

## Sobering Last Thoughts John 6:66-71

Well we come to the end of this amazing and glorious and uplifting chapter but the same time very depressing and sobering. It causes us to reflect on our own faith and why we follow Jesus, and even the ministry that we have had in other individuals' lives who have left the faith. It indicates how fickle the human heart in the face of such glorious proof that Jesus is the Christ and life is found in him alone.

We have just see the vast majority of the wider followers of Jesus have departed from him. They have essentially renounced his teachings and claims on their lives. This was the same group that was fed miraculously in the wilderness. They have now departed. Jesus looks at the small band of twelve that is left and asks the simple question in verse 67, "**Do you want to go away as well?**" Will you depart from Christ because you do not like the message? It is amazing that in the end people want to be the final arbiter of truth. They want to decide what is right and wrong, and if there is a teaching that they do not like, even if spoken by God they will reject it and walk away. And it is amazing how we have seen that even in our own assembly that there are many that sat where you sat but are no longer following Christ, and have rejected the very Lord that they once professed. They followed Christ, came near to Christ but were never truly believers in the Christ of the Gospel.

And we have the classic answer from Peter the spokesman of the twelve in verses 68-69, "**Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'**" If Christ is Lord and Saviour then where else can one go to have eternal life? If He is God in human flesh, and there is no other God then where is one to go? For the believer there is no where else to go. He cannot go backward because there is nothing backward to go to. Christ is our all. And it is significant that Peter says of Christ, "**You have the words of eternal life.**" After all the miracles such as the turning of water into wine, the healing of the paralytic, the feeding of the five thousand, and the walking on the water, it is the words of Christ that are important. Light began to dawn. They began to hear Christ not just see Christ. He truly is the Holy One of God. And that phrase was often used of God by the scribes. They would call God the Holy One of Israel. Here is the Holy One of God, none other one that is one with God but also God himself.

And now tonight we look at verses 70-72 which is Jesus' response to Peter. And we all love Peter. We love him because he is at times so enthusiastic and at other times so wrong. And we see that mixture of joy, pride, enthusiasm and presumption in each of us. And these words to conclude this chapter almost act as a climax. And Peter had gotten so much right in what he said about Christ and their trust in him. But there need correction and clarification. And these words are necessary also in our thoughts. This is a mild correction. It is not like the "get me behind me" rebuke that Jesus gives to Peter over in Matthew 16. There is a need to correct and teach them necessary Biblical truth.

And correction in our thoughts always have to take place in the Scripture. We think that we have everything figured out, but the Scriptures should be always altering and challenging our thoughts and life. We get in a dangerous position when we think

that we have everything figured out. God is always changing and humbling us through the knowledge of Christ. The question is: are we still learning? Are we still being corrected and changed? Are we still being humbled under the mighty hand of Christ? I want us to look at these two corrections, and they should do two things. One is that they help us understand our salvation, but they should also sober us with the spiritual danger of unbelief and therefore should cause us to draw near to Christ.

1. We need to see that salvation is of Christ. V. 70.

We always want to take credit for something in our life when it pertains to our relationship with God. We always want to find some reason to boast. And the gospel is such a humbling message. It humbles us. Not only did Christ have to come and pay that penalty but left to myself I would never choose Christ. It is amazing because even the Christian disciplines such as Bible study and church attendance and prayer should have the effect of humbling us because we see our desperate need and the hardness of sin and the blindness of pride, and we recognize what he has done. But if we are not looking at our hearts and letting us God reveal himself and show us ourselves all those disciplines can cause pride rather than seeing God's absolute sovereignty in salvation.

And the Lord Jesus might have heard a little pride growing in Peter with this profession of faith in Jesus as the Holy One of God. Notice verse 69 again, "**and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.**" Notice "we have believed" and we "have come to know." It is almost as the crowds, that large group of disciples depart from Jesus, pride wallows up that they had gotten the message. We have been smart enough, observant enough and spiritual enough to realize that life is found in you and you alone. And it is just like Jesus says hold on here, hold on with the "we." And look at what he says, "**Did I not choose you, the twelve?**" We almost expect Jesus to say at this time, this is great, come on in for a group hug. You got it. But he reminds him and them and us of God's - of Jesus' absolute sovereignty in salvation.

And it is not like this is something new at this point but has been one of the main points throughout the Bread of Life sermon. Look at verse 37, "**All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.**" Look at verse 44, "**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.**" Look at verse 65, "**And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'**" And now we have in this verse, "**Did I not choose you, the twelve?**" Peter needs to know and we need to know that salvation is by God's sovereign choice and grace. It is by his specific choice of individuals who will believe on Christ. In fact he says the same thing to Peter over in Matthew 16 after Peter says, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God," Jesus says in 16:17, "**Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.**" Peter's faith just like ours did not arise in us but was God's working and doing. None of us can claim an air of superiority over others.

And we all need this constant clarification in our lives because the thing that we struggle with more than we think is pride, pride that we are better than others. Even though we do not do it cognitively, we are always trying to be glory robbers. We are

always trying to make life about us rather than God. We are truly to make salvation about us rather than God. We want some credit, somehow to say that we are better than others. But Paul makes it so clear to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, **“ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”**

Here is the humbling truth - we did not choose ourselves. We were chosen by God by his grace and by his grace alone. There is nothing great about ourselves. There is nothing that God needed in us. God chose us by his grace and by his grace alone. The truth of eternal election through Jesus Christ is so humbling. The reason is that we want to find some reason to boast in us. In fact, I find it amazing that the one attitude that God creates in the one that he has chosen so that he will come is not pride but humility. It is something that you have to believe that you are wretched, poor, blind and sinful to the core, if you will ever see you need of Jesus. And that your only hope is someone else coming and living that life that you could never live, and taking the punishment that you deserve for all of eternity. Believers should be the most humble and thankful people in the world. It should be a contradiction to have a proud faith rather than a humbling faith.

And yet so many believers scorn and ridicule the vast majority that are on the wide road that leads to destruction, and never say - there go I except for the grace of God. So many believers who believe in God's sovereign calling even are proud that they know the doctrines of grace and somehow their faith is superior than others. God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. We need to constantly be preaching this gospel to ourselves that salvation, all of salvation is of the Lord. We need to let it have its humbling effect. Is God's gospel and his sovereign call humbling you? Is it calling you to have your boast not in self but in God who is bigger and more gracious than we could have ever imagined? Peter needed this correction and so do we.

2. We should never presume on God's mercy. Vv. 70-71.

We believe in eternal security of the believer. We also believe that those who are Christ's, although all of us falter because we are still in the process of being changed into the image of Christ, will continue on. And there are some sobering verses about individuals that seemed to have started well, even went through some difficulties and trials but in the end departed from Christ. And they were different from even the crowds here in this chapter because they really did look like the real thing. Listen to 1 Tim.

1:19-20, **“holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”**

They no longer held faith with a good conscience like Timothy was exerted to do. And most expositors believe that these are two leaders in the church. To shipwreck the faith is destroy or abandon faith in Jesus Christ. It is to apostatize the faith. Denounce the truth gospel. We learn something about Hymenaeus in 2Tim. 2:17-18 speaking of false teachers says, **“and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.”** But it is something else to think that these men were trained by the apostle Paul and served with him, but now have departed from the faith that they once held so dear. It is sobering because we begin to realize how fickle our own hearts are. It should create in us a godly fear that sin and apostasy are always so close to any of us.

And what is even more shocking is after informing them that they did not chose him but he chose them, he informs them that none of them should pat themselves on the back but look at verse 70, **“Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.’”** There are a couple of things here. One is to think that we never have arrived. None of us no matter how many strides we have taken forward in Christianity are perfect. It is easy to watch the crowd disappear and think. They didn't get it, but we did. We will never depart. Self-confidence always goes before a pride and a fall. There is no watching and trusting in Christ to hold us. And the other message here is that Jesus is not describing someone in the larger sphere of disciples but one of Jesus' closest followers, one who saw his miracles and heard his teaching over and over again.

And John gives a little narrative in this section and says in verse 71, **“He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.”** This proves that Judas was never saved. Many individuals who do not believe in eternal security point to Judas as one who had eternal life but one who lost that life. But notice the present active in verse 70, **“And yet one of you is a devil.”** In other words they are not animated by new life given by God, but by the devil himself or the spirit of this fallen world that walk according to the prince of the power of the air. Had he had real authentic life eternal from the Christ, had he been chosen as a recipient of eternal life then he would have never betrayed the Lord Jesus. He would have never shipwrecked the faith. Look back at verse 39, **“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”** How many does Jesus lose that has been given to him? And the answer is none.

And here we are told that Jesus chose him to be an earthly disciple and follower of Christ but did not chose him for eternal life. Jesus is not surprised by the defection and the betrayal of Judas. He knows that this is coming. Yet he preaches to this man and loves this man, and keeps sharing truth with this man, even though he knows the end of this man. It does beg the question: why chose Judas? Why not chose another who is ordained to eternal life? And that is such a good question and there are a number of reasons but let me suggest a couple.

One is that it is to teach us that someone can come so close to eternal life without receiving that very salvation. It really is a solemn warning to all of us who are believers in Christ to make sure of our calling in Jesus Christ. A.W. Pink writes about

this in his commentary. He says, **“The example of Judas shows us how near a man may come to Christ and yet be lost.”** He also writes, **“a man may witness the most stupendous marvels, may hear the most spiritual teaching, may company with the most godly characters, and yet himself never be born again.”** It really shows how hard and deceptive the human heart is. But it also indicates that although others might not know about his hypocrisy there is one that does. You might be able to look at the profession of faith and the works and someone might look like the real thing but God sees not as man sees. 1Sam. 16:7 says, **“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.’”** God sees the truth and even though at one time Judas preached the gospel of the kingdom he did not believe in, God knew his heart. He knew his hypocrisy.

It is amazing because we can only fool people for so long. We think we can keep it up but what we truly believe will come out. There is this heart wrenching scene over in Matt. 26:21-22 during the Passover meal where Judas has already conspired to betray Jesus and we read, **“And as they were eating, he said, ‘Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.’ And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, ‘Is it I, Lord?’”** This is just after he washed his disciples’ feet and no doubt they still feel the sting of their sin, and now they are overwhelmed with grief because they realize how near sin is in their lives. And they cry out in anguish, “Is it I, Lord?” You can almost hear their pain because that is what it is in a true believer - pain at the thought of leaving the Lord we love, and we see the fickleness of our hearts. And then Judas speaks and plays the hypocrite in verse 26, **“Judas, who would betray him, answered, ‘Is it I, Rabbi?’ He said to him, ‘You have said so.’”** And here is my point, you can only play the hypocrite so long, and after it comes out you will either repent or you will depart. Judas departed. And this is a sobering and solemn warning not to take the Lord’s calling on our lives for granted. Make sure of your calling and election in Jesus Christ. Some will heed the warning but some others will go the direction of Judas.

The other reason why Jesus chose Judas even though he knew that he would betray him is that God’s ways are not like our ways. Judas would freely and of his own volition betray Christ, but what would come to pass is none other than the death of Christ for sinners like us and all of this to the eternal praise of our great God. We would have never written the story this way, but we are not the authors of providence, and it ends with our eternal good and his glory. It teaches us to trust in him and his word through all the twists and turns of life. He can be trusted.

And this also prepares us what to expect. The huge band of disciples depart from Christ. That is painful enough. But then we have those who we have broken bread with us depart, close friends and associates. And the question then is the cost too high? Listen to Peter’s answer, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Look to him. There is no one else. Be amazed at his grace in your life. He will bring us safely home.