

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Marks of a Spiritual Defector, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-10

Divine Sorrow over Spiritual Defection, Part 2

We're looking at John chapter 6. A recurring theme in the Scripture, as I mentioned last time, is the matter of spiritual defection. There are always those who follow the Lord for a while and then leave. All of us have experienced that, I think everybody in this place who has been a Christian for any length of time has had the experience of knowing someone who professed faith in Christ, who identified outwardly with Christ, said they loved Christ, served Christ, came to church, got involved in Bible study, whatever it might have been and then at some point in time they just disappeared, spiritually defecting.

In 2 Timothy I remind you again, chapter 1 verse 15, he says Paul does to Timothy "Know this, that all they who are in Asia turned away from me." In chapter 4 and verse 10 he says, "Demas has forsaken me," and verse 16 he says, "At my first defense, no man stood with me but all men forsook me." Paul knew the experience of having people who claimed to be followers of Christ and associates in ministry who forsook him and in forsaking him rely forsook the Lord.

We said last time that Jesus knew the pain of that. In Luke 19, you'll remember, that as He looked at the city of Jerusalem He lamented over that city because of their unbelief and He actually wept, it says, and cried out, "If only you had known the things that belong to your peace." In other words, if only you knew what you had by way of opportunity in My coming, but you did not know and you rejected. Spiritual defection.

In 1 John we read about those in verse 19 of chapter 2 and that most important statement made there says, "They went out from us but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that it might be manifest that they were not all of us." And John says there were some who were around a while and left, defectors.

In Hebrews chapter 3 we read another New Testament portion that speaks to this matter. The writer of Hebrews calls for those who understand the message to believe and to sustain that belief in perseverance. In chapter 3 of Hebrews, verse 14, he says, "We are made partakers of Christ, true partakers, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." We're genuine if we hold on to the end. If we do not depart from the living God. If we do not harden our hearts and walk away from the truth we once said we believed.

And so, from last week when we looked at the Old Testament and from that brief look at the New Testament this week, we are reminded that spiritual defection is a common problem within the framework of God's work among men. Now as we come to John 6 I want you to look at verse 66 and I want verse 66 to set the pattern for an understanding of this chapter. Verse 66 says, "From that time, many of His disciples...not a few, but many...went back and walked no more with Him." Now everything in the chapter up to verse 66 leads to this. Everything that has gone on to this point sets up this kind of response. And it causes the Lord such great sadness that He asks a question of those who remain, particularly the Twelve in verse 67 and says, "You won't also go away, will you?" In other words, you're not going to leave Me also, are you, like all the rest?

There are many lessons in this chapter, I don't mean to say that because we're looking at spiritual defection that it's the only message here. In fact, there are many equally important ones that we could draw out of the chapter but I want for us to focus tonight on this matter of spiritual defection. The sorrow of the chapter from that viewpoint is overwhelming and we'll find Jesus leaning in the midst of His sorrow on divine sovereignty just to keep His balance. And though it doesn't say He wept, I'm assuming that He must have wept because of the sadness of this scene.

Now let's go back to the beginning of the chapter and I want to ask you a question and then I want you to begin to catalog in your mind what you see. What identifies a spiritual defector? How can we identify them? How can we anticipate that people will defect from the faith? And I'm going to give you a list, we'll see how far we get tonight, maybe we'll get through, it's likely that we may not but this is a long chapter. Let me give you what I see flowing out of this chapter, not so much explicitly taught but implied in the things that happen, what I believe to be identifying marks of a spiritual defector. And when you look around to see whether someone is genuine, when you want to know whether someone is going to stay true to the faith, these are the kinds of things that you can use as measuring sticks.

First of all, and we don't know that these are defectors yet, and so the things we see initially could be true of anyone but they turn out to be true of spiritual defectors. First of all, a spiritual defector is attracted by the crowd...he is attracted by the crowd. Verse 1, "After these things, Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee which is the Sea of Tiberius, and a great multitude followed Him because they saw His miracles which He did on those who were diseased."

Now this is where the spiritual defector first shows up. He is attracted by the crowd. And initially he is, frankly, indistinguishable from everybody else. It's a big crowd. And it's hard to tell who is going to be real and who is not. It's hard to tell who is going to leave and who is going to stay. But these defectors are in the crowd.

In verse 1 it says, "After these things," if you go back to chapter 5 verse 1 it says there was a feast of the Jews. If that feast was Passover then what happens in chapter 6 is a year later. If that feast was the feast of Tabernacles, then what happened in chapter 6 is six or seven months later. In that year or in that six or seven months of that same year many things happened in the life and ministry of Jesus, John doesn't record them. Matthew records them in chapter 4 through 15, Mark records them in chapter 1 through 7 and Luke records them in chapter 4 through 9 and what is recorded is the whole Galilean ministry of Christ, John skips over the whole thing and leaves it to Matthew, Mark and Luke. So "after these things" means after the Galilean ministry of Christ.

By this time in His Galilean ministry He has reached high, high levels of popularity among the people. He has literally banished disease from Palestine. He has healed thousands of people. He has delivered thousands of people from demons. He has taught again and again day after day week after week month after month and has created such popularity that everywhere He goes He is accompanied by a massive crowd. He is without question the most popular person in Galilee, maybe the most popular person in the history of Galilee. He is the event of their life time. They have never seen anyone who could heal, cast out demons, raise the dead and teach as this man taught.

Now Jesus is popular at this point. And it is admittedly always a bit dangerous when Jesus is popular. It is always a bit dangerous when Christianity is the "in" thing, when it is okay to be a Christian, when it is cool to be a Christian...to borrow the vernacular. When it is in to be a Christian, when Jesus is popular there is always the danger of attracting the shallow who run with the mood of the mob. The false disciple who will ultimately defect may initially be drawn by the crowd because he wants to be a part of what is popular. And I think even today Christianity has a certain amount of popularity that creates an environment which attracts the spiritual defector. It isn't as if being a Christian is going to cost you your life today, in fact, quite the opposite. Being identified with Jesus and even saying you're born again may be a bit in today. And consequently with the popularity of Christianity, there is an encroachment upon true Christianity by shallow men and women who ultimately will defect.

So, first of all, the spiritual defector is attracted by the crowd. Secondly, he is fascinated by the supernatural...he is fascinated by the supernatural. Verse 3, it says already in verse 2 that the people followed Him because they saw the things that He did on those who were diseased, and verse 3, "Jesus went up into a mountain and there He sat with His disciples." Now here is a moment of precious fellowship in which He retreats from this wonderseeking crowd. It must have been for the disciples who were there, an unspeakable privilege to sit with Him and hear Him, to feel His heart, to experience His love, to sense His burdens, to have a quiet moment with Jesus away from the crowd and touch Him in an intimate way. Now we don't know how many disciples there were there, by the way, the word "disciple" is a very big word, sometimes it refers to a very narrow group of twelve, sometimes it refers to a very large group, it even includes defectors because it's used in verse 66 of those who went away and didn't walk with Him anymore. So we don't know who was there, we can

assume the Twelve were there, perhaps, maybe less than that, maybe more than that.

But after a quiet moment with the Twelve, things begin to change. It was Passover time, verse 4 says, the feast of the Jews that was coming near and that meant there would be a lot of Jews on the road to Jerusalem and in the location where Jesus was they would be passing that way going south to Jerusalem. Consequently the multitude that would be normal would be swelled by the pilgrims moving to Jerusalem. And so the crowd was massive. And verse 5 says, "When Jesus then lifted up His eyes from the mountainside where He was with the disciples for a moment of retreat, He saw a great company come unto Him." Matthew says when Jesus saw them He had compassion on them as a sheep with no shepherd and He began to teach them many things. Mark and Luke say He began to heal all the sick who needed healing. So here came the crowd in verse 5, they came near and we find from the other records that Jesus taught them and healed them. That went on all day.

And when evening came, the disciples asked Jesus to send the people away for some food. He couldn't feed them, obviously, there was no resource for that. He was told by the disciples to get rid of them so that they might get something to eat. Now somewhere at this juncture Jesus speaks with Philip in verse 6...verse 5 rather. He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do." He said to Philip, "Where we going to get enough to feed these people?" It had already been suggested, as the other gospels record, that He should have sent them away. He didn't do that, He said, in fact, where we going to get the food to feed them? Now He said this to test him..to test whether he shared the Lord's compassion on the hungry crowd, to test whether he believed in the power of Christ, to test whether he could see Christ as a supplier of every need, to test whether he believed that Christ was greater than Moses who was God's instrument in the wilderness, to gather that provision which God provided for His wandering nation. So He said this really to test Philip's faith. Did Philip believe that He could provide? And Philip flunked.

Verse 7, "He said 200 denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them that everyone of them may take a little." In other words, he said we don't have the money to buy it. It never entered his mind that there might be another way. Never entered his mind that the Lord might have something supernatural in mind. You say, "Should it have entered his mind?" Yes it should have, he had been with Christ for the whole of the Galilean ministry and day after day after day after day he had seen miracle upon miracle upon miracle, why now is it that he has such difficulty in accepting that that's really what the Lord is trying to say? He failed the test.

But he wasn't alone, so did Andrew. Verse 8, "One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, Well there's a lad here, has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" Now here is the typical pragmatist. Here is the classic pragmatist whose first line is, "I've examined the resources and it can't be done, it is impossible." This is the little faith. He said, "I've checked it out, I found one boy, he's got five flat barley crackers and two pickled fish." What

they did was take their pickled fish and spread it on a barley cracker, that was lunch. It doesn't sound too appetizing, frankly, but that's what it was. And he was really saying, "But what are we going to do with that among all these people?" This is the pragmatist. This is not the visionary. This is not the dreamer or the man of great faith.

And the Lord proceeds in spite of the unbelief of Philip, in spite of the unbelief of Andrew to take them in their weakness and build their faith. And He does a miracle which builds their faith and the miracles primarily were to build the faith of people who already had faith, not to convince people who didn't. And so, in verse 10 Jesus said, "Make the men sit down, tell all the men to sit down, and there was much grass in the place." The Lord made sure it was a nice place. It wasn't a dusty hillside, it wasn't a desert slope, it was a nice grassy place. It is a beautiful spot, by the way, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the early evening and that's where they were, and the cool breeze comes down from the hillsides, as it always does at night there. "So the men sat down and in number they were about 5,000." And we can assume 5,000 men means about 5,000 women and 20,000 children, I suppose, or 15 or whatever. That's a large crowd. "And when Jesus took those little barley crackers that that little boy had, five little crackers, He gave thanks." He prayed a prayer, Thank You, Lord for these. And the disciples must have been peeking and looking at each other and wondering while He was praying what in the world He had in mind. And then it says simply, "He distributed to the disciples."

Now it becomes immediately apparent that this is a very very lowkey presentation of a monumental miracle. How do you give five crackers to 12 disciples? Mathematically it just doesn't fly. "And the disciples then gave to them that were sitting down." How do you do that? Somebody suggested they took very small bites, but I'm inclined to believe that's not the case. Because it says at the end of verse 11, "He gave the fish and they ate as much as they wanted." He created those crackers and He created that fish, He did a miracle...miraculous feeding. How blessed we are, how blessed we are to see how Jesus uses little to make much. And aren't you glad...aren't you glad that the gifts of His grace are dispensed by the richness of His grace and not the poverty of our faith? Aren't you glad? Aren't you glad we do not receive what we can believe to receive and nothing more else we would be paupers?

Jesus never scorned the little. God never scorned the little. God used the tears of a baby to move the heart of Pharaoh's daughter and ultimately free Israel. God used a shepherd stick to work mighty miracles in Egypt. God used a sling and a stone to conquer a whole nation. God used a little girl to bring the great Naaman to the prophet Elisha. God used a widow and her little meal to sustain that prophet. God used a child to teach His disciples lessons on humility. He used a donkey to speak the truth. He used a small lunch to feed thousands of people. And so the miracle took place. And verse 13 says, "Therefore they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained and above that which they had eaten."

They picked up everything. You say, "What was this? Keep Galilee clean? What were they doing?" Well, some suggested it was for economy, they were saving it, food was so precious in those days. Everybody worked most of his life just to eat. Some say that the reason it marks out that there was so much left was to show the abundance. Back in verse 12 it says, "When they were filled," and the word means foddered up like an animal who has eaten everything he can possibly contain. Some say the twelve baskets were for the 12 disciples, that's a little hard to believe because the word for basket here is kophinos, we get the word coffin from it. I can imagine them being hungry but not that hungry. The kophinos was a very large basket. So probably it was not one basket for each disciple but it might have been one basket used by each of the twelve to collect what remained. Large capacity wicker baskets that probably had handles and may indicate that each of the twelve disciples took one of those and gathered what was left.

But what I want you to see in this is this, this while being a faithbuilder for the true disciple really is the whole issue for the spiritual defector. He is there just because of this. Here is the real attraction for the crowd. This drew the crowd. They were fascinated, back in verse 2, by His miracles. It was always that way. The miracles drew them. They could sense that in those miracles and in that miracle power was the answer to all their problems. In Matthew chapter 4 verse 24, His fame went throughout all Syria, they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with diverse diseases and torments...those who were possessed with demons, those who were epileptic, those who had the palsy or paralysis and He healed them and there followed Him great multitudes.

Sure...sure...everybody wants to be healthy, everybody wants to be healed, everybody wants provision made. And it was very obvious that his kind of ministry would attract what I like to call the thrill seekers...the people who wanted to see the miracles. In Matthew 12:15, "Great multitudes followed Him and He healed them all." And that's always going to draw a crowd. Chapter 14 verse 14 of Matthew, "Jesus went forth, saw a great multitude, was moved with compassion toward them and healed their sick." And His ministry went on like that in His ministry in Galilee and they came for that, for healing and now for food. These are the thrillseekers who are chasing the signs and wonders that fascinate them, they are preoccupied with the healings, they are preoccupied with the mystery of the supernatural and how it can be used in their behalf and for their benefit.

In Matthew 12:38, "Certain of the scribes and the Pharisees answered saying to Jesus, Master, we would see a sign from you, do another trick, do something supernatural, show us this power." In chapter 16 of Matthew, "The Pharisees and Sadducees came and desired that He would show them a sign from heaven." Ever and always they sought for the supernatural, they were preoccupied with the miraculous.

In John 2:18 the Jews said, "What sign do You show us to make us believe?" In fact, Jesus said in John 4:48, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you won't believe." And so there are always those people whose interest in Jesus Christ is nothing more than a preoccupation with the supernatural.

They want a miracle. They want a healing. They want some divine intervention. They want to buy in to that power. They are reminiscent, by the way, of Simon...Simon in chapter 8 of Acts. Simon was a sorcerer. Simon bewitched the people, giving it out that he was some great one and everybody listened to him. And everybody said, "This man is the great power of God." But when he saw in Philip the real power of God, he realized he didn't have that kind of power, he was amazed, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. And so he comes to the Apostle and he says, "Give me that power," Acts 8:19, "Give me that power." And Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you." He was going to buy it. He offered him money. And he said, "You're in the gaul of bitterness and you're in the bond of iniquity and you better pray the Lord will forgive you."

So, here was Simon, a typical thrillseeker. He wanted to buy into the supernatural power. Listen, be very aware of people who are attracted to Christianity because it's the in thing and who are attracted because of the supernatural, because they're looking for miracles and signs and wonders, they're looking for deliverances and healings and provisions. So many many people have been swept up in the Charismatic Movement because that is their preoccupation. And they drop out at an alarming rate because they do not get what they think they'll get in the matter of supernatural provision.

There's a third thing that marks the spiritual defector and that is not only does he follow the crowd and not only is he fascinated by the supernatural but he thinks only of earthly things. His concern and preoccupation has only to do with earthly things. Verse 14, "Then those men when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did said, This is of a truth that prophet." Now that is a technical term, you can underline the two words "that prophet" that is a technical term for the Messiah found in Deuteronomy 18:15 and repeated in Acts 3:22 and 23. That prophet which is to come was a prophecy of the Messiah. So they're saying this is the Messiah. This is the Messiah. They are affirming that. The one who will bring the kingdom to Israel.

And notice their response. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and bow down and worship Him," does it say that? It doesn't say that. They weren't going to come and worship Him. They were going to come and take Him by...what?...by force and make Him their king. Why? They wanted free food, that's what they wanted. They didn't think about the Messiah of God as the anointed King of God to whom they should bow the knee in homage and adoring praise, all they had in mind was an earthly kingdom. All they could think of was overthrow the Roman yoke and give us free food. This is it, folks, no more work, no more toil in the sun, no more plowing the field, no more culling out of the soil all the rocks to plant the vineyard, no more watering, no more crushing the grapes, no more beating our food to make it...beating our grain to make it into flour, no more of that, no more slaughtering of the animals, no more work, we can all sit in the shade of the tree and just wait till He creates the next meal.

All they could see was the preoccupation of their own minds for the liberation of Israel from Roman power and the provision of free food. He was the great delivering prophet but where is the respect?

They're going to take Him by force and make Him do what they want Him to do. Boy, this is so common today. Those people who think that Jesus Christ is someone who does whatever you demand that He do. And it always has only to do with earthly things. That's that "name it and claim it" stuff again, where you claim money and success and riches and a new house and a new car and a new wardrobe and whatever you want. One wellknown preacher in our area who preaches that kind of thing, I was told, his congregation decided to buy him a new Rolls Royce for his birthday, brand new. I don't know, I think about 150 thousand dollars. They gave it to him. He said, "I don't like the interior, take it back and do it the way I want it." They took it back and redid the interior and gave it to him, again. And that's okay, you see, because that's what that system is all about. Everything is here and now. They call that faith to believe and you receive because you believe, and I call that stupidity of the first order. And it isn't God who gives you a Rolls Royce, believe me. That's not in the plan. That's not in the promise. But there are people who come in to Christianity, following the crowd, fascinated by the supernatural thinking only of earthly things. That's really all they're concerned about. What can I get to satisfy myself? And instead of worshiping the promised Messiah, instead of falling before Him, they want to push Him into their own earthly enterprises and use Him to get what they want. They want to do what these people wanted to do, they want to take Him by force and make Him their king. And then tell Him what to do. They see Him like a genie to fulfill their wishes. Men want comfort in sorrow, strength in difficulty, peace in trouble, health in sickness, they don't want any sacrifice. And this kind of carnal enthusiasm here and now has no place with Christ...no place.

The shallow follower has no place of the spiritual, no sense of the eternal, no sense of the divine plan of God, he lives for now. It's all here. And Jesus is somebody who delivers, that's all. And when He doesn't deliver, you're gone. Like the lady who called a wife of an elder in our church and said, "I tried your Jesus and He didn't work. I was sick and now I find it's cancer, my husband was leaving me and now he did and has another woman. My son was in a mental institution and he's going to have to stay. Your Jesus didn't work."

So drawn by the crowd and fascinated by the supernatural and thinking only of earthly things, the defectors are being made evident to us. Fourthly, and this fits right in to what I just said, the defector has no desire for true worship. He has no interest in true worship. Oh, he might want to hold hands, sway back and forth and get some kind of emotional goosebump, but he has no feeling for true worship.

I received a letter yesterday from a letter who said, "I have been coming to Grace Community Church, I'm leaving to go to another church because you people don't know how to worship God." Well what this dear lady means is we don't know how to give her emotional highs the way she thinks she needs them and people confuse that with worship. Nothing wrong with feeling good, but don't confuse it necessarily with worship. Worship is more directed toward God and how I feel about Him and how He feels about me than it is about how I feel about myself, or how I feel within myself.

Notice verse 16, we see this lack of desire of true worship. And it's sort of really a side light but I think you'll understand the point. "When the evening was come, His disciples went down to the sea. And they entered in a boat and went over the sea to Capernaum. It was dark and Jesus wasn't come to them. And as they're going along the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew." Now John is remembering this by the Holy Spirit 70 years after it happened, 40 years earlier Matthew and Mark had already written about this incident on the sea but John is recording the same thing by the Spirit's remembrance.

The disciples don't have any idea why Jesus sent the crowd away, He sent the crowd away. They can't read His mind. They don't know why He didn't want to be king. They don't know what was going on. Maybe they thought He should have been king. Maybe they agreed with the crowd. But Jesus wanted to be alone. And He asked to be alone. And so the disciples got in a boat and left. He commanded them, Matthew 14:22, get in a boat and go. Go ahead of Him. And He said I'll follow.

Verse 18 tells us that from the ravines, those deep and narrow valleys and gorges that circle the Sea of Galilee between the hills to the west came those strong blasts of wind that come rushing down and gain speed as they accelerate down the slopes of that area and they suddenly hit that lake surface which is about 682 feet below sea level and they stir that thing until it boils like a caldron. Verse 19 says that they tried to row and they only rowed about 25 or 30 furlongs, they didn't go very far. They fought all night to go about three or four miles. And they're out in the middle of the sea, they can't get where they're going. Matthew says it's the fourth watch of the night, so it's now between three and six A.M., they've been going all night and they're nowhere. The storm is so intense, night has deepened and hour after hour they fight the oars against the storm and all they've done is gone three or four miles and they're sitting out in the middle of the water being bounced around like a cork in a storm and fear reigns supreme in their hearts.

And verse 19 says they see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat and they were afraid. I understand that. So do you. They were petrified. To put it mildly, they were frightened right out of their wits to see Jesus walking on the water. They might even have thought it was some kind of a harbinger of their own death by drowning. Peter by this time, seeing Jesus, you remember what happened, don't you, to Peter in Matthew 14, he jumped out of the boat. Impetuous, runs to Christ, then takes a look around himself and realizes what's going on and almost drowns because of his unbelief. They come back to the boat and when they came back into the boat, a most wonderful thing occurred. Jesus stilled the storm, calmed the storm and then something very beautiful and very significant happened, it says in Matthew 14:33, "Then they that were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying of a truth, Thou art the Son of God."

He had said, "It is I, be not afraid," in John 6:20. They received Him into the boat. Then Matthew adds they worshiped Him. Never do the sham believers do that. That moment of worship that sits in

the middle of this whole chapter is the only moment of worship. The crowd never does that because theirs is not the perspective of worship because, you see, they don't come to God to give, they come to God to...what?...to get. They do not fall down in adoring wonder before Christ, they're not interested in offering Him their praise, they are interested in getting from Him their wishes. No humility, no sense of awe, no adoring wonder but it marks those that are real. They worshiped Him. They said, "Of a truth You're the Son of God." What a wonderful place. They turned that little boat into a sanctuary in the midst of the sea.

And so, in a reverse sense we make a contrast at this point and we conclude that spiritual defectors are drawn by the crowd, fascinated by the supernatural, thinking only of earthly things, and they show no desire for worship at all because for them it isn't a matter of giving, it's a matter of getting. Invariably these kind of people walk away saying, "Oh, I got a lot out of that," or, "Oh, I didn't get anything out of that." Like the lady who said I don't come to your church anymore because this other one makes me feel better. No desire for worship. This marks so often the defector.

Fifthly, and this fits right in as well, the defector is a seeker of personal gain. He is a seeker of personal prosperity. Verse 22, "The day following...now it's morning...the disciples who stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there except that one into which His disciples." That people are now on the other side of the sea and they see no other boat except the one into which His disciples were entered. "And Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat but that His disciples were gone away alone." You get the picture? They knew the disciples left in a boat and Jesus did not. Now they're on the other side and the disciples there and so is Jesus but only one boat and they can't figure out how Jesus got there. And the answer, of course, is He walked right across the sea. They didn't know that. They were bewildered. And where is Jesus, they're saying.

What they're really saying is "We want breakfast. We had dinner, we want breakfast." I imagine that those little pieces of barley and pickled fish were the best thing they had ever eaten because they were untouched by the curse. Jesus made them in His own hands so they would have been untouched by the curse. Whatever prefall food was, that must have been it cause there never was any barley grown in any ground, He just made it and there never was any fish in any water, He just made it. So it was unstained by the Fall and must have been something to taste. And so they said that was so good we're back for breakfast.

"And so they came, other boats, from Tiberius near the place where they did eat bread after the Lord had given thanks. And the people when they saw that Jesus wasn't there, neither His disciples, took boats and came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus." They're looking all around for Him now. Bewildered that He isn't there and he knew He hadn't gone in the boat of the disciples, they don't know where He is and they're hungry. And they all want to eat so they come all the way over to Capernaum in all these boats, like a flotilla land in Capernaum. See, eating was the main cause of all their efforts in life. Agriculture was a way of existence and free food was a ticket to instant

retirement. They didn't have restaurants, like we do.

Verse 25, "And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said, Rabbi, when did You come here?" I mean, they really abuse Him. Do they believe this is that prophet, the Messiah of the Old Testament, and do they talk to Him like this? They've rode across the lake for free breakfast. If they wanted free breakfast before they started rowing, you can imagine how much they want it now. They've burned up all the calories from the night before. How did You get here and when did You come? Meet my needs, supply what I want. The effect of it is to say, "What are You doing over here when You knew we were over there? How dare You."

Jesus answered them in verse 26, "Truly, truly I say to you, you seek me not because you saw the miracles but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled." You are so crass. You just want breakfast. "Stop laboring for the food that perishes." Why do you do this for a perishing food? How earthbound. In verse 26 He says, "And you were filled," that word chortazo again means to be foddered up, it's the same word used earlier. They ate to their hearts' content. Boy, are these people ever candidates for the prosperity gospel. They wanted their desires met on a spot and Jesus was going to do it or have to answer why He didn't. This is very selfish. They seek only personal prosperity. Watch out for a person like that. Watch out for a person like that.

Drawn by the crowd, fascinated by the supernatural, thinking only of earthly things, having no desire for worship, seeking only personal prosperity, sixthly, he makes demands on God. And we've already seen that but it comes clear in verse 28 and following, he makes demands on God. Here comes demand number one, Jesus has just said, "Why do you want to do this? Stop laboring for the food that perishes. If you're going to labor, labor for that food which endures to everlasting life which the Son of Man shall give unto you for Him that the Father sealed." Why don't you seek what is really important instead of just what is earthly?

And then they come with the demands. They totally ignore what He said. He just gave them a call to salvation but they're not interested in salvation, they're interested in breakfast. And this is what they said, verse 28, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" You know what that means? Hey, we don't want to follow You around all the time to get food, just tell us how to do it. How do we get the power? Give us the power. They were power hungry. So that we can work the works of God. It's just like Simon in Acts 8, we'll pay you, we'll buy it. What do we do to work the work of God? What do we do to do this?

They're making demands on Him now. And Jesus said unto them, "This is the work of God that you believe on Him whom He has sent." Well they ignored that, that went off like water on a duck's back. And in verse 30, "They said therefore unto Him, What sign You going to show us then that we may see and believe You?" Are You kidding? What do You work? They're still pushing for breakfast. "Do a miracle, prove we should believe in You." Well, do you need more proof? Banishing disease

from Palestine, raising the dead, healing the sick, casting out demons, feeding 2030 thousand people, what do you mean show me a sign that you may believe? But the point is not that, they didn't want to believe they wanted food. And the gnawing in their stomachs blurred their minds, overpowered their hearts. They make demands. Give us the power...give us the food...prove Yourself.

For the thrillseekers, beloved, there are never enough signs, there are never enough wonders, there are never enough miracles, they always have to have more. And shallow disciples are sustained by the promise of more and more and more miracles, more and more signs and wonders. If you come in to Christianity on that basis, boy, you fight a battle to stay in there once you realize that those things are not really happening. That's why the fallout in the Charismatic Movement is so great because what they think is there is not there at all, and when they find that out they're hardpressed.

So, they suggest, "You should at least do what Moses did," verse 31, "our fathers did eat manna in the desert. As it is written he gave them bread from heaven to eat." Oh, this is really subtle. Moses...they're sharp...Moses...You should at least do what Moses did. If Moses said that a prophet greater than he would come and You're that prophet, then You certainly ought to be one up on Moses. Hey, You provided one meal, my friend, Moses gave manna daily to millions of people for years. You see their point. Come on...they're still after the free food. Can You top Moses? This is their challenge. They weren't looking for signs to be proving that He was Christ, the Son of God, they were looking for free food. It was that crass. They were seeking for themselves. They were making demands. And they demand Him to do it. "Go on, top Moses. How can You be greater than Moses? Moses brought manna down from heaven and fed maybe two million people every day for years and years and years and years and You think it's a big deal to give us dinner?"

Hidden in this demand for more miracles is a desire for a perpetual food supply. The thrillseekers always want more, they never get enough. Jesus answers in verse 32 and says, "Verily, verily I say to you, Moses didn't give you that bread from heaven." You better go back and reread that. "Moses didn't give it to you, My Father gives you the true bread from heaven." Moses only collected it, he gave directions on how to collect it, he didn't give it. It was only manna, too, He says. But I give you true bread.

Listen, the spiritual defector is not looking for soul satisfaction. No. He's looking for outward fulfillment. My Father who will give you the true bread. Verse 33, "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Moses gave you physical bread. The true bread is spiritual bread. Manna couldn't prevent death. That whole generation including Moses died in the wilderness, manna was for Israel. The true bread is for the world, He says. "Yes, I'm greater than Moses, I give you true bread."

Verse 34, "They said to Him, Lord, ever more give us this bread." Isn't that amazing? They didn't want it just then, they wanted it for good. Keep giving it to us. We want you to promise to give it to us permanently and it will satisfy our hunger. They didn't even know what they were saying. They had no idea what they were talking about. Simply selfseeking.

So the shallow disciple misses the whole point of coming to God, the whole point of coming to Christ, and shows up to make demands on God, to perform at their command. Seventh, and I'm going to stop at this point because I want to share a letter with you, seventh, the spiritual defector seeks no personal relationship. Oh boy, this is important. He seeks no personal relationship.

Verse 33, back there again, "For the bread of heaven," doesn't say is given by He who comes down from heaven, it says, "The bread of heaven...what?...is He." Who's that? "Christ who cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world." Verse 35, "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life, he that comes to Me shall never hunger and he that believes on Me shall never thirst. I am the bread. It is not what I can give you, it is what I am in you."

Now listen, the true disciple, mark it, the true disciple seeks Christ, the defector seeks what Christ can give. Come to Me, believe in Me, I am that bread. Verse 36, "But I said unto you that you also have seen Me and believe not." They didn't want Him, they only wanted His power. They only wanted His provision. They didn't want Him.

And then in a very sad soliloquy Jesus speaks almost defensively and for the first time it's as if He's gaining His balance over the sadness of rejection. In verse 37 He says, in a soliloquy, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." What does He mean by that? He's so sad, He says, "You've seen Me but you won't believe." And in the sorrow of saying you won't believe He steps back and says, "But all that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me." And you see in the midst of the sadness of their unbelief He leans on the sovereign electing grace of God and says, "But even your unbelief can't thwart the eternal plan of God."

It's marvelous, beloved, to find that in the midst of sadness over unbelief, Jesus finds His footing on the sovereign grace of God. I know I find mine there. When you preach the Word of God and people reject and your heart aches and you say, "Why won't they hear and why won't they believe?" The only place you can stand is on the sovereignty of God and you say, "Yes, I know they're rejecting, I know they're saying no but I must remember that all that the Father gives will come." And so in the midst of the mystery of unbelief one stands on the ground of sovereign grace. And verse 38 says, "And after all, I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me. My heart cries out, Father, that all should be saved, but after all, I'm here to do that thing which is Your will. And this is the Father's will who hath sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I should lose nothing but raise it up again at the last day."

In verses 37 to 39 you have what I think to be one of the most profound insights into the person of Christ given anywhere in Scripture. Christ found His own support, His own strength in the midst of sadness over rejection by standing on the sovereign eternal electing plan of God and saying you won't come but I know that all that the Father gives will come. And I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but to do His will. And this is the Father's will who sent Me, that of all that He's given Me I will lose none and they'll all be raised up at the last day, at the glorious resurrection day, they'll all be there. Even your unbelief can't thwart the plan of God.

So He finds His balance on the sovereign side. And then He repeats the same idea in verse 40, "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life and I will raise Him up at the last day." Here He turns the corner again and He says this...underline the word "everyone,"...wherever you have sovereignty you also have the wideness of the invitation. Yes, only those the Father gives will come but whoever comes I will receive. And everyone who sees the Son and believes will have everlasting life. Whenever you read about God's sovereign electing grace, that does not preclude a wide extensive invitation to everyone to come. How that's harmonized is God's problem, not mine. And so the Lord looks and says you won't believe but everyone the Father draws will believe and everyone who wants to believe will be saved. And He finds His footing again.

So, Jesus speaks of a personal relationship, come to Me, He says, come to Me. Everyone who sees the Son, who believes Him, everyone who takes this bread, who is Me, verse 37, "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me." The thing I want you to understand is always it is a relationship. He is the bread we eat. He is the one to whom we come. His is the life we live. And the true disciples pursue the relationship. He seeks the Savior not just what the Savior can give. Defectors have no desire for a relationship with Christ. They only want power, they only want provision, they are drawn by the crowd, fascinated by the supernatural, thinking only of earthly things, they have no desire for worship. They seek only personal prosperity. They make demands on God. They seek no personal relationship at all. They only seek to gain for themselves.

I want to share a letter that may serve to illustrate this. I just received this. Listen carefully. I met this man a couple of weeks ago in Florida and he wrote me.

"Dear John, My family ties to Jehovah's Witnesses go back three generations, nearly to the time of Pastor Russell who founded it. In fact, my father was arrested and went to prison for three years during World War II for refusing the judge's offer to let him serve as an apprentice in the forestry service. As you know, Jehovah's Witnesses are conscientious objectors but the Watchtower Society has gone so far as to prohibit alternative service for its young men. As a result, thousands of men like my father have gone through their lives with criminal records. When I left high school in 1971 I immediately went in to the pioneer work, that is full time doortodoor evangelism. I rose to the ranks of

the local congregation serving as a ministerial servant, deacon, finally as an elder and pastor. So zealous for the house to house evangelism that I was appointed as service overseer (the pastor whose special ministry is to oversee the local congregations preaching activity and train new ones). I might add that my appointment was made when I was barely 27 years old and it is official Watchtower policy that no one is eligible for an eldership until aged 30. I only dwell on this to show you that I was no fence sitter Witness, I was right in the forefront, leading the charge against Babylon the great, the worldwide empire of false religion which meant everybody but Jehovah's Witnesses.

"But some very strange things were going on in my mind. I was aware, of course, of the dismal failure of the society's prophecy that the world would end in October of 1975. But in the heady excitement of those days, we were growing so fast then that we could hardly keep up with it, some pioneers I knew even had waited...even had waiting lists of people who wanted to study the Bible with them. We had learned to live with the disappointment. But in late 1979 I was shocked when the editor of the Watchtower was disfellowshipped for apostasy. He said that all Christians were in the new covenant, not just an elite 144 thousand. He was similarly(?) ousted for...someone else was similarly(?) ousted for agreeing with him and was later disfellowshipped. I started to ask questions and found no satisfying answers.

"In May of 1984 we lost our home in a fire. Now one thing about Jehovah's Witnesses, they take care of their own. Later that day we had another home, clothes, money and food. It was incredible. But during the days after the fire, some very unusual things happened. The local Presbyterian church showed up with a check for \$200. The Baptists brought us a new set a dishes. A deacon from another church sent us a check for \$100. And people from many different churches were on our doorstep each day with more until we finally had to beg them to stop. Something was wrong. I knew that as a Christian I was to love my neighbor. The Watchtower Society told me that meant that I was to preach to him. But here were complete strangers, members of other churches, so concerned about me and my family and these were the same people I considered enemies of Jehovah, eternally damned and my wavering faith began to shake.

"Driving through the Everglades one day in the summer of 1984 I tuned in to your broadcast. I don't know what made me stop. I would like to believe that the Holy Spirit's hand was on me. I listened, although I admit sheepishly that I can't recall the subject you were discussing and I was fascinated. The truth came crackling out of that old dashboard like a thunderbolt. Here was a preacher that was different. No hellfire screeching, no pleading for money, no prayer cloths or giant Jesus dolls, just the Bible. The emotional strain that I was under made me forget the contents of those early broadcasts but whenever I could I would tune across the static until I found your voice. Often you would make me angry. When you called Jesus God one day, I shut the radio off in disgust. But the next moment I turned it back on, listening intently. I couldn't understand how He could be God and yet God's Son, but I kept listening.

"Meantime I began to study my Bible as never before in my life. I knew my proof texts like few other Witnesses, in fact, disproving the deity of Christ was one of my specialties, I loved to tangle with students at the local Bible college, priding myself on an ability to win debates. But I really didn't know the Bible. I began to rebuild my library after the fire and I was given many of the society's older publications where I found shocking inconsistencies with the history of the society as I had heard it. And I began to get new study tools for my library, books that the society often quoted in support of their interpretation of Scripture. I was likewise astounded that they often quoted these authorities out of context and usually made them say the exact opposite of what they said.

"But it was the deity of Jesus Christ that ate at me day after day. I found out that as one of Jehovah's Witnesses I couldn't accept Christ as my mediator since I didn't claim to be one of the 144 thousand in the new covenant. And day after day you spoke of Him as Lord, as Savior, as God and still God's Son. One night in a motel room unable to sleep, sure that I was going insane, I prayed to Jehovah to help me know the truth. I told Him I didn't care if He was the triune God, it didn't matter what my wife thought or my father thought or the society thought. I just needed to know Him. That night through my tears I read the gospel of John. By morning, exhausted yet exhilarated, I knew who Jehovah God was. And I knew that He came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ the Son of God to die for my sins. And you know what? There were no trumpets and I didn't speak in tongues. I had no miraculous gifts other than the absolute certainty that I knew my Lord for the first time in my life."

Isn't that marvelous? There is the essence of true discipleship, it seeks a relationship.

"That left me over the course of the next year or so to do some fancy foot work in my pastoral duties, especially my congregational teaching. Words began to disappear from my vocabulary and other words began to appear in their place. Several times I was told, 'You sure talk about Jesus a lot. Why don't you talk about Jehovah, after all, He's the Father?' I would agree but that gave me an opportunity to witness and your commentary on Hebrews was invaluable. I would show how the Old Testament quotes that applied to Jehovah were applied to Jesus by the New Testament writers, showing His exalted position as the Son of God. One night I expressed to a pioneer friend that I believed that Jesus had not returned invisibly in 1914 but that He would visibly return in the very near future. We shared quite a matter of Scriptures about this.

"A few nights later a couple joined us for dinner. I had converted the husband to the Jehovah's Witnesses when we were teenagers and we had pioneered together for several years. We had had many discussions and like me he was beginning to see just who Jesus really was. In fact, the week before we had taught our midweek Bible study group that when we worshiped Jehovah we are worshiping Jesus. I was out of town that night but I knew that it caused a considerable stir.

"My wife asked me a question about the 144 thousand. I looked at my friend, he winked and so I dove in. Before the night was over we discussed the new covenant, the Rapture, some glaring perversions in the text of the society's New World translation of the Bible and the deity of Christ. It was a lot for one night, we talked for five hours. I was really high. I felt that God was really using me to witness for Him to people that bore His ineffable name, but who really didn't know Him. I was sure that along with many others I had become aware of we could change the organization into a mighty force for Christ. I was wrong.

"I quit attending the Kingdom Hall. And so I was unable to reach as many Witnesses as before, but they started to come to me asking why I quit. The best things were to happen in my family. During the stress of my heresy trial, my wife turned her life over to Christ. Unsure of who was right, feeling perhaps that I was under demonic control and yet afraid that everything that she had believed was going down the tubes, she cried out to God to help her and He did. My father, likewise a loyal Witness as was his mother before him, began to read his Bible too. He has served the Watchtower Society in many prominent position over the years, even in training schools for new elders. After reading the complete Bible in the last three months, he too has come to the startling conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord. He just resigned his position and is devoting himself to intense Bible study. My mother, Bible in hand, has acknowledge that Jesus is our God and Savior and we have begun a serious deprogramming of our two children. And I have been encouraged too that all across America and the world thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses are facing the fact that they are part of a bankrupt cult system and are turning to the true God for help. I don't know where He will lead me in the years ahead but wherever it is I want to be diligent found of Him in peace without spot, blameless when He returns for me."

Isn't that great? You see, (applause), you see, here is a man who sought and found a relationship. When you look at someone and you analyze whether they might be a spiritual defector or not, run that little inventory by and take a good look at the things that we've mentioned tonight. And I've just not even completed all that I want to say to you. When you see a person drawn by the crowd, fascinated by the supernatural who thinks only of earthly things, has no desire for worship, seeks personal prosperity, wants to make demands on God and does not hunger for a personal relationship with the living God through Christ, you have a potential spiritual defector. And as we shall see, it's this kind of attitude that ultimately results in verse 66, they turn their back and walk away. I submit that perhaps tonight we should examine our own hearts to see whether we seek the relationship or whether we seek only what we can get. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we just thank You so much for tonight. I thank You for the men who sang, who are representative of a generation of men preparing to go out and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, who are willing and called and ready to preach truth, to call men to true discipleship. But, Father, we know and they will experience throughout their ministry what all of us experience, that there are many who come for a while and then defect. God, help us to preach to that, to call men to

true discipleship and true faith, to call them to a relationship, to take the living bread and not seek only that which perishes. I pray that there's no one in this place who will leave as a casualty to the faith, an eternally damned soul who once stood in the midst of the light but walked away. May there be no one here of whom it can be said you have seen the Son but you believe not. May every heart here seek that true relationship and all that means.

While your heads bowed for a moment, if you don't know Christ, if there's any question at all in your mind about your faith, about your relationship, make it right. Silently in prayer speak to God, give your life to Christ, say yes I believe, yes I want to know Christ. I'm not so concerned with what I get, it's not things I want, it's Him. It's not what He can give, it's Him. The beautiful beautiful melody that was played this morning, "Jesus the very thought of Thee, with sweetness fills my breast, but sweeter far Thy face to see, and in Thy presence rest." The consuming desire of the heart of a true believer is to seek the Lord...to seek to know Him. If that's not your heart, something's wrong. You may be a spiritual defector who hasn't yet defected but will if there's not a genuine relationship.

Father, thank You for what You've given us in the Word tonight. We bless Your name for the Savior's sake. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).