

**John 6: 67-71; “Will You Go Away Also?”, Sermon # 44 in the series –  
“That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall,  
on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The Lord Jesus has now been left by “the many” disciples who had been following Him after He fed the 5,000. And He turns to the 12 and asks them: “Do you also want to go away?” At this hour, I want us to focus on what Peter said in response to this question as it will show us what the Lord Jesus is looking for from us as well. Jesus is looking for loyalty from each person who would follow Him. Whether it was in that day or this, it is a certain and special kind of loyalty that that He is looking for. He is looking for a loyalty of the heart which is based upon a loving spiritual affection for Christ. And this is explained for us by the 3 things which are mentioned by Peter, here in our text. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – If you would be a loyal follower of Christ you must have a real and on-going desire for His words. Then 2<sup>nd</sup> – If you would be a loyal follower of Christ, you must believe and know that He is the Christ. And then, 3<sup>rd</sup> – If you would be a loyal follower of Christ, you should be willing to search the depths of your loyalty to Christ. Let us think about these things together now, and each examine our own heart to discover whether we have this kind of loyalty there; the kind of loyalty that we will continue to follow our Lord Jesus, even if many other people we know turn away from Him and do not follow Him anymore.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – If you would be a loyal follower of Christ you must have a real and on-going desire for His words.**

Verse 67 – “Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’” “Then Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go?’” “You have the words of eternal life.” It ought to be obvious from all that we have studied so far in this chapter that Christ was sifting His followers at this stage in His ministry. Yes, He was doing miracles; He fed the 5,000. And He was showing compassion to the multitudes in healing them. But these acts of compassion were done by Him in order that those beholding them would then listen to what was most important – His teaching them the way to be saved from their sins, come to have eternal life, and then He would lead them into the truth of how they could become righteous and holy people of God. And, to that end, He wanted every person that was following Him to know that if they were going to be His faithful follower that they would have to have a spiritual appetite for His words. This was why He had preached to them the Bread of Life discourse that we have so recently studied. He knew that people would follow Him for different reasons, but each person who would sincerely follow Him would have to come to terms with their own spiritual appetites or lack of them. Those who left Jesus, those who departed and went away and did not follow Him anymore, did not have this spiritual appetite. They had rejected His hard saying of their having to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

Now, why do you think that Jesus spoke to them in the way that He did? Why did He not just spell it out and make it easy for them to understand that they needed this spiritual appetite that we are talking about? At another point, Matthew 11: 28-30, He would say to those whom He was speaking to: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” But these hard sayings of Jesus do not seem easy or light. Why did Jesus speak in this way? Because he wanted to teach His listeners the importance of not leaning to their own understanding. He wanted to show them that they were going to need to be taught of God; that God was going to have to give them this spiritual appetite for His words. They would need to be shown grace to be able to receive all the sayings of Christ, whether they were easy or whether they were hard. And Jesus deliberately made them hard at certain points to convince them of their need of grace to follow Him.

In John 6: 65 He said – “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” Do not think that following Jesus is simply a matter of your own decision and determination to do so. Decision is involved, but for your decision to stick, for you to continue to follow Christ through thick and thin, you must have the Holy Spirit’s working in your heart, creating in you an appetite for Christ’s words. This is why, even before the words of invitation that Jesus gave in Matthew 11, where He said, “Come unto Me”, He said this: “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.” “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” Jesus said all this before He gave the invitation. Why? Because He wants every one of those who do sincerely come to Him to know that the reason that they are coming is because the Father has given them to Jesus, and therefore Jesus wills to reveal the Father to them.

The reason that some come to Christ but do not stay, long term as His followers, is because they have no lasting appetite for His words. They are not interested in feeding upon God’s word continually; meditating upon it day and night, or becoming spiritually prosperous, obedient, and successful in doing what God has called them to. They are more concerned about whether they are getting the most out of this life materially. They are thinking of following Him in terms of their own personal pleasures and satisfactions. They are more concerned about keeping up their own personal projects, interests, and goals, rather than losing their life, in order that they might find it in Christ. They believe that they are missing out on something when a godly Christian person tells them that they should abide in the word and learn to pray. And they are offended when you tell them that they cannot follow Jesus based upon their own understanding of what they want from Him, but rather must humbly submit to the instruction of His word concerning how they should live their life for God.

After all, why should a person such as they are, so full of talent, so skilled in business, so wise in worldly things, so wise in their own eyes, have to submit to continually reading the Bible and listening to the good preaching of the word? Why, they think, should they be subject to having to receive the hard sayings of Jesus? Am I not smart enough to figure spiritual things out for myself? Well, Jesus knows that the reason that you should receive His hard sayings is that you will never be able to be saved or to live the Christian life until you are willing to see and believe and know for yourself that He is Lord; the One who has the words of eternal life. He knows that if you are a person who always wants to get your own way in relation to all the situations of your life, that you cannot follow Him. You may say that you want to follow Him, but really, you have no appetite for it; not in the way that He describes.

If you would be His true disciple, yours is to learn from Him the way of truth; the truth about the sinfulness of your heart before you are saved, and the deceitfulness of your own heart, even after you are saved. Yours is also to have a heart’s desire to follow Christ in the way of obedience to His word. It must be by faith in His word that you feed upon it and become strong in learning to do what is profitable, and good, and right in every situation. He would have you to deny yourself and pick up your cross and follow Him. He would have you to see that there are difficulties in regard to all of what it will mean for you to become obedient to God in every situation in your life. But these can be faced by trusting in Him for all the wisdom and the grace to do the right thing and go about to accomplish all of your personal goals in the right way; the way that will glorify Him the most, and not the way which would necessarily please you the most. That is the way that you glorify God in living the Christian life; to pay close attention to His word.

Listen to Frank E. Gabelein in the Expositor’s Bible Commentary – “We need not then greatly fear for our own faith if we are sure that we covet the words of eternal life more than the path to worldly advantage. Still less, need we tremble for the faith of others if we know that their tastes are spiritual, their leanings Godward. Parents are naturally anxious about their children’s faith, and

fear it may be endangered by the advances of science or by the old props of faith being shaken. Such anxiety is in great measure misdirected. Let parents see to it that their children grow up with a preference for purity, unselfishness, truth, unworldliness; let parents set before their children an example of real preference for things spiritual, and let them with God's aid cultivate in their children an appetite for what is heavenly, a craving to live on terms with God and with conscience; and this appetite will infallibly lead them to Christ." (end of quote) And I would say that if you have this on-going desire to receive Christ's words as the words of eternal life, you will never depart from Him by way of not believing in His hard sayings. It is not to say that you will not have your struggles with receiving all of His words at every point. But you will ultimately rather say with Peter – "To whom shall we go?" "You have the words of eternal life." You have this desire because your heart belongs to Christ, and you will live your life in this way, knowing that there is no other way to know God, or glorify God, or walk closely with Jesus.

**Now 2<sup>nd</sup> – If you would be a loyal follower of Christ, you must believe and know that He is the Christ.**

Verse 69 – "Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Isn't it interesting that what kept Peter and the other disciples from leaving Christ when others were leaving Him in great numbers, is this truth: that they had come to believe and know that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God." What a confession of faith! The great and magnificent truth, which had been revealed to them, was that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God. This kept these disciples following the Lord when He had suddenly become unpopular. For Peter, and for the others, (except for Judas), there was no other Person who was comparable with Jesus. Is this the way that it is for you? Do you see Christ as distinctively unique; above and beyond all men? Do you see Him as separate from all other men because of His perfection, and their imperfection? But yet we saw that He had mercifully called them to Himself, and called them to learn from Him. He loved them with an everlasting love, as He does all of His true disciples. In Christ, all the fullness of Deity dwells. In Christ perfection of humanity is displayed. It is Christ's holiness and righteousness, flowing from His Perfection of Being, that is what ought to be continually admired and thought upon by the Christian. We behold His glory, and by that same glory we are transformed from one degree of glory to another by the Lord the Spirit.

It was not as though those persons who followed Jesus, and left off, did not sense that Jesus was a glorious Man, but it appears that they could not believe that He was the Son of God, the Bread of Heaven, the One who was sent down from the Father, and equal with the Father because He was one in essence with the Father. They objected to the statement that He made when He said that He came down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father in heaven. They reasoned to themselves: Can I not do the will of the Father in heaven just as well as He can? Honestly, they could not. But they did not see themselves as sinners who needed a Savior. They did not understand that their carnal mind was enmity against God. Listen to Romans 8: 7 – "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

It is a carnal mind which rejects the truth of God's having to have sent Christ into this fallen world, so that we might be saved. These people who walked away from Christ could not believe in one who claimed to be God, and who was demonstrating His claim to be true by the miracles which He was doing. They still thought was He was only a man, like them. And so they thought of His having to come down from heaven, of His having to do God's will perfectly on their behalf, on behalf of sinners as they were; and this, they thought, was something that they could not accept. This is what they did not like. They did not care for God's condescending love; they did not think that they needed it. They could not accept the proposition that Christ was declaring to them, that they could not save themselves, that they must needs be saved through their partaking spiritually of Christ, or not be saved at all. In thinking this way, they did not realize it, but they were actually

becoming practical atheists. They were saying that they believed in God, but they actually did not believe in Him at all, if they could not believe in Christ, His only Begotten Son.

Listen to Gabelein once again: “And it should be observed that Christ claims this exceptional homage from His people. The “following” He requires is not a mere acceptance of His teaching alongside of other teaching, nor an acceptance of His teaching apart from Himself, as if a man should listen to Him and go home and try to practice what he has heard; but He requires men to form a connection with Himself as their King and Life, as that One who can alone give them strength to obey Him. To call Him “the Teacher,” as if this were His sole or chief title, is to mislead. The alternative, then, as Peter saw, was Christ or nothing. And every day it is becoming clearer that this is the alternative, that between Christianity and the blankest Atheism there is no middle place. Indeed we may say that between Christianity, with its supernatural facts, and materialism, which admits of no supernatural at all, and of nothing spiritual and immortal, there is no logical standing-ground. A man’s choice lies between these two – either Christ with His claims in all their fulness, or a material universe working out its life under the impulse of some inscrutable force.”

“There are of course men who are neither Christians nor materialists; but that is because they have not yet found their intellectual resting-place. As soon as they obey reason, they will travel to one or other of these extremes, for between the two is no logical standing-ground. If there is a God, then there seems nothing incredible, nothing even very surprising, in Christianity. Christianity becomes merely the flower or fruit for which the world exists, the element in the world’s history which gives meaning and glory to the whole of it: without Christianity and all it involves, the world lacks interest of the highest kind. If a man finds he cannot admit the possibility of such an interference in the world’s monotonous way as the Incarnation implies, it is because there is in his mind an Atheistic tendency, a tendency to make the laws of the world more than the Creator; to make the world itself God, the highest thing. The Atheist’s position is thoroughgoing and logical; and against the Atheist the man who professes to believe in a Personal God and yet denies miracle is helpless. And in point of fact Atheistic writers are rapidly sweeping the field of all other antagonists, and the intermediate positions between Christianity and Atheism are becoming daily more untenable.”

“Anyone then who is offended at the supernatural in Christianity, and is disposed to turn away and walk no more with Christ, should view the alternative, and consider what it is with which he must throw in his lot. To retain what is called the spirit of Christ, and reject all that is miraculous and above our present comprehension, is to commit oneself to a path which naturally leads to disbelief in God. We must choose between Christ as He stands in the gospels, claiming to be Divine, rising from the dead and now alive; and a world in which there is no God manifest in the flesh or anywhere else, a world that has come into being no one knows how or whence, and that is running on, no one knows whither; unguided by any intelligence outside of itself, wholly governed by laws which have grown out of some impersonal force of which nobody can give any good account. Difficult as it is to believe in Christ, it is surely still more difficult to believe in the only alternative, a world wholly material, in which matter rules and spirit is a mere accident of no account. If there are inexplicable things in the gospel, there are also in us and around us facts wholly inexplicable on the atheistic theory. If the Christian must be content to wait for the solution of many mysteries, so certainly must the materialist be content to leave unsolved many of the most important problems of human life.” (end of quote)

I want you to notice that there was an order to the way that Peter made his statement concerning faith in Christ. It was – “We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It was when they believed in Him that they came to know the truth that He was the Christ. It was not that they must prove to themselves that He is the Christ first, and then they would believe on Him. They believed in Him and His words first, and then came the certainty of understanding that Who they had believed was true, and that He was righteous altogether. They had the certainty of understanding that Jesus Christ was the Son of the living God, and that He was

the only Man who was perfectly holy. They believed in Him and they came to understand His uniqueness in this regard. They understood that He was the Holy One of God.

Listen to A.W. Pink on this: "Notice carefully the order here: "We believe and are sure." It is the Divinely appointed and unchanging order in connection with spiritual things, It supplies one out of a thousand illustrations that God's thoughts and ways are different, radically different, always different, from ours. Whoever heard of believing in order to be sure? Man wants to make sure first before he is ready to believe. But God always reverses man's order of things. It is impossible, utterly impossible, to be sure of Divine truth, or of any part thereof, until we have believed it. Other illustrations of this same principle may be adduced from Scripture. For example, the Psalmist said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13).

"This also is the very opposite of human philosophy. The natural man says, 'Seeing is believing'; but the spiritual man believes in order to see. So, again, in Hebrews 11: 3 we read, "Through faith we understand." How many desire to understand the mystery of the Trinity or the doctrine of election, before they will believe it. They might live to be as old as Methuselah, and they would "understand" neither the one nor the other until they had faith in what God had revealed thereon. It is through faith that we do understand any part of Divine truth. "We believe and are sure." To sum up: assurance, vision, knowledge, are the fruits of "believing." God rewards our faith by giving us assurance, discernment and understanding; but the unbelieving are left in the darkness of ignorance so far as spiritual things are concerned. "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God." Certainty that Christ is "the Son of the living God" comes not by listening to the labored arguments of seminary professors, nor by studying books on Christian Evidences, but by believing what God has said about His Son in the Holy Scriptures."

Ah, this is good, but let us think together, a little further, of our Lord's holiness. Truly this was what Peter and the other apostles, except for Judas, saw in Him. And it held their attention and it no doubt formed much of the basis, in accordance with His grace, and the working of the Spirit, for their decision to stay and not to leave. There is nothing which so influences our faith like the holiness of Christ. The pre-eminent attribute of God is His holiness. The Lord Jesus represents to us, in His own Person and life, the holiness of God. The Lord Jesus delegated the power to work miracles to His disciples, but His holiness could not be delegated. It was a part of His inherent character, it was a part of His being. It belongs to both of His natures. It was His continual will, and practice. The disciples saw it in all of His words and all of His actions. If that notable woman in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings chapter 4, verse 9 could say to her husband, of Elisha the prophet – "I perceive that this is a holy man of God who is passing by"; how much more did the disciples see pure and perfect holiness in our Lord. Those who continually lived with the Lord Jesus and watched Him day and night; how He spoke, how much He was a Man of prayer, how serious and yet joyful He was in His service to God; how He went about doing good, and how He did not compromise with sin or false doctrine; they knew and felt the truth of His holiness, and they must have stood in awe of it.

As Gabelein says in his commentary – "A king may give to his ambassador ample powers, he may fill his hands with credentials, and load him with gifts which shall be acceptable to the monarch to whom he is sent, but he cannot give him a tact he does not naturally possess, a courtesy he has not acquired by dealing with other princes, nor the influence of wise and magnanimous words, if these do not inherently belong to the ambassador's self. So the holiness of Christ was even more convincing than His power or His message. It was such a holiness as caused the disciples to feel that He was not a mere messenger. His holiness revealed Himself, as well as Him that sent Him; and the self that was thus revealed, they felt to be more than human. When, therefore, their faith was tried by seeing the multitudes abandon their Lord, they were thrown back on their surest ground of confidence in Him; and that surest ground was not the miracles which all had seen, but the consecrated and perfect life which was known to them." (end of quote). Let it be,

for you who would be faithful and true disciples of Christ, that you will remember His holiness; His perfect love for God and men, and especially His love which took Him to the cross for you.

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – If you would be a loyal follower of Christ, you should be willing to search the depths of your loyalty to Christ.**

Verse 70 – “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ “He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.” Now, let us remember that the apostles, when Jesus said this, did not know that it was Judas Iscariot who was the one who would betray Him. And furthermore, when Jesus said, “Did I not choose you, the twelve,” He was not speaking of their election to eternal life, but to His having appointed them to their office as apostles. Judas was chosen to his office by Christ, but from what our Lord says here, he was a devil. He meant that this one who He was speaking of, was a false believer. He was a deceiver, a liar, and murderer, as the devil has been from the beginning. This statement no doubt shook them to the core of their being; and Jesus intended that it should. When Peter had given his confident statement of saying, “We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus knew that there was one among them who really did not believe that, and He thought it wise, for the sake of them all, to warn them about this traitor. He did not want them to assume that all of them there had really believed, and that they all really knew, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

John, in verse 71, reveals who it was who was going to betray the Lord, from the vantage point of the time of his writing this gospel many years later. But at the time, none knew that Judas was the one. Not only did Jesus reveal this awful truth that one of them was going to betray Him, on this one occasion, but He also revealed it again on the very night of his being betrayed. In Mark 14, verse 17, it says – “In the evening He came with twelve.”(that is – to the large furnished upper room, where they would celebrate the Passover) “Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.’ “And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, ‘Is it I?’ “And another said, ‘Is it I?’ “And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish.’ “The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!” “It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.” What an awful revelation at the time of this Supper.

But there was only one who left the Supper that night after he dipped his hand in the dish with the rest, and that was Judas the disloyal disciple. And yet, as I close this message, I want you to see the tenderness of the other disciples’ hearts at this point. They were true and faithful disciples because they were willing to search their own loyalty to Christ, to its depths, so that they would not prove to be false, but rather be proven to be true to Christ. I believe that it will be a very good thing for each of us, to have this same willingness, and not simply assume that we going to be faithful disciples to the end, or faithful at every point. Let us be willing to see the possibility of our own defection from Christ, if His grace does not prevent it. But let us also see that Christ’s grace is most certain in its bestowal upon all of His elect people, and that not one of them will ultimately depart, but all will have this basic and necessary loyalty, because they know that their hearts have been changed by grace, and they know the promise of God from Jeremiah 32: 40 – “I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.”