

No More Faith (John 6:60-71)

By David Soper

"At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him." John 6:66

John chapter 6 starts with huge crowds following Jesus wherever he went and ends with many of his disciples deserting him. Not exactly what we'd call a church growth success story. These are people who were following Christ - people whose hopes were very high, and now they are suddenly leaving him in droves. What is going on here?

To the natural mind, to the un-regenerated mind, it is impossible to understand Jesus when he says that whoever eats his flesh has eternal life (John 6:51). But the person who is a true believer knows that they cannot live without the "bread of life" (John 6:48). The nominal Christian admires the Jesus who says to "love your neighbor as yourself", but is completely repulsed by the Jesus who says that unless they hate their own family, they cannot be his disciple (Luke 14:26). The true believer has spiritual eyes, the discernment of the Holy Spirit, and knows that anything can become an idol, even their own family. The faith of a genuine Christian is not shipwrecked by the seemingly difficult teaching of Jesus, instead we are convicted of our own sin and ultimately are able to love our family more deeply than ever, but now with God's perspective.

The disciples who deserted Jesus were people who had attached themselves to Christ but had not yet truly believed. They were disciples in the loosest sense of the word. It's easy to sit here and judge them, but it seems they aren't much different than the large number of people in our churches today who think they are Christians but aren't born again. Their so-called faith is intact as long as things are going the way they like and the preacher is saying the things they want to hear. However, they are not genuine spiritual seekers who are hungry for the truth, they are merely cultural Christians with a socially acceptable religious identity.

I recently returned from a Pastor's conference in eastern Poland. I've heard many people say how difficult it is to serve God in Poland. But let me tell you something, as I worshiped God with 120 Polish pastors and church leaders I was moved to tears and overwhelmed by their passion for Jesus and love for the living God. My eyes were opened and my heart convicted as I heard story after story of their situations. Ministry is hard wherever you are, but these men and women have their hand to the plow for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God is alive and well in their ministries in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Are you spiritually discouraged? Are you ready to give up on faith? Is the teaching of Jesus hard to understand? The question is, where else will you go? Who else has the words of eternal life? Jesus asked the twelve, "Are you also going to leave?". When discouragement and doubt overtakes us, the answer is not to turn away from God, but to turn towards God! As Peter said, "To whom would we go?". Where else can we turn? Jesus has the words of life that are the watchword of our faith. "We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."