

**The Pathology of False Disciples, Part 3**

Scripture: John 6:60-71

Code: 43-39

Now we come to the opportunity that we've been waiting for, I think. Completing John 6. Thank you for your patience through this great chapter. I pledge to you that this will be the last one. It was the last in the early hour, and it will be for you, and we'll go on next week to chapter 7. But I want to begin our final look at John 6 by reading to you the final verses starting in verse 60 and reading to the end, verse 71.

"Therefore, many of his disciples when they heard this said, 'This is a hard, difficult statement. Who can listen to it?' But Jesus, conscious that his disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble? What then if you see the son of man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 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 who would betray him. 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.' As a result of this, many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore. So Jesus said to the 12, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God.'"

"Jesus answered them, 'Did I myself not choose you, the 12, and yet one of you is a devil?' Now he meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot for he, one of the 12, was going to betray him." The notable statement in this section I just read is in verse 66 where it says that many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore. And the original language indicates this is the final decision. They were over it, whatever it was that drew them to him. And the pain is manifest in the heart of Jesus over this defection. You see it in verse 67 where he pensively says, "You do not want to go away also, do you," when speaking to the 12.

You see it again in verse 70 when he, in a brief soliloquy, says, "Did I not myself choose you, the 12? And yet one of you is a devil." I can't comprehend the pain that our Lord suffered over the defection of these disciples, these students of his who turned their back finally and went away, but I do know in some small measure this difficult reality in ministry. Biblical ministry, gospel ministry, certainly pastoral ministry has a sadness to it that never goes away, and frankly, it accumulates the longer you do it, and it is the heartbreaking reality that people come, and people hear, and people stay, and

sometimes people actually profess, and then they turn their backs on the Lord Jesus Christ and eternal life and plunge back into their sin and leave.

I've seen it constantly in all the years of ministry, both here and beyond. It's not rare. It's not rare. Normal is what it is. It's the nature of ministry to see people who come and hear and stay for some measure of time, and leave and turn their backs on the gospel. It is the most painful of all spiritual experiences. It is the most discouraging of all. Not just because you don't get a return on the investment you made. Not because they forsake the preacher. Not because they forsake the people, but because they forsake the Lord. The only hope of salvation, the only hope of heaven. It is so severe that there is one particular book in the Bible that more than any other warns against doing this, and it is the book of Hebrews, and I want you to turn to Hebrews for a moment.

There are throughout the book of Hebrews a series of warnings, and they are warnings to people who have identified in some way with a group of believers. They have come. They have listened. They have stayed. They have gotten involved. They've even paid a price for that association, but they don't really believe, and so they defect. This issue is so much on the heart of the writer of this epistle and the Holy Spirit who inspired it that there appear scattered throughout the book these severe warnings, starting very early in the book in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 10, and that's where I want you to look, Hebrews 10.

Now what we have here are people who had heard the gospel. They had heard it from those who were with Jesus. They heard it from people whose preaching was tested by signs and wonders, miracles. They were interested enough to stay. They associated with this church. Their hearts had been drawn and warmed, but they're in danger of walking away. They're short of faith. They haven't yet genuinely believed. And so if you look at Verse 23, you have a very direct statement that sort of launches this portion here.

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." It is to those wavering people that this warning is rendered. Don't let go of the confession you've made. This is a warning against the most severe sin that any person can commit. It's the sin of apostasy. That is the sin of knowing the truth and rejecting it when you know it.

I suppose we think that the hottest hell is reserved for the people who committed the most heinous crimes, and that would be correct. What we don't sometimes understand is the most heinous crime is to reject the gospel with full knowledge. Far worse than any Hitlerian crime. That is the ultimate crime, as we will see in this passage.

So the warnings are very serious and very severe. If you go down to verse 26, we're introduced to what apostasy is, for if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, that's what it is. What does "go on sinning" mean? Go on sinning by not believing. The ultimate sin that dams

everybody is the sin of what? Unbelief. Every other sin is forgiven when you believe. Every other sin. So if you go on sinning by not believing, by rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, if you will not receive the knowledge of the truth, gospel truth, that is apostasy. Willful, deliberate, intentional continuation in a life of sin that does not embrace the truth.

That's the warning. You've heard it as these people to whom he writes heard, but you willfully continue in the same path. That's what it is. That's what apostasy is. Here are the results of it. First, there's no longer any sacrifice for your sin. If you reject the only sacrifice, there is no other sacrifice. There is no other provision for salvation. None. There's only one name under heaven whereby men can be saved. That's the name of Jesus Christ. He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the one who offered the one offering that God accepted to perfect forever those that believe.

So if you reject him, there is no longer any other sacrifice to which you can turn, no other offerings satisfy God. So what happens as a result of that? You are left unforgiven, and Verse 27 says, "What awaits you is a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." No more sacrifice for sin is available, and you are turned over to terrifying judgment eternally.

And then he adds something else. Verse 28. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. You break the law of Moses, and you die. How much severer punishment, Verse 29, do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the son of God and regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant, the blood he shed on the cross by which he was sanctified, set apart unto God is the only acceptable sacrifice, and has insulted the spirit of grace.

How severe is that punishment? You are turned over in Verse 30 to the Lord who will judge his people. Vengeance is mine. I will repay. This unbelief, this rejection of the gospel, this trampling of the son of God is a sin against the trinity. You trample the son of God, you insult the Holy Spirit, and you so violate God who said, "This is my beloved son. Listen to him that you come under his full wrath." That's why Verse 31 says it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Not believing the gospel is a sin against the trinity. Massive sin of such epic proportions that the most severe punishment in hell is reserved for those who do that. That's sin. That's sin. In light of that, there's a plea starting in Verse 32 not to do that. And here are some deterrents. Remember the former days when you were enlightened. Remember the former days when you were enlightened. Remember your interest originally in the gospel. Remember how wonderful the message was when you first heard it. Remember how hopeful you were when you heard about a sacrifice for sin, and you heard about the promise of heaven. Remember.

Remember your enlightenment when the truth first dawned on your mind. And then do this. Remember that you made enough of a connection to these believing people that you actually endured a great conflict of suffering, and you were part of being a made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations because you became sharers with those who were so treated. Look, remember those early days when it all seemed so wonderful and all so glorious and so hopeful.

Remember when for the first time in your life, you may have thought you found the truth that would lead you to true happiness, which every soul seeks. Remember those days, and remember that it seems to wonderful to you that you associated with people who are being mistreated and persecuted because the early believers were. I mean you cross that line. You joined with us. You actually got involved in ministry, Verse 34. You showed sympathy to the prisoners, and you accepted joyfully the seizure of your property.

You were going through what all of us were going through, and you were realizing you could let your property go because you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. You started to think about heaven. This is a warning to people who have been exposed to all of this, connected with the people of God to the degree that they have suffered the negative and enjoyed the anticipation of the positive.

These are people who are part of the church. These are disciples, to borrow Jesus' term. Remember those days. In Verse 35, "Don't throw away your confidence, which has such a great reward." You throw away your confidence, and you've just decided for the cheap stuff. Don't throw away your confidence. You need endurance. Sure, we admit that. It's hard being a Christian. You need endurance in the battle against sin.

And if you do endure, you'll receive what was promised, and it won't be long for yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. You're either going to meet him when you die, which they all did, or he's going to come. So hold on for a little while. Endure the deprivations of being a Christian for the hope that is promised.

In Verse 38, my righteous one shall live by faith. You have to live by faith in this Christian life. Right? And if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. Don't shrink back. Don't defect. And then the writer says, "But we true believers are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." There are the options. To people associated with the church, people like you, there are some of you this morning – and this is the first time you've been here, maybe be the last. Because of what you're going to hear, you're not going to like me, and because I'm going to tell you what Jesus said, you may have a different view of him and not like him either.

This may be the beginning and the end. There are others of you who have been here a while that you've been thinking you've had enough of this, you're over it. Whatever the original attraction was is

gone. You're over this. You don't want this in your life. You don't believe. You're not really willing to give up your sin. And you're about to go, and maybe for some of you, this might be the last Sunday. There are some of you who are still in the throes of trying to make that decision, but down the road, you'll turn your back and walk away and shrink back to destruction.

And if you don't think that's a heartache beyond measure, you're wrong. But as sad as it is to me and those who serve you, equally sad as it is to those in your world who love you, it is far more sad for your sake because of what that means eternally. This issue is an issue that got far beyond John 6, but let's go back to that point. This is reality in ministry. This is why ministry is this two-edged sword. You minister over a long period of time, many, many years, and you accumulate the joy of faithful true believers, and you accumulate the sorrows of unfaithful defectors. So you're always kind of living in the tension of those things.

Would be easy to say the longer you minister, the more you see of the grace of God, and that would be absolutely true, but the more you minister, the more you see of those who turn their backs to the grace of God and walk away. There's a sadness, and I know that sadness, and the Lord knew it far, far beyond anything I could ever comprehend. As we come to John 6 – by the way, we're going to start now. I just threw that in. Hadn't really planned that until late last night. But as we come to the end of John 6, we're coming to really the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry, which had gone on for more than a year.

And at the beginning of his ministry in Galilee, had the same response as he did the first year of his ministry in Judea. There were huge crowds, people following him, people enamored, people excited about his ministry, and they were just – they were caught up in his power and his works. Now he was born in Bethlehem, but he lived his childhood in Nazareth. He knew that area very, very, very – very small, small piece of geography, and it's bordered, of course, on the west by an ocean, and on the east by – and the north by gentiles and pagans, so Israel was crushed into this very small area.

Some estimates are 200 plus villages and towns were scattered all over that area. Jesus would have traversed them all because he ministered in all the towns and villages of Galilee during that time. He was peripatetic the whole time he was on the move. There were villages that were as small as maybe 30, 40, 50 people. There were villages that were 100 to 400. There were villages that were larger than that. There were some towns, they tell us, that could have been between 10,000 and 20,000 people. Significant size.

But if you added it all up, maybe it was 400,000, 450,000 people. It was densely populated. It had been urbanized. People had been moving into towns because of the work that the Romans and the Herodians had done in the area. So Jesus traversed all of that, and the crowds were massive. Sometimes the crowds were so big that we're told in the New Testament that people were stepping on each other. That's how it all started.

That's not how it ended. Here we are at the end in Verse 66, kind of gives us the postmortem. Many of the disciples he'd been collecting in all these tours walked away, withdrew, were not walking with him anymore. There's finality in the intent of that text. It was over. It was over. They went on willfully sinning and literally fell into the fury of God, the wrath of God. This then is the final word in a sense on the Galilee ministry. And what we see at the end, as I read you a moment ago and have read several times over the last couple of weeks, two groups are made clear.

False disciples who walk away, true disciples who won't go away. So let's talk a little bit about those false disciples again. We'll call it the defection of the false disciples. The defection of the false disciples. Now they had been drawn to Jesus, admittedly, and we've gone through all that. Haven't we? All the way through the chapter, they were drawn by the crowd. They were fascinated by the supernatural. They were very focused on earthly benefits, and he was giving benefits the likes of which they had never had any conception of, healings, deliverances from demons, feeding, just nothing like it.

So they were fascinated by the supernatural. They were focused on earthly benefits. That's what they were interested in. They were in heart indifferent to worship, but they sought personal satisfaction. They even went so far as to demand more miracles. They said, "Either give us the stuff, or give us the power to do it ourselves." Very self-centered. But when he told them that he was the bread of life and the only way they would ever have eternal life was far more important than physical healing and physical well being, physical food, the only way they would ever have eternal life would be if they would embrace him. They had no desire for embracing Christ.

And then when he went further than that and said, "I have to tell you something else. I'm going to give my flesh for the life of the world, so you're going to have to drink my blood and eat my flesh," what was he talking about? His death. You're going to have to embrace the fact that I am the messiah, the savior, the only hope, the only bread of life who came down from heaven, and you have to embrace me and my death.

They were unwilling to embrace the cross, so they left. They left. It wasn't the works of Jesus. It never is. It was the words. And it's still that way. There is kind of a patronizing of Jesus that goes on in our culture and around our world. People want to say nice things about Jesus. People want to speak of him kindly. People refer to him kindly. They like the idea of the Jesus of their own imagination, the Jesus who is sort of a self deprecating, sort of a self-humiliating, sort of poor man who goes around helping people. He demonstrates a certain amount of compassion and kindness. They don't even mind the miracles, whether they believe them or not.

This is nice that he heals people, delivers them from demons, feeds them, cares for the poor, loves the poor, puts blessing on the poor, blesses children. Now this is the popular Jesus. This is the Jesus

everyone likes. It's not his works that push people back. It's not his works that offend them. Not his works that infuriate them. They make him attractive. So there is a kind of Christianity that allows this Jesus to be the Jesus that they proclaim and the Jesus that they present. Who can reject this? Who can reject somebody who takes care of little children and blesses them and takes care of widows and cares for the sick and people who are dying and puts an end to a funeral by raising a dead person?

Who can reject that Jesus? So the popular Jesus is acceptable to the world and very commonly demonstrated in our own culture. Just don't let him speak. It's his words that alienate people. And that's what happens here. That's why they walked away. This is against their own natural desires. Why? Because he did miracles. Get that?

And they didn't have any word that there weren't going to be any more. And they had eaten the day before a meal the likes of which they had never had in their entire existence because it was created by him. They had no word that the miracles were over. They walked away. Let's just counter to everything. Were the healings over? Were the deliverances over? Was the compassion done with? There was no reason for them to assume that.

But unbelief is so hard and so resistant to the words of Jesus that even though they're walking away from the very stuff that attracted them in the first place and they have no reason to think it's not going to continue, that's the nature of unbelief. It presses hard in the direction of its own will and sin. So Verse 60, therefore many of his disciples, when they heard, you see this in italics, you can kind of take that out. When they heard – when they heard what? His words about being the bread of life who came down from heaven, that he was the incarnate, that he was the God of very God in human flesh, that the only way to eternal life was through him.

He was the bread of life. He was the one who could give eternal life, and you had to embrace him fully and his death fully and his bloodshed fully. When they heard what he said, they said, "This is a hard word. Who can listen or who can hear it?" Hard is *sklros*. *Sklros*, find that word in medical language. It means stiff, dried out, inflexible, hard. Consequently in the figurative sense, this word is used as a word for harsh, unpleasant. It's objectionable. It's offensive. It's not hard to understand. It's hard to accept that Jesus is the only way, that this man is from heaven, that he is the messiah, and the messiah will shed his blood. Really, it's this that caused me a number of years ago to write a book called *Hard to Believe*. It's hard to believe. The message is inflexible.

There's no salvation in any other. Christ and Christ alone, and this way, through his death, through his cross, by repentance and faith in him and no other way. You have to eat and drink Christ, which also means you have to deny yourself. I think they objected to the whole thing. I think they objected to the notion that he said, "I'm from heaven," as we saw. Remember Christmas Sunday? I'm the bread that came down from heaven.

We looked at the incarnation in those words. I think they thought that was preposterously proud, if not blasphemous. And to say then that he is the only way to eternal life, it isn't that it was incomprehensible. It is offensive. It's offensive. Look, the world will always take that Jesus is kind of a social reformer. This is the language of social justice you hear all the time. A Jesus who is simply benignly tolerant, a Jesus of love.

I wrote another book, thinking about this, called *The Jesus You Can't Ignore*. I wish more people would read that book because that's the Jesus they ignore. It's the Jesus that speaks that they – by the way, that's why you don't see me on CNN anymore. Because I don't talk about the works of Jesus. I talk about the words of Jesus. It's not that they don't understand it. It's that they do understand it, and it's offensive. It's offensive. Go back to Chapter 5 for a moment and Verse 24.

Just so we hone in on this, truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word. Did you get that? It's words again. And believes him who sent me has eternal life, doesn't come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life. He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, which means that believing – hearing Jesus' words is the same as believing in the God who sent him because God speaks through him.

Oh, by the way, hear him now or hear him later. Hear him now or hear him later, Verse 28. Do not marvel at this. An hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come forth. Those who did good to the resurrection of life and those who committed the evil to a resurrection of judgment. I say this. One day, everyone in the world will hear him when he raises them from the dead, either unto life or unto judgment. The words of Jesus are unmistakably clear. Go back to Chapter 6. That was the issue.

So in Verse 61, Jesus, conscious that his disciples, his students, Mathetes grumbled. This is a mumbling, grumbling conversation of discontent. Said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?" They went from grumbling to stumbling, and we understand that. Don't we? 1 Corinthians 1:23. The cross is a stumbling block to the Jew. It's a stumbling block also to the gentile because it's so foolish.

He's saying to them, "Have I killed your hopes by what I've said? You were so enamored by what I did. You were so fast to embrace the works, and you wanted more of the works, and then the words came. Have I literally killed your hopes? Is this that I've said too much for you that you grumble and you stumble?" Verse 62. "What then if you see the son of man ascending to where he was before?" What if you saw me go back to heaven? Could you then believe that I had come from heaven?

And by the way, if you did believe that I actually came from heaven, then you would believe my words. So that became the issue. What if you saw the ascension? Sadly, they walked away before it happened. The faithful were there when he ascended. Right? Acts 1. You're going to see that tonight.



When they saw him go back into heaven, two angels appeared on the mount, and then Jesus went up into the clouds and went back into heaven. They had no question about where he'd come from when they saw him go back. So would you believe if you saw me go back?

And then he says in Verse 63 – and remember, this is a kind of composite of highlights of this conversation. He says, “It is the spirit who gives life. It is the spirit who gives life.” You know, I think he's recycling John 3. “You must be born of the spirit.” Again, he's leaning on divine power. He's looking at unbelief and realizing they're not going to come, and he checks off the reality that only the spirit can give life.

Flesh profits nothing. And then the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. It all comes down to this. Believing what he said. Right? Believing his words. Faith comes by hearing. We're begotten again by the word of truth. The word in us itself is the power of God unto salvation. In the 12th Chapter of John, Verse 49, “For I didn't speak of my own initiative, but the father himself who has sent me has given me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that his commandment is eternal life. Therefore, the things I speak I speak just as the father has told me. Life comes by the spirit through the words that come from the father through the son.”

The key to eternal life is to receive his words, his words, to believe his words. Verse 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 who would betray him.” Of course, remember back in John 2:23-25 where it says many believed on him superficially, but he didn't commit himself to them because he knew what was in their hearts because he knows everything in everyone's heart.

The horrible word in Verse 64 is really not just a word, but a phrase, “Who do not believe.” Unbelief is the great tragedy of all tragedies. It's the worst word in the theological vocabulary. Unbelief. It doesn't say they didn't understand. Salvation is not a question of intelligence. It's a question of faith. Believing. Believing. Some of you who do not believe.

Remember, they've been there associated for a while, classified as disciples. They didn't believe. Jesus knew who they were, and he knew the one who would betray him. It was none other than Judas who he speaks about in Verse 70. Jesus answered them, “Did I myself not choose you, the 12, and yet one of you is the devil. Now he meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he was one of the 12, and was going to betray him.”

Jesus knew Judas. Go over to Chapter 13. This is an illustration of how he knows everyone. He knows not only those who are his, as John 10 says, but he knows also equally well but in a different way those who reject him. They're in the upper room here. Passion week has begun. They're celebrating the Passover. Verse 21 of John 13. He became troubled in spirit. Again, what troubles him is the same thing that troubled him in John 6. It's this defection. It's painful.

He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And even in the last week of his life, the rest of the disciples had no idea. Sometimes the defector just is not known. Some of you sitting here, people think you're a Christian. "One of you will betray me.' The disciples began looking to one another at a loss to know of which one he was speaking." This was absolute shock to them. "There was reclining near Jesus one of his disciples whom Jesus loved."

That's how John refers to himself, John the writer. "Simon Peter gestured to John and said to him, 'Tell us who he's talking about.' So he leaned over to Jesus and said, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered and said, 'This is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.' So when he had dipped the morsel, he took it and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore, Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'" No one at the table had any idea why Jesus said this to him. Thought he was going to go get the moneybox to pay for the meal, and he went out immediately, and it was night. Was it ever night.

Jesus knows who believes. Absolutely. In his high priestly prayer. And he also knows who does not. High priestly prayer, he prays for those that are his and those who will be his in the future later, but then in Verse 12, he says this. "When I was with them," speaking of his disciples, "I was keeping them in your name, which you have given me, and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition so that the scripture would be fulfilled." Wow. So that the scripture would be fulfilled.

What scripture? Psalm 41:9, Zachariah 11, 12, and 13, prophecies of the betrayer. Prophecies of the betrayer. Judas is the prototype of the defector. Follow Jesus. He was must like James and John, they – you say, "Wasn't he in it for what he could get out of it?" Sure, but so were James and John. They wanted to be on the right hand and the left hand with Jesus in the kingdom.

Judas was like them in wanting a place of elevation, a place of prominence while they were being drawn to the glory of Christ. Everything that drew James and John and the rest pushed him away. He figured finally after three wasted years, he'd get as much cash as he could and sold Jesus out for the price of a slave. The guilt was so profound, he hanged himself. Plunged into an eternity that is incalculable. The Bible says he went to his own place, the place prepared for the devil and the angels and apostates and unbelievers.

No wonder Jesus said in Matthew 26, "It would have been better for that man if he'd have never been born." So Jesus knows. He knew Judas was a betrayer. He knows those who believe in him. He knows those who do not, and yet they are fully responsible for their own belief or unbelief. This is a tough question. Isn't it?

They're fully responsible for unbelief, and yet God already knows and ordains. How do we resolve that? Let's see how Jesus resolved it. 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.” Jesus found his comfort and his rest and his solution to that difficult dilemma in just leaning hard on divine sovereignty again. This is what he did in Verses 37-39.

Same thing, just what he did in Verses 44-45. All that the father gives him, he will come to me. Whoever the father draws will come. To whomever the spirit gives life, there will be faith. “I know,” he said. “No one can come unless it’s given to him by the father, unless he’s chosen by the father, drawn by the father, given by the father, and when that happens, I will receive him and hold him and raise him.”

That’s what the Bible teaches. Jesus doesn’t find some middle ground for us. He doesn’t build us a bridge there, doesn’t solve that problem other than to say the sinner is responsible for his rejection, and no one can be saved unless he willfully believes. Yet when it’s all said and done, it’s all the outworking of a divine, sovereign miracle.

Well, Verse 66 is the final word on these false disciples. As the result of this, many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore. And what was it they refused? Not the works of Jesus, but what? The words. And as I said some weeks ago, Judas is no solitary monster. People did it then, and they’re doing it now. Some of you will do this. Walking away, many have kissed Jesus with a Judas kiss. I don’t want to leave you with that.

I want to turn from the defection of the false disciples to the affection of the true disciples. Verse 67. So Jesus said to the 12, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” That’s a brokenhearted comment and shows you the genuineness to which Jesus grieved over unbelief, even in the face of divine sovereignty. What did he ask? This offer was free. Free. Believe. Not asking you to do penance. Not asking you to put nails in your shoes. Not asking you to inflict flagellation on yourself. I’m not asking you to pull yourself up by your own moral bootstraps.

Not asking you to go out and do some massively sacrificial charitable kind of works in order to gain this. Just believe. And what am I offering? Eternal life for just believing. You don’t want to go away also from this incredible offer. Simon Peter speaking for the rest as he always did said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” That’s the key. Right? “We accept not only your works,” but what? Your words.

Verse 69. Here is their confession. It’s equal to the confession that Peter makes in Matthew 16 where he says, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God. We have believed.” That’s what separates true disciples from false ones. Genuine saving faith. What did they believe? “We have believed and come to know that you are the holy one of God.” Now that is a title. The holy one of God. Calling someone the holy one, well, Jesus was called the holy one. Who called Jesus the holy one? Demons. Demons, Mark 1:24. Angels. Luke 1:35. This holy child. And here, disciples. The holy one of God.

But beyond identifying his holiday and his deity in this statement, the title the holy one belongs particularly to God himself. And by the way, you heard it read this morning in Isaiah 1. Isaiah uses this term for God more than any other Old Testament writer. It's his favorite name for God, the holy one of Israel. The Jews knew that phrase. So when Peter says, "You are the holy one of God who is the holy one of Israel," they were affirming his equality with God. They had believed the necessary truth about his person, and they were willing even eventually to swallow the necessity of his death.

We believe. We're not going anywhere. We want your words. I know why people leave. They don't like the words. I know why people stay. They say with David, "Oh, how I love your law. Your words are my delight." They can't hear enough. What group are you in? That's the question. Lord, we thank you that you have given us such a potent picture in scripture of this matter of true and false discipleship. Wheat and tares.

And we know that in many cases, only you can separate, and you will by the holy angels in the Day of Judgment. We don't intend to do that. We can't know. But you know, even as Jesus knows who believes and who doesn't, who is a Simon Peter and who is Judas. We ask, Lord, that you would by your holy spirit and according to the will of the father graciously, graciously draw and give life. Give life. Open up hearts to faith and belief in the truth for the sake of salvation. Do that work, Lord, we pray.

Now father, we ask that you would help us to worship you in a more grateful way, that the spirit gave us life, that the father chose us and drew us, called us, granted this salvation to us. And yet, Lord, help us to understand that no one can be saved who doesn't hear because faith comes by hearing the word concerning Christ. Give us zeal to preach that word, and no one can be saved without believing. Lord, may sinners understand they must believe these truths. Not hard to understand. In fact, you have to become like a little child. Embrace the simple truth. And so embracing that truth may enter into everlasting life, which comes only through Christ. Accomplish your work in us and through us, and help us not to walk away from the serious realities we've talked about this morning as we shift into some other mode on our way. May we for a moment meditate on those things, and give us the grace to have them shape us, make us more faithful to live and proclaim your truth. We ask these things in Christ's name.

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