in my ears and in my heart." Today Christ speaks to us through his word and we say, "O Lord, I want these words in my eyes and in my ears and in my heart." That's the mark of a true disciple. Are you a disciple like that is the question.

Now, there is another aspect to the allegiance of a true disciple. It's not just the word of God, although that's central and can't be separated from what I'm about to say, but true disciples have an allegiance not only to the word of God but to the very person of Christ. The very person of Christ is a captivating affection of the inner man to a true disciple. True disciples show that kind of loyalty, a love, a devotion, an affection to the person of Christ as he is revealed in Scripture and you can see that by what Peter goes on to say in verse 69. Go back to verse 68. I told you this is like one of my favorite verses and so I have to keep going back to it, right? "You have words of eternal life." And where do those words lead him to? Verse 69, they lead him to an understanding of who Christ is.

Not simply God's word as an academic abstract pursuit, God's word as it leads to a recognition, understanding and devotion to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 69, "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." Wow, what a statement. The Holy One of God is Peter's way at this time saying, "Lord, we believe You're the Messiah. You're the one that the Old Testament promised to come to redeem Israel. You're the one that is set apart from God. You are the unique representation and revelation of God and You're right here in human flesh right in front of us." That must've been magnificent and yet it's no less magnificent for us to have the revealed written word of God right in front of us as well. Christ is present in every bit the same way, just not physically. Our access to Christ is not diminished because he's not physically with us. We have the revealed word. We have the Holy Spirit to help us to understand, to bring us to Christ, and Christ to bring us to God. We have a complete sufficiency. We're not in a diminished place compared to the earthly disciples who knew him in the flesh. But what Peter's saying here in verse 69, "You are the Holy One of God," he is assigning to Jesus the highest possible place in the order of the universe. "Jesus, you are consecrated. You are pure. You are the One from God and there are no others."

So Peter here is showing an allegiance, a loyalty, a submission to the person of Christ himself. Watch this, beloved, watch this: Peter's allegiance to Christ is personal. He says, "Lord, out of the bottom of my heart this is what I believe about You. This is the commitment of my heart." And what Peter is saying is, "Lord, those thousands might have walked away, I don't want to. I want to stay. I want to belong to You." You see, a true disciple of Christ, I'm speaking metaphorically in what I'm about to say, speaking figuratively here, Christ becomes so central to his sight, the sight of his heart, that everything else fades into the background by comparison. There is a unique place for Christ in your heart that no one else has. The closest to you on earth, you love them unconditionally, you love them open-endedly, you love them with all you are, but even those closest earthly relationships fade in the background compared to that consideration of Christ that says, "You may love me on a human level, Christ loved me and died for my soul. I can't give my deepest, highest affection to anyone but that." That's how a disciple loves Christ, with that kind of central elevated view that says, "I belong to You and, praise God by Your grace, Lord Jesus, You belong to me." And there is this direct personal commitment to Christ. You see, a true disciple recognizes who Christ is: God in human flesh, the glory of God manifest in man; left from heaven, came down to earth; God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Never a time where Christ was not. Eternally existing. Will always exist. Lord of the church. Lord of creation. Lord of my life. A true disciple sees Christ like that, recognizes him and submits to him. "Oh, You're my Lord and I love it that way. I wouldn't have it any other way. Let death come first, let death separate me from physical life before anything would separate me from my love for You, my Lord." That's the kind of allegiance of a true disciple that Peter is manifesting here.

So we see allegiance, loyalty, devotion, from the bottom of the heart toward what? Toward the word of God written and Incarnate. And there is a supreme place in the affections of your inner man for Christ and for his word that nothing else can compete with. That's the allegiance of a true disciple. Is that you? I can't answer that question for



you. I mean, churches baptize people and that's great however they do it, but your parents, your friends, your church cannot make you into a disciple of Christ. You need to turn your heart to him yourself and give him your personal loyalty. Don't rely on what someone else has done. Don't rely on the family that you were born in. Don't rely on the church that you were baptized into. Give yourself to Christ. That's what a true disciple does. That's the only kind of disciple that there really is. Jesus said, "Why do You call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" Off with this hypocrisy. Off with this charade. A true disciple says, "Lord, I fall short but, oh, do You have the devotion of my heart?" Have you given that kind of allegiance to this worthy Christ is the question.

Let's go to a second aspect of a true disciple and here we want to see that kind of reinforcing that what we're talking about a disciples' allegiance, we're not talking about something that is grounded in self-effort, we're talking about desires of a heart, not works that you do, but the allegiance of a true disciple is bound together like two sides of a coin with point 2 here this morning: the reliance of a true disciple. The reliance of a true disciple. "Reliance" being a word meaning "confidence; trust; hope." What is it that you hope in? What do you trust in? What are you confident in? And you have to do a little bit of work and a little bit of thinking here to see what transpires in verse 69 and following but we'll go through that together here.

Verse 69, Peter had said, "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." Okay, that leads us into the verse that supports our second point here, "Jesus answered them." Okay, so we're focusing on what Jesus says here as being the indicator that we want to take our cues from. "Jesus answered them, 'Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?'" When you read that the first time, second time, third time, that seems like a complete non sequitur. Does that even follow what Peter said? How does that follow from Peter's confession that, "We have believed that You are the Holy One of God"? You would expect Jesus to clap and applaud but he doesn't do that. There's almost an element of rebuke in his response to Peter. What's going on here?

Well, in verse 69, look at verse 69 again, there is a nuance of emphasis. The content of what Peter said was great, "Christ is the Holy One of God," but there's a nuance of emphasis here that is just a little bit unhealthy that Jesus is purging and cleansing. Peter says, "We have believed and have come to know." There's an emphasis in what he's saying, "We have come to believe. Lord, You see them going off into the wilderness, off into the horizon, off into the sunset, we're not like them, Lord. We have believed and we know who You really are." Jesus hears that and what Peter is doing there is he is stressing the disciples' own belief, their own response to Christ, to distinguish them from the false disciples who had turned away. Now watch this, this is very very important: Jesus turns around and from Peter saying, "Lord, this is what we have done," Jesus says, "But Peter, this is what I have done." And it's emphatic. You can see by the way it's expressed in the English, "I Myself." "Jesus answered them, 'Did I Myself not choose you?'" Peter, forget about your response and focus on Me. I Myself chose you, not you." And he's drawing a contrast. Peter says, "We believed." Jesus said, "I did the choosing." He puts them side by side to bring out this important contrast about the reliance of a true disciple. You see,

Peter's response here, "We have believed," is just a little bit too self-important. "We made the distinguishing choice. We made the distinguishing recognition about who You are. They left but, Lord, we see it." And he sprains his arm getting back to patting himself on the back. He threw his arm out in this verse. It's not in the text which means that I'm making it up but you know what I'm doing. He's patting himself on the back, "Lord, look, we got it right."

What is Jesus doing here? Oh, do you want to follow this: Jesus here is purging pride out of Peter's heart that even a statement of true faith can be mixed with elements that need to be sanctified still further. Peter is overconfident and Jesus is tempering that overconfidence. He is tamping it down. Peter says, "We have believed." Jesus says, "Peter, that trajectory isn't going to help you. You're going the wrong direction, Peter, when you talk that way emphasizing your belief. Peter, understand something, you didn't choose Me, I chose you. In fact, Peter, think about it this way: I chose the twelve of you and one of you is a devil," referring to Judas Iscariot, anticipating Judas' eventual betrayal of Jesus into the hands of the Roman authorities. "Peter, I chose the twelve of you and one of you is going to prove to be a devil. If My choice from your perspective can't guarantee that all twelve of you will be true, then Peter, how much more can your weak, human, sinful faith, your defective imperfect faith, how much less can you rely on your own faith to be the guarantor of the outcome of your soul?" He says, "Peter, I chose you and one of you is going to fall away," which is not to say that Judas was saved and lost his salvation; Jesus chose Judas for the fulfillment of Scriptures that one close to him would betray him.

So Jesus here is laying forth before Peter, "Peter, there is no confidence in man. You can't have confidence in yourself, in what you believe." He says, "Peter, you have to trust Me, not your choice." Do you know what he's saying in terms that we would use if he was speaking this after the Reformation? Do you know what Peter would be hearing from Jesus? Jesus would be looking at him and saying, "Peter, stop being an Arminian. Stop trusting in your choice and talking about your choice. Look outside yourself and trust and rest alone in Me." Jesus earlier in chapter 6 had stressed the centrality of trusting him as the mark of a true disciple.

Go back to John 6:40 for example. Notice how Jesus emphasizes what he is going to do to secure the salvation of those who believe in him. Verse 40, "this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life," resting it in the will of God the Father, not in the choice of man; and he says, "and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Jesus says, "The will of God is that the one who believes in Me will have eternal life and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Jesus points to what he will do, not what man will do.

Look over at verse 51, we can start in verse 50, "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven," this what at the initiation of God, "so that one may eat of it and not die." And notice how Christ points all the attention to himself. This is incredible. No human man in his right mind would ever speak words like this. Jesus says in verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread," this bread that is Me,

"he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." Jesus prior to this episode at the end of John 6 says, "I am the one who will raise them up on the last day." Jesus says, "I am the one who gives My flesh for the life of those who believe in Me." Everything is designed to point your confidence, your trust, your reliance outside of yourself and to place it into what Christ alone has done. There is no confidence to be had in man. Mark this as a true disciple if you're taking notes, put a little star in your margin or a cute little heart, whatever you do to emphasize in your notes that this was really important, whatever that is, do it in your margin right here: true disciples rest on Christ and on his promises, not on the integrity or the perfection of their own faith.

And I know that a lot of you need to hear this today that are true Christians but you struggle with assurance because you're looking inside yourself for the things that would validate your faith. "Do I feel the right way? Do I feel it strongly enough? Have I felt my sins deep enough?" And you start asking yourself these introspective questions. Well, let me answer those questions for you. Do you feel sorry enough for your sins? No, you don't. I don't either. Could you possibly feel a deep enough sorrow over violating the holiness of an eternal God with your own self-willed activity and thoughts and words? You could never feel sorry enough for that. Could you ever love Christ enough? Could you ever have high enough affections for him that would settle things and would just be perfect, you as a sinner still in the human flesh of time and space? No, are you kidding me? Could you ever love Christ enough for giving his flesh for your eternal life? Could you ever love him enough for choosing you before you were even born and guaranteeing the outcome of your eternal salvation? Could you ever be glad enough? Could you ever be thankful enough? Could you ever love him enough for that? No, you can't, and so do you know what that means? That means that you shouldn't be looking inside yourself for that which would verify the reality of your faith. That's secondary. You start with: is Christ the Son of God? Yes, he is. Is Christ the only Savior of the world? Yes, he is. Is Christ and his death sufficient payment from my sins? Yes, it is. Is Christ risen from the dead? Yes, he is. Is Christ ascended into heaven? Is Christ interceding there for me? Yes. Yes. Yes, he is. And you're relying on who Christ is and what he has done as your hope for eternal life, not looking inward where you're only going to find at best very imperfect evidences of that in your soul. Does that make sense? Peter said this thing that was true. He had believed in Christ, he had named Christ rightly but Christ says, "Peter, don't trust in that. Don't trust in your own faith. You look to Me and you trust in Me alone. Look beyond yourself. Look to Me and trust in Me."

So what should you do if you're a false convert here today and it's been laid forth before you and you say, "Do you know what? That's not me. I have no desire for God's word. I have no real interest in Christ but now I am convicted and I realize I need to come to him." What do you do? Behold Christ. Receive Christ. Rest in Christ. He gave his life on the cross to save sinners just like you and he is a complete and a perfect Savior and everyone that comes to him, he receives and he will never cast you out. The one who has received Christ like that will find that an allegiance and a reliance is bubbling up inside him, not a perfect faith, but faith that's in a perfect Savior becomes the mark of a true disciple.

So you don't trust your choice. You don't look back, beloved, you don't look back and say, "Well, I prayed this prayer in a church 20 years ago and, yeah, I've lived in immorality and drunkenness ever since but, well, what about my choice?" Well, you know what we say about your choice? That didn't amount to anything, did it? That's a broken net that can't stop your fall into hell. You need to come where you're trusting in Christ alone, looking outside of yourself to Christ and relying on him, on his person, on his work, on his promises. My hope, my certainty, my assurance that I'll be in heaven with Christ in the end is not what I see inside me, it's that Jesus said, "I will raise him up on the last day," and his promise never fails.

Now, let's look at this from another side. Let's look at you are a Christian now, let's say, you're a Christian and you say, "My faith is weak and I do believe these things about Christ but my faith is weak, it's imperfect." Let me give you a word of encouragement that you can take out of the room with you today. This is very very important and will kind of illustrate everything that we've said. You say, "My faith is weak," and I'm just going to trust the Spirit of God for those of you who need to repent for him to apply that to your heart in that way. I'm speaking to sensitive-hearted Christians right now who need a word of encouragement; that's who I want to talk to right now. And I realize you struggle. You've failed and all of that. Do you know what? Peter can relate to you. You know what Peter did later on, right? As Christ was moving swiftly in events and the hand of God the Father were rapidly taking Christ to the cross, what did Peter do? He bailed on him. Denied him three times with curses. "I don't know that man!" We less readily remember what Christ said to Peter before that happened. He said, "Peter, I have prayed for you, that your faith would not fail," Luke 22:32. You see the keeping, preserving hand of Christ on true disciples that even before they enter into their temptation Christ has provided for us, Christ is at work, and while he might let us stumble for a time to expose our own weakness and to humble us, his intention is to carry you and to keep you all the way through that. Oh, doesn't that just make you love him? To realize, for Christ to see Peter in advance and say, "Peter, you're going to fail. You're going to deny Me three times. But do you know what I've already done because I love you, Peter? I have prayed that your faith would not ultimately fail. I have made provision to keep you." Weak Christian struggling with assurance, in your weakness, Christ is keeping you. He died to save you, not to abandon you. He died and lives that you might live with him forever. So even in your weakness, don't collapse into introspection and dissect and analyze and cross-examine every little bit of weakness that you can find in your heart. That will go on forever. Look outside and see the saving, keeping, loving, generous Christ who gave himself for you. If you trust him, trust him, rely on him to do what he said he would do, to keep you and to raise you up on the last day.

That's what true disciples do. They have a loyalty to Christ. They are devoted to Christ, to his person, to his word. They recognize the supremacy of the person of Christ. They recognize the authority of Christ's word. They submit to that. And as that word testifies to the one whom they trust, they look at his words and say, "Lord, I trust You, that Your death was sufficient to cover my sins. I trust You to keep Your promise to give me eternal life. I trust You to keep Your promise to raise me up on the last day." Allegiance

and reliance, that's the mark of a true disciple. So do those traits mark your heart? Are you a true disciple? If so, friend, you can rest. You can be at peace because he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus, Philippians 1:6. That's what God's word says.

Another question for you: if you're a true disciple in the context of what we're doing here in the life of our church, have you followed Christ in baptism? Have you followed him in believers' baptism? You see, a true disciple would say, "Oh, I've got to do that. That's the authority of Christ. That's what He says. I must do that." There are applications out in the back that you need to get involved with if you haven't followed Christ in baptism. Are you a true disciple of Christ? Have you been baptized? Great. Praise the Lord. I'm so thankful that so many of you are like that and in that position. Let me invite you back next week to be faithful to the Lord also as we observe the Lord's table together, okay?

Let's bow together in prayer.

*O God, we ask you to seal to the heart of every believing Christian in this room an assurance that you belong to them. May the questions and doubts and introspection of the past find their rest in looking upward and outward to Christ. Father, for those who are here who do not know Christ, who do not have that allegiance, who do not have that reliance and it shows in an unbroken pattern of sin and disobedience and fractured relationships left in their wake, O God, may you by the power of your Holy Spirit bring the fullness of your saving power to bear upon their heart even today that they might truly repent and turn to Christ for this salvation of which we have been speaking here today. And Lord Jesus, we lift up our hearts to you corporately now in allegiance. We love your word. We love you. And Lord, we trust you. We take you at your word, that you are who you said you are, that you will do what you have said you will do, and we commit ourselves, we entrust ourselves, we rely completely on you and not on ourselves, and in that find both our objective peace with God and our subjective peace with God. Thank you for who you are and what you have done in our lives and what you have still yet to do. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

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