

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

To Whom Shall We Go?

John 6:67-71

Intro: At the beginning of this discourse, Jesus was speaking to a multitude of people. Most of them were simply looking for another free meal but Jesus was more concerned for their eternal souls. He begins to explain to them that He is the both the source and sustainer of eternal life and that if they were to receive Him into their innermost being, they would receive everlasting life as well. It appears that upon seeing that the free lunch was not going to happen, many of the crowd left and the conversation then moved over into the local synagogue (59).

Now Jesus was speaking to a smaller crowd made up mostly of religious leaders and a large group of “followers.” Here, Jesus restates the necessity of accepting Him but He delivers this truth in more graphic (accurate) terms: by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Taken on the face of them, this challenge would be difficult to accept but only if you take them literally. Of course, Jesus wasn’t speaking about cannibalism as He explains in 63b. How do we eat His flesh and drink His blood? By partaking of His Word! John 1:14 tells us that, “the Word became flesh...” The converse of that is also true. To partake of His flesh means to partake of His Word. Jesus said as much in 5:24a. The crowd balked and complained about this teaching but they should’ve been well aware of the concept of receiving God’s word into their innermost being from OT passages like Jer 31:31-34. In the end, it wasn’t that they couldn’t understand what Jesus was saying, the real problem was: they couldn’t accept it and most of them turned away.

So, in one day, Jesus’ ministry went from a huge multitude to a smaller crowd then, to no crowd at all. This would not be considered a successful ministry at all by modern Christian standards. At the end of a long day of ministry, Jesus was left with just the group He brought with Him. Now, He asks them the 2nd most important question of their lives!

67- This is a poignant scene. Instead of congratulating Himself on the fact that the 12 had remained with Him or allowing them to congratulate themselves, Jesus quietly turns to them and asks: “Will you also leave?” Jesus searches the motives of all who follow Him. It’s a simple question, but

it's one that must have cut deeply into their hearts as it does our own hearts and minds also. Will we go away? Will we be like those who've heard the Word of God, have professed to believe it, but who've then turned their backs on Christ and Christianity? Or will we stay? This question is relevant for us today for 2 important reasons.

1) Some who claim to be Christians really aren't and will surely go away. John speaks about this later (**I John 2:19**). The church of today is filled with people who will betray Jesus. If you doubt that, just look at the small group Jesus was speaking to. Here were 12 men that He had personally picked to walk with Him and help Him. Surely He had good judgment, much better than anyone else. Yet, one of these men was Judas. Here is a man who never believed in Jesus in a saving way (a devil) yet he is with the other disciples and his true character was completely unknown to them. Eventually, he would betray the Savior!

Is it too much to say that there are similar people in the church today? Those who profess to be Christians, even hold office in churches, but who've never been born again and who may one day openly turn their backs on all they have stood for previously. These are those who go out from us because they are not of us. But is that us? Could it be? We should let that question go around among us as it went around the table in the upper room: "Lord, is it I?" We must be willing to search our own hearts to see if we have really committed ourselves to the Savior.

2) A true believer may never betray Jesus but we could still deny Him. Just consider Peter: he was a true believer, a staunch follower and supporter of Jesus but given the right set of circumstances, he denied his Lord and Savior. If it could happen to Peter, it could happen to us. Will we also go away? Will we deny Jesus? This is a critically important question because ultimately, perseverance is the only real criteria for being a true follower of Jesus Christ.

I must admit that I have seen both of these scenarios throughout my Christian life and it is sad in every case. But, how can you prevent a similar fate from occurring in your own walk? 1st, analyze your heart and make sure your faith is firmly grounded and accurately placed in the real Jesus. Not a religious ceremony or denominational doctrines of men but in the claims of Jesus Christ. Then, if you find that you are a true Christian, you must also

make sure that Jesus is the #1 focus of your mind and desire of your heart. If Jesus is first in your life, then nothing that the world has to offer could ever compare. This is exactly what we hear in the response of the disciples.

68- Sounds like Peter had previously thought this one out. I'm sure there were probably times when Peter had said in his heart, "Maybe we shouldn't have dropped our nets and followed Him." It seems as tho he has already searched out his alternatives...as many of us have at times. "Lord, this is really hard. Lord, I can't take the pressure from my family...friends. Lord, do I have to do this? Lord, it was easier before! Lord...Lord..." What are you going to do, now that you're a Christian and things get tough? Are you going to become a Hari Krishna? Maybe try Buddhism? No; of course not. But, Peter's response carries the idea of going back and he's expressing his view that having once come to Jesus, such a thing is unthinkable! Is it unthinkable to you? Would you ever consider turning back? Many do. You may get so discouraged in your walk with Christ that you might toy with the idea of going back but let me ask you this? What would you go back to? Was there anything in your former way of life that could compare to Jesus?

Before you came to Christ, your former way of life may've been characterized by a great emptiness or lack of meaning and purpose. God filled you and gave your life meaning. Would you go back to that emptiness? Your life may've been filled with the excesses of sin: drunkenness, drugs, sexual immorality, etc. You were destroying yourself with your sins. Will you turn back to that? If for no other reason, your own self-interest should demand that your pathway be forward. Don't get me wrong, following Jesus can be very hard at time but it is still preferred above every other alternative. Following Jesus is the hardest way to live – except for all the others! However difficult it may be to go forward, it'd still be worse to go back. Consider this when discouraged or tempted. Retreat is impossible!

Peter didn't just acknowledge the impossibility of turning back; he also recognized the true benefit of sticking with Jesus (68b)! This shows that Peter had grasped what Jesus had tried to make obvious to all His hearers – that by believing in Him they'd have eternal life. This is why retreat is not an option: when you have been with Jesus, you're never the same again. The most miserable people on earth are Christians who try to live their old life style. It can't happen! They have too much of Jesus to be happy in the world and too much of the world to be happy in Jesus. You may try to turn

away from Jesus but He will never turn away from you (**Ps 139:7-10**). But that's not all Peter said...

69- Peter says a lot of things in the Gospels that cause us to cringe; but then there are other times when he reaches astonishing heights of faith. This is one of those times, one of Peter's great confessions of faith in Jesus Christ. He actually declares Jesus as "the Holy One of God." This phrase is uncommon in both the OT and the NT. In fact, the only other time it appears in the NT is on the lips of a demon that Jesus casts out of a man in Capernaum (**Mk 1:24**).

But, in using this phrase, others would have naturally thought of that other popular phrase used of God Himself: the Holy One of Israel. In Peter's mind, there was no other possible category to place Jesus in. He's the Lord: Jehovah! Peter was placing Jesus in the same category with God and not with man.

This confession of faith is also interesting because of 2 words Peter used to indicate how he came to know this truth about Jesus. They are "believed" and "know." The most important thing about these two words is their order: first belief, then certainty. This is nothing other than the divine order for true understanding in all spiritual matters.

I'll admit that this is counterintuitive and contrary to our natural way of doing things. From a human perspective, who ever heard of believing in something in order to be sure of it? We tend to want to make sure of something before we believe in it. We want to test a person out before we trust them. But, God reverses that order. Jesus will say to Martha in **11:40**, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?" Hebrews tells us that "By faith we understand" (**Heb 11:3**). Why is this order necessary? Because divine truth is beyond us. God's ways are not our ways. We only begin to know and understand God's ways as we begin to know and understand God. We can only begin to know God by trusting Him. Assurance, insight, knowledge—these all are the fruit of believing God. Certainty that Jesus is the Son of God does not come by listening to the arguments of professors or by reading the latest of theological books or articles. It only comes by believing what God has said about His Son in Scripture.

Of course, if this was just a matter between men, then to believe without

seeing would be foolish. But, in dealing with God it is logical. God's never made a promise that He's not delivered on in its proper time. His word is His bond. Plus, if we do not believe Him, then we're actually casting doubt upon His character.

God has some strong words to say about those who refuse to believe His testimony of Jesus Christ (**1 John 5:9-10**). This is a grand, sweeping statement, but its importance lies in providing insight into the heart of God. God tells us here that He wants to be believed. Plus, He says that He wants us to believe Him simply because of who He is.

These verses compare our belief in people with our belief in God, and they point out that we do believe other people. We believe in men, or in what men say, every day of our lives. If we didn't, we could never ride a bus, drive on the road, be employed or buy groceries. These things all involve acts of faith. They all involve accepting the word of another person, oftentimes people we have never met. God says, "If you can believe other people, you can believe Me; if you don't, then you're dishonoring Me." Most people are too polite to ever call anyone a liar; yet they make a liar out of God every day by their unbelief. God expects them to believe Him just as they believe other people.

The true secret of having certainty in spiritual things is: we must believe what God tells us. If we believe God, then knowledge will follow. The certainty Peter speaks of here didn't just come from viewing Christ's miracles. Peter's faith came from hearing and believing the "words of eternal life" that Jesus, the Holy One of God, had spoken.

70-71- Peter believed he was speaking for all of the 12 but unfortunately he was not. Jesus didn't allow Himself to be carried away by Peter's enthusiasm. He knew better. He knew that Peter had overstated the case. Jesus knew that there was one in the group that really didn't hold to the same view of Himself that Peter and all the others believed. John implies here that Jesus saw into the hearts of men and knew Judas was not a believer and would eventually betray Him. If that is the case (and it is), why did Jesus choose Judas? Why not choose another?

The short answer is to fulfill Scripture, **Ps 41:9** specifically and others. Jesus will refer to this later in **17:12**. But why did God allow these passages to be

written? Why did God ordain Judas to be one of the 12? There are several good reasons for this but I'll just touch on a few. **1)** To reveal the perfections of Christ. Everything Jesus did while on this earth was out of obedience to the will of the Father, including choosing Judas. Now, if we know someone who's done us dirty, we can hardly stand to be in the same room with them, right? But Jesus knew exactly what Judas would do and yet, He always treated him like all the other disciples. Jesus wasn't putting up a front. No, He loved Judas as much as the rest and afforded him every opportunity to repent and come to faith in Christ. But, Judas refused

2) To reveal the awfulness of sin. Think of everything Judas saw in the presence of Jesus: the teachings, miracles, changed lives, sinless perfection of Jesus. Now imagine betraying such a person! That's how terrible sin is. Not just Judas' sin but our sin as well. It was just as much our sin that sent Jesus to the cross as Judas' betrayal.

3) To provide sinners with a solemn warning. A person may experience the closest possible contact with Jesus and still not come to Him for salvation. Judas lived and walked with Jesus for 3 and a half years and yet never believed on Him for salvation. You may've been raised in a godly home; may've been exposed to great preaching; may've seen others come to faith – maybe even immediate family or close friends. But you have not believed personally. Their faith cannot save you. You must believe. Proximity to Jesus is not the same as faith in Jesus. Don't let one cheat you of the other.

So, at the end of **ch6**, two men are brought together in the space of three verses—Peter and Judas. One made a great confession. About the other we're given a disturbing revelation. Which one most reflects your life? Both were with Jesus. Both gave evidences of a genuine interest in religion. But for one it was real; he was there because of Jesus. The other was only there for himself; or at least for what he could personally gain from the relationship.

I said that **vs67** was the 2nd most important question of the disciple's lives but what is the 1st? What will you do with Jesus Christ? Is He just a historical figure to you or is He the holy One of God? Is He just a religious construct or is He your own personal Savior? That's what He wants to be. That's what He came to this earth and died on that cross to be. Will you make Him your Savior today?

Now, if you have believed on Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you're united with Him by the miracle of the new birth, then there's no way for you to go but forward. In fact, you're bound to Jesus by a threefold cord. 1st, there's nowhere else to go. Who will have you after you have been with Jesus? Jesus was not wanted and neither are His followers.

2nd, there's satisfaction in the words of Jesus and true satisfaction is only found in Him. If you have partaken of the heavenly Bread, everything else seems flat by comparison. The world's delicacies will taste like dirt in your mouth.

3rd, since Jesus is the Holy One of God, to go back now would not only be a crisis of faith; it would be intellectual suicide. It cannot be done. We know too much about Jesus to prove faithless. 😊