

#130 “Where Else Could We Go? A Reminder for Disappointing Times”

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In John 6, Jesus taught at length about His having come from heaven and being the only way to the Father. He used the illustration that people would need to eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to enter heaven. Many found the teaching difficult, and, as a result, they abandoned Christ. Of course, those who had ears to hear would have recognized that Jesus was simply saying to believe in Him, that He was the giver of life, and that His truth had to be spiritually ingested and applied at the deepest heart level. This would require an allegiance to His teachings, a faith that was willing to follow Him wherever He led, and an abandonment of the approval of the world. These were difficult things, and despite the wondrous miracles that Christ had worked in their presence, many refused to follow any longer. John 6:66-69 says,

“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, ‘You do not want to go away also, do you?’ Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.’”

At least the twelve still believed. They rightly recognized that there was nowhere else to go. This Man was the truth, and He was God. He was the Messiah that the Jews had been waiting for. There was no point in leaving Him or trying to find some other "messiah." They even recognized that their lives were caught up in something more important and significant than what they had previously known. This was the call and purpose of God for them, to know and follow Jesus Christ. Where else could they go?

There are many things that are spiritually easier than serving God. Many of those who followed Christ and then left Him left not because the teachings were intellectually difficult but because they didn't want to follow this Jesus anymore. They didn't recognize Him as God, or if they did, they weren't impressed enough to abandon their old ways of living and follow Him. He wasn't worth their time, their ears, their money, their interest, or their investment. They had other things to do, other people to meet, and other places to see. The twelve who stayed with Christ acknowledged that they had nowhere else to go. They found God, and there was nothing else that could compare. But for many others, that is, the vast majority, their sin and their worldly enterprises were far more interesting than seeking God's will for their lives and living lives that bowed to the authority of Jesus Christ.

If we are deceived by sin, we might decide that Jesus isn't worth following or that perhaps we can follow both Him and something else. But we cannot serve two masters. If we are discouraged by all that God has ordained for our lives, we might consider another path. But if we truly have come to know Jesus for Who He really is and if we really believe in Him, we will know in our spirits that there is nowhere else to go. Then once we cease from our unbelief and stubbornness we

will remember that He cares and that He does not disappoint. Scripture is clear in 1 Peter 2:6, “For this is contained in Scripture: ‘BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.’” Those who make Christ the cornerstone of their lives can be assured that they will not be ultimately disappointed. Even in the temporal world, they can trust all things to work for their own spiritual benefit (Romans 8:28-29). But it takes a persistent and consistent viewing of the world by faith rather than by sight in order to keep from succumbing to disappointment and the consideration that maybe the devil has something better than this to offer. God does not disappoint.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” This man’s life got so much more brutal, trying, and difficult when He chose to follow Christ. But he was convinced that Jesus was God, and despite the fact that he was frequently near death for the sake of the gospel, he didn’t despair of following Christ. If his perspective had been that surrendering to Christ on the Damascus Road meant that Jesus would make his life easier, wealthier, and more humanly successful, he would have been gravely disappointed. But that wasn’t his view from the beginning of his conversion. Christ sought him, Paul believed, and Paul understood that it was about faithfulness and a supreme allegiance to Christ. He knew full well that heaven was a place of honor and reward, but earth would be a battleground with much suffering for the sake of the gospel. Yet nothing made him disappointed in his Lord because Jesus was his joy even in suffering, and especially in suffering (Philippians 3:10).

The difficulty of each of our lives varies, and Paul’s was definitely on the high end. But he didn’t grow disappointed or angry with God. He, like the twelve disciples, who would also suffer greatly, recognized that there was nowhere else to go. Jesus was the Christ, and His message was their calling. Since Jesus would always be God and the gospel would never change, disappointment could never happen if their perspective was right. So just because things don’t go like we think they will does not give us reason to be disappointed. Just because God allows suffering to continue doesn’t give us grounds to succumb to despair. Jesus is still God, God is still on the throne, and we still have kingdom work to do. One day, we will see what we have now only believed, and it is guaranteed, that when we see Jesus in heaven, we will not be disappointed for having left what the world has to offer so that we could follow Him.