

Will You Also Go Away?

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Bible Text: John 6:66-69
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Dear congregation, we live in tumultuous times, times in which many of the things we've counted on are proving themselves less secure than we thought. Our society, our systems, our economy, our prosperity, our health, so much seems up in the air, as we say, and we could say that these times are also sifting times. Children, have you ever seen in your kitchen a sifter, something that you use for baking, maybe you've seen your mother use that or you've used it yourself, something you can turn or otherwise use and you use it with flour and things like that, and when you sift something, then through these little holes falls the little pieces of flour and the big clumps, they stay on top? And maybe you have a sand toy that works kind of like that as well, that sifts things out? And really what is happening in our world right now is things are being, we are being sifted. These are separating times, times in which hearts are being exposed for what they are and what lives in our hearts is brought to the surface, whatever it is, and the Lord has his designs with that to shake us and to sift us and to separate that which is real from that which is not real.

Don't you find that as well? Haven't you read, just as I have, that people are leaving the profession of Christianity? Certain prominent people, it seems like every week there's another one who on some kind of social media announces that they've lost the faith, that they're no longer a Christian, that they can no longer believe what they at one time even preached in some cases. And maybe you know this closer to home, people that used to be in church with you or people in your family or friend circle that have drifted to the point now that they are away, gone, they've left the profession that once they had. Well, that's not just happening today, this is happening in every age really in essence, and it happened to the Lord Jesus as well when he was here on the earth as you can read in the passage that we read just earlier, and we take as our text in order to learn for ourselves, and as we look out over our world, we want to see what the Lord has to say to us about what it means to depart from him, what a dangerous and deadly thing that is. We're going to see it from the words of our text which you can find in John 6:66-69 where we read these words.

66 From that time many of his disciples [notice that word, many of his followers] went back, and walked no more with him. 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

The theme with God's help this evening is simply "Wilt thou also go away?" We'll see, first of all, a sobering reality; secondly, a searching question; and thirdly, a solid anchor. Wilt thou also go away? A sobering reality, a searching question, and a solid anchor.

We read in the words of our text, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." What had happened? Well, when you look back at the beginning of this long chapter, John 6 which we couldn't read in its entirety, you see that the Lord Jesus had done a remarkable miracle, multiplying a few loaves to feed thousands of people. And the people had been so impressed by this, that they had wanted to make the Lord Jesus on the spot king, verse 15. But the Lord Jesus avoided that by leaving, going to a mountain alone to pray, and his disciples boarded a boat alone and went onto the sea of Galilee when threatened by a storm, the Lord Jesus had come to meet their need and had come walking on the waves and had calmed the sea and provided safety and security for his disciples. But by the next morning, the crowds wanted more. They wanted to see more miracles, they wanted to have more bread, they wanted more excitement and more that appealed to their earthly senses, but Jesus had something different for them and in a synagogue, as we read later, in Capernaum he gives them a sermon that is full of riches but not something that these people, at least most of them, were looking for. And yet in such a majestic way, the Lord explains the salvation that he has come to bring and work, the life that he is for needy sinners. He has come down from heaven, sent by God, sent by the Father, to a needy, to a dying, to a dead people and he has come bearing words of eternal life.

What these people in the wilderness had received in the form of manna every day so freely, so consistently, so wonderfully, that Jesus was and infinitely more, so freely, so richly, so fully. "I am the bread of life," he said, "whoever eats me, whoever believes on me shall never hunger, shall never thirst." Can you imagine a more merciful, a more majestic Gospel than this to sinners who deserved death forevermore? And here the Son of God in our nature comes and he freely gives life, life in himself. And yet as you read this chapter starting already in verse 30, the people are not content with this. They want a sign. They want a sign in order that they may believe in him. In other words, "We're not gonna believe in the Lord Jesus unless we are given a sign that fits us, something on our terms." And as you continue reading, these hearers murmur at Christ. It's offensive to them to think of the Lord Jesus Christ as bread that's come down from heaven. "We know this person," they say. "We know his father, his mother. He's walked among us. How can he be bread from heaven?" And he says to eat his flesh and to drink his blood, this was offensive to them. They had better solutions than that. They had a better set of beliefs than this and they come to the conclusion in verse 60 that this really is offensive. Who's going to believe this? This is hard. They're offended by this, and offended, they turn their backs and they go over the hills away from this bread of life.

What a mystery, isn't it, at some level, at least, but one which you and I need to see for what it is and it's this, that the human heart apart from God's grace, rejects the greatest of

gifts from Almighty God in foolishness and in unbelief. And there are two things that we want to see here in our first point, and the first is this, is that many people inside the church as well as outside the church, but let me just note here that Jesus here is speaking to what we would say is people in the church, people who are hearing him, were listening to his sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum, and eternal life from God is not what they want. It is not what they're looking for. They want something that deals with their everyday lack and problem, something that appeals to their earthly senses, things that they can touch and taste and handle, things that will make their life easier and more pleasant. They want an earthly king who will free them from the Romans and provide food and drink for them. And they want the hubbub, the excitement that comes with someone who does exactly what they want him to do. But when the Lord Jesus says that these provisions that he did give them, notice that, he does give them things for their body, the Lord gave healing for the body many times, he was not unconcerned with the needs of the body but what he did, these were pictures of what he had ultimately and centrally come for and that is the salvation of body and soul from sin and from death, from alienation from God and back to fellowship with God and peace with God, but these people were not interested in this eternal perspective and in this soul salvation.

Now let's not look down so quickly on these original hearers because, congregation, our hearts down deep are no different by nature. Our own desires are so often temporal and temporary, to have a better life here, an easier life here: food, money, peace and prosperity. Sometimes we look down on people who believe the health, wealth and prosperity gospel as it's preached and it's a false gospel, it's a wrong gospel, but congregation, let each and every one of us beware that we don't suddenly believe that and hold to that, and that is, that if I serve God and I come to church and I read my Bible, then things need to go my way; then I need to have more ease, more esteem from people, more success in this life, and that when bad things happen and when things come against me and contrary winds blow upon me in my life, that I'm not ready to pack it in and I don't raise my fist against God and say, "Well, God, I've served thee so long and so hard and look at me, look at what's come upon me." You see, the natural man is willing to serve God and to tithe and to come to church and to do all kinds of things as long as he or she feels helped in everyday life and provided for, and think things certainly should at least not go more, go harder than if I didn't follow the Lord. But you see, the Gospel calls for allegiance no matter what. The Gospel comes with a cost. The Lord Jesus said, "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

So many are ready to serve God for their belly, for this life, for a better life now, that we start to see our picture in these original hearers. Even you, dear believers, don't you find yourself up against this inside? When things go so wrong as we think of it, in our families, in our life, in our finances, in our economy, in our world, do we murmur? Do we complain? Do we catch ourselves saying, "You know, I wonder if this Gospel really is true because, look, it doesn't seem to really change my life, it doesn't change my circumstances, it doesn't change the world around me." And that even in true believers is the flesh, it's our nature, and Satan is right in there with it. "Curse God and die," that's what Satan wants when things don't go our way.

But the second thing that lies behind these people leaving the Lord Jesus is they were offended by God's way of saving sinners. They found it hard and impossible to believe that salvation had to be that way and you know, congregation, the same is true today and let us beware ourselves about this. There's four things that Jesus is stressing in this sermon in Capernaum that are really up, we're up against, and the natural man does not like these doctrines. Take, first of all, the doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation. Look at verse 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." This is repeated in different ways. God is a sovereign God and the Lord Jesus Christ delighteth in his Father and in the sovereign God, and in no way did the Lord Jesus ever speak against the sovereignty of God. God is sovereign in all things, also in salvation, and he magnifies that, and in salvation God's sovereignty is always magnified. It can't be otherwise. It's God's salvation from beginning to end and we need to believe the sovereignty of God over everything and also in the Gospel. Without God there is no salvation and unless the Father draws a sinner, that sinner will never come to Christ.

And this is a stumblingblock for people when they hear about the sovereignty of God. There's something in our hearts, we may have grown up with the doctrine but when we really are up against it ourselves, our own hearts, we find that to be a threat, a sovereign God, because man by nature wants to be in charge of his own life, of his own destiny, but to lean on a sovereign God, to depend on a sovereign God, man doesn't want to do that. And even believers need to learn this again and again. We find, don't we, still a lot of Arminianism in our hearts, don't we, dear believers? So much self-will. John Murray wrote an article about the pilgrimage away from Arminianism in the soul, and in that article he says that every one of us needs to be led deeper and deeper to embrace the sovereignty of God as really the delight of our souls, something that isn't the enemy of our salvation but really is the only open door for salvation.

That was the first thing that people didn't like, but here comes the next thing and it's human responsibility in salvation, and this whole chapter is filled with calls and emphases on coming, coming, coming, believing, believing in the Savior, and there's no way to mistake the call of the Gospel in this glorious chapter. Like the Lord Jesus says throughout his ministry, "Come unto me and find life. He that cometh to me and eateth of me shall live forever." In other words, without coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, without believing on the Lord Jesus Christ there is no salvation, there will never be any salvation, and that must weigh on us, that must motivate us, that must drive us, that must draw us out to the Lord. And there are people who have in their mind at least, they have no problem with the sovereignty of God in salvation but they're very much up against the responsibility of the sinner in salvation, and they hide behind the sovereignty of God in such a way that they're off the hook. "Well, if God doesn't want to save me, if God doesn't powerfully pluck me from the fetters of Satan, I might as well just live my life. There's nothing I can do anyway." And they stop their ears to the calls of the Gospel that say, "Come. Submit. Rest. Believe. Embrace. Repent. Forsake. Look." And all these wonderful and marvelous calls of the Gospel. And my friend, if that's you, the Lord is saying in his word to you tonight, "You will not come unto me that you might have life."

And so it's sovereignty, a responsibility that really both are offensive. The natural man, you know how he would like it? He would like the sinner's sovereignty and God's responsibility, that we are in control of our destiny, of our life, and God is responsible to serve us at our behest, at our call, at our whim. My friend, it's the exact opposite. God is 100% sovereign and we are 100% responsible. That's the doctrine of biblical salvation and woe unto us if we neglect either of these, impressing both of them upon the consciences until sinners are caught in the vice of, "I can't be saved but I must be saved. O God, save me! I look to thee!" And it's there that the third thing that's often a problem for people and it was for the people here in our passage, the offensiveness of faith as the instrument, the sole instrument in salvation.

Notice verse 28, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" In other words, "Tell me what I need to do. Tell me what I need to do and I'll do it." You see, the mindset is legalistic, it's activist, it wants to do, do, do. "Tell me what to do. What shall we do?" And the Lord says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the name of the Son of God." In other words, it's by faith, not of works. It's by submitting to the righteousness of God in the Gospel, falling upon it, looking to Christ, resting on his finished work. Not doing, doing, doing but resting, falling upon Christ in the Gospel for sinners. As a sinner, you do nothing else but you fall on him. You go lost upon him which is not lost but saved. You fall on him. You embrace him. You come on his command. You come on his word, on his promise, on his invitation, on his entreaty in his word. You don't put demands on God beyond that. You don't make it faith and works, faith and experience, faith and whatever it may be but faith alone, resting on Christ alone.

Well, my friend, you've heard this countless of times. Why, why are you offended at this doctrine of falling upon Christ? "I can't fall," you say. You can't fall on the one and only rock that can save you from death? You won't fall. Just say it the way it is. You won't fall because you have other options. You're holding on to other things. This doctrine of faith alone which rests in God's word is offensive. You want something else, you want something different, or at least something in addition of faith and faith alone. The Lord Jesus makes it very clear, "You will not believe in me."

Then there's one more thing that offends people both then and as well today and that is that salvation is exclusively in Christ. The Lord makes this so abundantly clear here. You can't miss it. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." In other words, if you are not united to Christ, if you have no union with Christ, if you are not his by faith and faith alone, you have nothing. You don't have life. You are still dead in your sins. And Christ there exalts himself in the preaching. What happiness he must have had in his heart to say, "I am the bread of life sent down from heaven which if any man eat, no matter who they are, embrace me with a living faith, they will live forever." And the people say, "This is offensive. We want something different. We want something else."

You see, congregation, the Gospel is offensive to the human heart, the natural human heart and we try to tweak that doctrine of salvation a thousand different ways to cushion ourselves, to cushion our desires, our wills, our ease, our actions, our unbelief, our still

being unconverted, and we are unwilling to live on that knife's edge of God's way of saving sinners and people stumble at that all the time. Not just out there, in fact, most of it is right here in places where the Gospel is preached.

Sovereignty exalted, responsibility pressed, faith in the Lord Jesus is held up and called for and entreated, and Christ alone is exalted, that's where Satan is doing his busiest work and that's where the human heart rebels so very much. And then it's the scene of our text. When Christ is speaking through his word, he's exalting himself and people are hearing it, and they might not feel that they're offended by it but they are because whoever does not submit to this way of God saving sinners is offended by it. Then you might be back next week and the week after, you might not leave the church, you might not leave even the truth per se like some of the people that we read about in the media, but inside in your heart there is that awful departing from the living God, that departure from his truth, from Christ, from his Gospel. And my friends, at the end of the day if that's us, we are choosing death over life because Christ is life.

And you see, congregation, how Christ's preaching sifts, how Christ's preaching separates. Christ here is not some victim who gives a sermon and people leave and we should feel sorry for him. No, he speaks the truth as it is and he knows what's gonna happen. He knows everything in advance. He does, you can read of this in this passage. He knew that Judas was a devil. You can read of that at the end of the chapter. He's not taken by surprise but he gives this salvation for the chief of sinners and so many turn their backs and he sees them go over the hills, over the mountains. They want something else.

Well, my friend, don't be mistaken, the winds of apostasy are blowing. They're blowing in our society. They're blowing in our world. They're blowing in the professing church and they are not held back out the walls of this church. It's something that's very subtle. It's something that reaches right into those who sit in pews like this from Sunday to Sunday and it's a solemn reality. And this leads us, secondly, here more briefly to a searching question. As these scores of people, maybe hundreds, thousands of people are leaving, the one after the other, the Lord Jesus turns to his 12, to his 12 disciples and he asks this question which he's asking through the Scriptures tonight: will you also go away? Others have gone, others will go, how about you? Will you go or will you stay?

You know, sometimes we think out of a misguided sense of politeness that we shouldn't ask each other hard questions, but it's not loving to do so. Well, my friends, the opposite is the truth. Christ asked some of the most piercing questions. "Could you not watch with me one hour? Whom do you say that I am?" And here, "Will you also go away?" You see, the Lord Jesus Christ here is searching the hearts, he's probing the hearts of his disciples and he is making his disciples to the hard work of registering, "Where are you at spiritually? Where do you stand? How is it with you and your soul before me? Is there that root of departing from me also in your heart?" And dear friends, the Lord is asking that through his Scriptures of each and every one sitting here or joining with us tonight. Will you also go away or will you stay, will you stay with this one speaking no matter what?

Now congregation, we shouldn't imagine that the Lord here is just feeling very hurt by what's happening here and that he's looking for support in his disciples. Maybe we think that because we think of ourselves in that situation and it's true that the Lord Jesus had human feelings obviously, and yet in this particular instance he's not wanting reassurance from his 12, no, he has it with his Father. But he's asking this question to make his disciples and all of us see how weak we are in ourselves and how much we need to rely on the Lord and those two things go hand-in-hand. The Lord wants us to know how weak we are in ourselves, how prone we are to halt and stumble. You know that hymn, don't you? "I am prone to halt and stumble, I am prone to leave the Lord I love." Is that the language of your heart? You know, you never outgrow in this life the Lord's probing questions that take you by the shoulders, as it were, and pierce through your eyes into your soul and say, "Will you, will you, will you go away?" May the Holy Spirit make this question of Christ to ruminate within our hearts like a bright light and search out all that dwells within.

I am capable, you're capable of backsliding. We backslide all the time, don't we, dear believers? Can you say without God's sustaining preserving grace, I would perish? Because there's no way I would endure in the fight of faith against a three-headed enemy of Satan, the world and my own evil flesh. I have within me an evil seed of unbelief, of departing from the Lord in my heart and my thoughts and my emotions, and I need to be guarded. I need the whole armor of God. I need God to guard me and to guard my heart.

What is it in your life that draws you away from Christ? Ask yourself that question, believer, or whoever you are. There are many things that can draw us away from the Lord. The attractiveness of the world. The world is right there with its flashes, with its gimmicks, with its pomp and circumstance, with its siren calls, "Look at me! Be entranced by me!" The world is attractive to us and to our flesh, isn't it? Or perhaps for you it is your friends, the way people look at you. How they look at you, and the last thing you want to do is to stand out, to look strange, to look holier than them. And for all of us when we're honest, to stand alone is very hard. Don't minimize what these disciples must have felt when just yesterday and just this morning there were thousands and now it's all down to 12 and one of them is a devil? That's not easy.

Maybe it's your own mind that just pulls you away, that focuses on other people's weaknesses and on your own weaknesses and finds excuses and just ruminates all the time, and pretty much if the Lord doesn't check that and if you don't crucify that with the help of the Lord, you've departed; you've gone a mile from the Lord, 10 miles, 100 miles from the Lord just like that. We don't, it's like gravity, you don't need to exert a lot of work to depart from the Lord, it just happens. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "I can sometimes fall asleep at night with the Lord so close and so near and I wake up in the morning and my heart is so ice cold. Nothing's happened, just some time has passed and there it is." That's our heart and the sin that dwells within.

That's why the Bible says to each and every one of us and hear this exhortation from Romans 11, "Be not high-minded but fear." Don't look down on other people who are

departing from the faith but take stock yourself and be afraid of that same principle, the same pull, that gravitational pull away from the Lord. And shouldn't we live close to the ground, congregation, in prayer before the Lord? Not standing tall in our own strength because those who stand tallest can fall furthest. Let's not imagine that departing from the Lord and backsliding will never happen to us, instead we should pray with the Psalmist, "Keep me, O gracious Savior, keep me in the hollow of thy hand. Come deliver me lest I falter and fail."

The Lord wants us to see how weak we are in ourselves, dear believers, but also, secondly, how much we need him. Robert Candlish, he writes this in his sermon on this text, "O let this question of the Lord be ever ringing in your ears in every necessity and crisis of spiritual life, whenever you are in danger of growing weary in well-doing or becoming ashamed of the cross of Christ, or getting ensnared in Satan's subtle wiles, or the world's false and idol ways. Let the eye of faith be opened to see him who is invisible that you may endure unto the end." And that is what the Lord Jesus Christ is aiming for in this searching question to indeed humble us, make us cry out and need the Lord and press more closely to him and learn to confess him come what may, as we see in our third and final point. "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Oh my dear friends, what a miracle it is that at the end of this chapter it is in everyone leaving, that there are 11 who by God's grace stay. And it's an even greater miracle that this preacher sent from heaven, this Son of God, he doesn't leave. He doesn't turn his back on people. "He came unto his own and his own received him not," but he came and he stayed and gave his life a ransom. But you see, congregation, how Christ in all of this is aiming for one thing and he's aiming to elicit and evoke and effect a confession in the heart of his people. "Will you also go away?"

You know, the Lord could have said here, being the all-knowing Savior that he was, "I know that you, except for one of you, you will all stay with me." He doesn't say that nor does he say, "You know," with his commanding authority, "You know, don't ever go away from me." He could have said that but instead he asked this probing question. Why? To get an answer. To elicit a confession and may God give this confession in your and my heart in truth, the confession that the Scriptures have recorded here as being from the lips of Peter, there's three things about this confession.

First of all he says, "To whom else shall we go?" In other words, separation from Christ is the most fearful thing. Separation from Christ is the most fearful thing. "To whom else can we go?" Peter can't imagine being anywhere else with anyone else. Nothing can afford him the help and the comfort and the rest that he finds with the Lord Jesus Christ and so he can't imagine going anywhere else. "If I had to leave this hill where the Lord Jesus is or this synagogue, if I had to leave this and go, where would I go? Where would I go? If I would but turn away from him, I would know I would be leaving everything I need."

Where would you go? Where are you going? Is it true in your heart and in your life that you say, "I can't imagine being anywhere else other than with this one. No, I'm not such a great believer. I do everything wrong. I do so much wrong but go away from him? Where would I go? What would I do? I can't leave him." Is it true, my dear friend, that the thought of being separated from Christ is just something that anything but that, "I must have him. I must be with him. I would be so terribly utterly lose without him."

You know, maybe you can't say all the other things that Peter says here in this text, maybe all that is too high for you, but I want to know one thing: can you say this in your heart, "To whom else shall I go? Where else could I go?" Because if that is in your heart, that separation from Christ is the most fearful thing, then something else will come if it's not already there and that is that satisfaction in Christ is everything. Separation from Christ is fearful but satisfaction in Christ is everything. Peter says, "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

The Lord is everything. The Lord has eternal life. The fountain of eternal life is found in Christ and where else would I go? Would I go hew out cisterns that can hold no water when this is the fountain that comes up out of eternity that is brimful of everything that I need? Just one drop is more than enough to satisfy my soul's deepest longing to give my dead soul life forevermore. If I have Christ, I have everything. He is the bread of life. When I taste him, I am united to him, I have his life. When I drink from him and from his merits and from his life, I have everything my parched soul could ever ever want. To eat him is to have life. To believe in him is to enjoy life. With him is true satisfaction.

Oh my dear friend, has the Lord shown you something of this? Maybe not a lot, maybe you feel like all you've had is a drop or two here or there and you long for more. Maybe you feel like that Psalter we sang. I wander in a desert land where all the streams are dry. But a drop from him, a crumb from him, that's everything, that's more than enough. That's what my soul needs. My soul is lifeless, it's dead without him. He is the hand that fits my empty soul like a glove. He is the life-giving God who fits my dead soul perfectly. He is riches in my poverty. He is cool water to my fevered brow. He is everything my heart could need for this life, for today, for tomorrow, for eternity. My friend, I may proclaim Christ as sinners as the everlasting fountain of life for sinners, and he comes by his word. Do you see that? Peter has discovered that. "Thou hast the words of eternal life. This whole sermon of thine has been like one just brimful of life sermon, and I could eat and I could drink and thy words were unto me everything that my soul could long for."

My dear friends, it's the words. Sometimes people are looking for experiences in addition to the word and then they say something like this, "Oh, if only I could experience this or that, this true salvation, or what this other person over here experiences." My friends, true believers long for experiences, they long for the nearness of the Lord, they long to have it all felt in their soul, but we're not saved by feelings no matter how holy they are. Notice how Peter says, "Thou has the words of eternal life." Salvation is by revelation and not by some mystical revelation but by the revelation of the Gospel. When once our eyes are opened, we see it as truth and we see it as all our desire and all our salvation. "I must

have this no matter what. It is all with him." The fountain of eternal life is with him. "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

When God works in your heart, he makes you a word-centered Christian, then the words of this book are the words of eternal life. Oh, yes, you long for the blessing and the Holy Spirit and you long for the sealing of the Spirit and the confirmation of the Spirit, but these words are the words of eternal life. You take them as a poor sinner and nothing else. You come with all the need of your soul and if you perish, you perish but you must have eternal life. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Oh, my friend, are you eating, are you tasting, are you taking, are you pressing your needy soul there into the rich lavish words of Christ? Wonderful words of life?

Separation from Christ is fearful. Satisfaction with Christ, in Christ is everything and solidity in Christ is by faith and faith alone. Peter has listened very well. "You must believe in me," the Lord has said. It called for faith and Peter echoes, Peter answers and he doesn't just say there that, "Thou hast the words of eternal life," but he answers the call of Christ and he says, "We believe and are sure." He's speaking here of faith and assurance, something that some of you really struggle with. Some of you might be able to say, "Listen, I can follow Peter up to the point when he says we believe, but then are sure." You know, my dear friend, if that's your struggle, assurance is by faith. Assurance is not by extra revelation. You can read of that in Catechism, Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7. And true faith no matter how weak it is, it can be the weakest faith on the planet, it has the seed of assurance in it. Not only a certain knowledge or by a hold for truth but also in a sure confidence which the Holy Spirit works in my heart. You cast yourself with all your emptiness, with all your sin, with all your shame, making no excuses, you cast yourself upon the one who has promised, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And those are words of everlasting life and there you find security and strength, and as a beggar you reach out your hand that has nothing in it, sin and death and shame and wasted life, and by faith of everything the sinner could ever wish for.

And notice here how it's faith and nothing else. Faith. Empty faith, you could say. The empty hand of faith that clings to the promise of God in the Gospel, it has everything. It has Christ and with Christ is has everything. It has solidity. And notice how Peter says it. He doesn't say here, "I believe it and I'm sure that I believe." He doesn't say, "I believe it and I'm sure that I'll make it all the way to heaven." No, he says, "I believe and am sure that thou art the Son of God." Be certain of one thing: this is the Son of God. And you may be here today and you're not sure of yourself at all, all you might be able to say of yourself is, "I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all." My friend, is Christ the all-in-all? Is he the Son of God come down to the earth with words of everlasting life? Well, my friends, the Lord will take care of the rest. The Lord will so bind this upon your heart, he'll lead you by heart and by hand. He will bring you through ups and downs, through valleys and over hills, but he won't let you go if your hope is in him for time and for eternity. Then you may have many things inside of you that pull you this way and that pull you there, but humbly to plead with the Lord, "Lord, don't let me go. Leave me not nor forsake me. Still closer to thy side I press."

You see, congregation, as we close this afternoon, do you see how the shadow of the cross lies over this passage? People are leaving. People are rejecting. The Lord Jesus Christ is entering into his suffering but in and through his suffering, in and through his cross he is procuring everything for needy sinners like Peter and like you. Like you, needy sinners who learn to look away from self and find everything in him, and it's all because he came, he suffered, he died and because of that he has wonderful words of life for sinners like you and like me.

So the question comes as we close this evening: will you also go away? May you say with one author, "Go away? What, from Jesus? Go away? This would be going away from light to darkness, from plenty to poverty, from happiness to misery, from life to death. I cannot, I will not, with God's help, I cannot leave this fountain of eternal life." My unbelieving friend here tonight, where does this leave you? You're under the preaching, you're part of the crowd, Christ is speaking and the question comes to you as well, "Will you leave this Gospel? Will you leave this Christ?" I say to you: where will you go? To whom will you go? He has the words of eternal life. Who else can attract you save him? Who else can give you eternal life save him? Oh, my friend, never go away but come, press in with all your need upon this crucified Redeemer and cling to his cross come what may and you'll find him clinging to you. Amen.