

INTRODUCTION

A brand-new lawyer set up a one-man practice in a little town. He hung his shingle out and arrived at his office the first day and sat behind his desk. He heard someone opening his office door. He didn't want the potential client to know that he was his first business, so he picked up his phone. As the man entered his office he held up his hand and said, "Oh, yes sir, I have quite a bit of experience in corporate law. Expensive? Oh, no sir, I have some of the most reasonable rates in town." He said, "Excuse me for a minute." He held his hand over the phone and looked up at the man standing in his office. The young lawyer smiled and asked with a confident tone, "May I help you?"

The man smiled and said, "As a matter of fact you can. I work for the telephone company and I've come to hook up your phone."

He was pretending to be something he wasn't. He was probably just a little embarrassed, and it's a funny story. But when it comes to having a relationship with God there are some people who are pretending to be disciples, while they aren't at all.

In John 6 Jesus made some audacious claims. He claimed to have come down from Heaven. He claimed to be the Bread of Life. He claimed to have the words of eternal life. He backed up these claims by two miracles. He fed 5,000 people with two minnows and five muffins. He walked on the water to calm the fears of the disciples. But by the end of the chapter, most of the people are going to turn and walk away from Jesus.

John 6:60-71. "Therefore, when many of his disciples heard this, they said, 'This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?' Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were complaining about this, asked them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to observe the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? The Spirit is the one who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some among you who don't believe.'" (For Jesus knew from the beginning those who did not believe and the one who would betray him.) He said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father." From that moment, many of his disciples turned back and no longer accompanied him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "You don't want to go away too, do you?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus replied to them, "Didn't I choose you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." He was referring to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, one of the Twelve, because he was going to betray him."

This is the second part of a message I started a couple of weeks ago. We identified several characteristics of salvation. We are called by God, we are chosen by God, and because of this, we have the confidence to have the assurance of salvation. But then I introduced the possibility that there are some who follow Jesus who are actually counterfeit disciples. In this message I want to examine three types of people who follow Jesus.

1. THE DESERTERS: Many people start following Jesus but they drop out along the way.

When the mob of people found Jesus, they wanted another miracle. They were so fickle that when He stopped giving them food, they left. We read "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." (John 6:66) Now they are called "disciples" but that's just a generic word that meant "followers." Yes, they were following Jesus because He was a meal ticket. When the meals disappeared, the mob disappeared.

There are multitudes of people like that in East Texas. There was a time that they started to follow Jesus, but they became drop-outs. Like a soldier on guard duty, they deserted their post. They became AWOL: absent without love.

Just like the fickle mob in John 6, there are people today who approach Jesus because they think they can get something from Him. I need some happiness. I need some peace. I need some relationships. They approach Him because they want only what He can give them. There is a phenomenon today that we call Consumer Christianity. We are a culture of consumers. We love to shop. We go to the store so we can get something. We go online and scroll through the products so we can get something we want.

We can fall into that same trap when it comes to church. You come to church to see what you can get out of it. Some people even call it church shopping. I want to find the church that will give me and my family the most. So just like products on Amazon, we rate it. I give the music a three star, it was a little loud. I give the message a two star; it was a little long. I give the friendliness a three star; the facilities a four star ... And then people leave and this is the reason they give: I wasn't getting much out of it.

You see worship was never intended for what you could GET out of it. It was always intending for you to give something to God. Just imagine the angels in heaven. They surround the throne of God and focus on the Lamb who was slain. They are constantly saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" I just can't imagine one of those angels saying to another one, "You know, I didn't get much out of worship today."

How did we ever get into that trap? When you come to Jesus it should be to pour out your life before Him. What can I give to the Lord today? I want to give Him my praise, my thanksgiving, my life. NOT what can I get out of it? So, if you have a consumer mentality when it comes to church or worship, when you get tired of the product you drop out.

Now, I could name names, and so could you. I know hundreds of people who I've known through the years who were regularly coming to Green Acres but through the years, they've dropped by the wayside and they never show up for worship or service. Their names are on the rolls of our church. But you don't get to heaven because your name is on a church roll, you get to heaven if your name is written down in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Notice Jesus didn't leave these drop-outs. They left Him. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out." The very fact that they dropped out is evidence that they were never truly His disciples. The Apostle John wrote: "They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us." (1 John 2:19)

If you are hearing me in person, you're not a drop-out yet. But you may be a potential drop out. None of these drop-outs just decided one day, "I'm no longer going to worship." It happens gradually like the Frog in the Kettle. They start missing every other Sunday. Then they come once a month. And before long they only worship on Easter. And soon, they don't even show up then. But their reason is the typical consumer rating, "I'm just not getting that much out of church." East Texas is filled with spiritual drop outs.

2. THE DECEIVERS: Some people seem to be following Jesus but their hearts are never changed.

There are the deserters who drop-out. But then there is another group of people who continue to follow Jesus, but they aren't really believers. They are more like make-believers. Their faith is fake and their profession is empty. Jesus described these kinds of deceivers as people who "draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." They have profession without possession.

I can stand up here and say anything, but that doesn't make it true. I can say, "I'm a tree. I'm a flowering pear tree." And if I insisted on saying that you'd say, "No you're not a flowering tree. You're a blooming idiot." The reason I'm not a tree is that I don't have the inner nature of a tree. A person can say, "I'm a Christian." But saying doesn't make it so unless they have had their hearts changed by Jesus.

Our example of this is found in Judas. Judas was one of the twelve disciples chosen to be a part of Jesus' team. He appeared to be a true disciple, but from the beginning, Jesus knew Judas was a deceiver.

Judas had the other disciples fooled. Peter spoke for the group and said, "We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of Israel." But Jesus corrected him. He said, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve. (John 6:70-71)

We've all heard of counterfeit money. Some counterfeit money looks real, and others don't look real at all. For instance, there's an example of someone who tried to create a seven-dollar bill, it would never pass. But real counterfeiters try to make the money appear as real as possible.

A few years ago, I had a conversation with a bank president. This was before they had the pens you can use to mark on bills to tell if they are real. I asked him how they trained their tellers to recognize counterfeit money. I wondered if they presented them examples of counterfeit bills. He said, "No, they just train us to be so familiar with every detail of real currency that when a

fake comes along, it is obvious. The best way to spot a counterfeit Christian is to know what a real disciple is.

The Apostle Paul had been scrutinized and criticized by some of the members in the church at Corinth. But he had passed every test. As he closed his second letter to the group, he wrote that it was time to turn the tables; they should be examining themselves: He wrote: "Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Do you feel Christ's presence and power more and more within you? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when actually you aren't at all? I hope you can agree that I have stood that test and truly belong to the Lord." (2 Corinthians 13:5-6 TLB)

Judas followed Jesus. He saw the miracles of Jesus, but He never believed. His heart was never changed. It says in John 6:64 that "Jesus knew from the beginning who wouldn't believe." That wasn't just talking about Judas. Jesus knows from the foundation of the world who will believe and who won't.

When you see the last chapter of Judas' life you see that he was filled with regret. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. But when he saw what they did to Jesus, he was filled with remorse and tried to give the money back. But they wouldn't take it. Then the Bible contains some of the saddest words of the Bible. It says that Judas went out and hanged himself.

I don't know what went through his tortured mind. But maybe at the end he thought, I could have had Jesus but all I have is this bag of silver. I traded everything for this bag of silver? I traded God for this? And he throws it in the Temple. How sad. I believe there will be many other people who come to the end of their life with the same regret. Is there something in your life that you spend all your time trying to accumulate, and one day you're going to come to the end of your life. And you're going to be holding that bag of silver—or that man—or that woman—or that job—or that career—or that bank account—or whatever it is. And you're going to say, "This is what I traded for life with HIM?"

3. THE DEDICATED: True disciples persevere to the end.

The mob left Jesus because they weren't being fed and they were offended by His claims. Judas hung around but he was a make-believer. But as the hundreds of people turned to leave Jesus, He turned to His twelve disciples to see if they were going to leave Him. The Bible says: Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:67-69)

Peter speaks for all of the faithful followers of Jesus. Lord, we can't leave you because you have the words of eternal life—and we believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

There are some Christians who believe you can be saved and then lose your salvation. But we strongly believe that once you are in Christ, you can never lose your salvation. Earlier in this chapter Jesus said, "I will lose NONE of those that the Father gives me." (John 6:39)

I'm not worried about losing my salvation because I'm not worried about Jesus losing me! My salvation isn't dependent on me KEEPING myself safe. It's dependent on God KEEPING me safe in His hand. Paul wrote, "I know whom I have believed in and am persuaded that HE IS ABLE to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day." (2 Timothy 1:12)

There are some preachers who try to get Christians to doubt their salvation. I once knew of an evangelist who made a good living going into churches and preaching on the statement that Jesus to religious imposters in Matthew 7. Jesus said, "Depart from me I never knew you." This evangelist claimed that if you had 1% of doubt that you were saved then you were 100% lost. He boasted that he would have 1,000 people coming forward for baptism. But 990 of those were church members, deacons, and even preachers. He just made them afraid that they were really lost.

It's the devil who wants to make you doubt your salvation. He is the accuser of the brothers and sisters. My desire is to help you come to full assurance of your salvation, so you can relax in the security of God's amazing Grace.

In over forty years as a pastor the #1 topic that Christians have come to talk to me about was whether they were really saved or not. As I talked to these people only a tiny fraction of them weren't saved. The vast majority knew the Lord, but were troubled because of sin in their lives. I tried to assure them that the very fact that they were concerned about sin was proof that they knew the Lord and wanted to live a life pleasing to the Lord. Lost people usually aren't worried about sin.

Yes, according to Matthew 7 there will be some counterfeit believers who stand before the Lord on judgement day and argue with Him. They'll claim that they knew the right language. They will say, "Lord, Lord!" They will argue that they performed religious acts. "In your name, we cast out demons and did many wonderful works." And then Jesus will declare that they are counterfeit. But I want you to see what Jesus actually said in Matthew 7:21. Jesus said, "Not everyone who confesses to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that DOES THE WILL of my Father which is in heaven." And when some of the most faithful followers of Jesus read those words, they think, "Oh no! Am I doing the will of God? What is the will of God?"

That's a valid concern, so let's answer the all-important question: "How can I DO the Will of God?" Jesus answered that question up in John 6:28-29. The people asked, "What shall we DO to satisfy God?" Jesus told them, "This is the will of God, that you BELIEVE in the one he has sent."

Please understand that because your eternal salvation depends on this. What do you have to DO to be saved? Just believe. People worry, "Have I done enough? Is my salvation dependent on keeping the Ten Commandments?" Nope. "Is my salvation dependent on loving God and loving my neighbor as myself?" Nope. The only thing you have to do to fulfill God's will is to BELIEVE IN JESUS.

CONCLUSION

One of my seminary professors expressed our security in a statement using words that begin with "f." I've never forgotten it. He said: The Faith that Fizzles before the Finish was Faulty from the First!

The security of salvation is not the same thing as having a personal assurance of your salvation. Your security is set in Heaven. But you won't have a lot of peace until you settle it yourself and come to full assurance.

One of my most painful memories was in the early 1980s when Laura Grace as just a toddler. We attended a high school football game in Alabama and as we were leaving the stadium, we were walking on a pathway of crushed gravel. I was holding LG's hand and she was just a toddler having trouble navigating the gravel. It was a hot humid evening, and my hand was sweaty. Suddenly her tiny hand slipped out of mine and she fell and hit her head on a sharp piece of gravel. She began to cry and that small gash in her forehead began to bleed. I think you can still see the scar. Everyone stopped to help, and someone gave me a handkerchief to stop the bleeding. As I hugged my crying daughter I felt as bad as a dad could. I had let her slip out of my hand, and she had been hurt. If you are a child of God, that will NEVER happen to you. In John 10 Jesus said, "My Father is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

A little girl who believed that God would never let go of her was talking with a man who believed you could lose your salvation. She said, "I will never slip out of God's hand." He asked me how she could be so *certain* that she would never slip out of God's hand. She said, "That's simple. Because I'm one of His fingers!"

Don't be a drop-out. Don't be a make-believer. Instead be a dedicated disciple. Make this your motto: "I won't back up, give up, shut up, or let up until I'm caught up to be with the Lord!"

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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