



“Finding your Way in the Dark”

John 12:37-50

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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John 12:37 – 50 *But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, 38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of*

the LORD been revealed?" 39 Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: 40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." 41 These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. 42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. 44 Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 "And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46 "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47 "And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49 "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50 "And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

We are a “show me” generation, a “seeing is believing” people. Well, at least we are up to the door of the church! For it seems when it comes to God, man tosses out all the empirical evidence as well as the simple and plain common sense. How anyone can even *claim* to be an atheist is mind-boggling to me. I do not have enough faith to believe that miracles like creating a child, the incredibly precise balance of nature, the daunting marvel of the human body, or the wonder of the solar system and finding this perfect place called earth for us to thrive, ...all could be luck or the odds of billions of correct choices under the rules of compound probability.

Romans 1:20, “From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.”

Ps 8:3 “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained...”

I have known countless individuals who have come here amongst us and experienced the miraculous hand of God manifested in their own lives as well as the lives of others who have also stumbled in here. They were people who “...were once enlightened,” and “tasted the heavenly gift.” They were “partakers of the Holy Spirit” and they “tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” and **yet they did not remain**. Not here with **us** or with **Christ in general**. 1John 2:19 tells us of such folks saying “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

Sadly, such phenomena did not start in our generation. No, even as far back as the wilderness with Moses we saw such play out. Ne 9:17 “They refused to listen and did not remember the miracles you had done for them. Instead, they rebelled and appointed a leader to take them back to their slavery in Egypt! Zech7:12 “They made their hearts as hard as stone, so they could not hear the law or the messages that the LORD Almighty had sent them by his Spirit...”

Both then and now the problem rested in the fact that their “belief” never extended beyond their heads.

Such belief failed to move them to action, it did not extend deep like a root beneath them to hold them in place when the storms of life blew. They failed to grasp that Christ showed Himself and His power so as to bring us not only to repentance and salvation, but to faithfulness and holy sanctified living. They failed to move on in their faith to maturity. They were the seeds that fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. They fell away as soon as they had problems or were persecuted for believing God's word. Others were seeds that fell among the thorns and grew up and choked out the plants and their growth. They were those who heard God's word, but all too quickly the message was crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of the world, so no fruit was produced. All of these folks wanted the blessings of a relationship with Christ and His church but rejected the sacrifice, the effort and the discipline. They, like the world at large, knew He was there, but they did not love Him. They loved only themselves. And because they *would* not accept Him, there came the day when they *could* not accept Him.

Luke 12:10 speaks of such a daunting position. "*Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.*" Ironically, so many individuals who get extremely tied up over their fear that they have committed such a trespass are the last ones who really need to worry! For the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a willful, determined refusal and opposition to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in one's life. The premise being that if I keep saying no long enough, God will confirm that rejection and the door closes to any chance I may have to redemption. The Holy Spirit "moves on" and leaves me to what I wanted: *to be my own ruler*. Mind you, no one is so condemned unless they essentially wanted to be!

Those who *would not* believe in verse 37 ultimately *could not* believe in verse 39. Since they chose to not believe, they eventually weren't able to believe because God hardened their hearts. Why? To ratify their choice. This terrible scenario occurs only because a person refuses and rejects for so long that God will give them what they truthfully want and they thus become a living example...a "poster boy" for life without Christ. To those who don't want to believe, to those who continually stand in the posture of unbelief, there will come a time when they *cannot* believe. Matthew 12:31 paints a picture of the person whose lips may have said the right words to some imagined "sinners prayer" but their heart and lives said "no" to holiness and commitment to Christ and His church. What seems inexplicable to those of us who passionately believe is astonishingly no big deal to such individuals because they *never really believed or loved* so it was not some heart impassioned departure from the faith. People do not "depart" Christianity. If they move on, they were honestly never part of it to begin with.

The bible says "*Indeed, the 'right time' is now. Today is the day of salvation.*" (2 Corinthians 6:2). There is clearly a "window" of opportunity to all of us to come to Christ, and when that window shuts, *game over*. But again...rest easy Christian, no one is refused redemption and no one gets kicked out of the club! For the one that *can't* come in, certainly he ultimately does not *want* to come in. He or she knows what they are rejecting and they don't care.

Those who reject the sovereignty of God, His power and Lordship, will also reject His miracles. They will see only busy-work and effort, and fail to see the spiritual aspects, the changed lives and the furthering of God's kingdom. John 15:24 records Jesus saying "*If I hadn't done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be counted guilty. But as it is, they saw all that I did and yet hated both of us—me and my Father.*" There will always be those who inexplicably reject Christianity. Often it is not because they do not truly believe that there is a God or even that Jesus is His Son and the one Messiah/redeemer. They just simple refuse His Lordship. They will not have a Master over them.

The first group refused to believe despite the overwhelming evidence. The second group believed, but refused to confess Christ out of fear or discomfort. They loved the praise of men more than they loved Jesus. Therefore they failed to love Him "*...with all their heart, all their soul, all their strength, and all their mind.*" (Luke 10:27) Matthew 10:33 speaks to the penalty of such: "*But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.*" Note that both of these groups "believed" of Jesus, and both were "lost."

John wrote in the last chapter of this letter...speaking no doubt concerning himself, "*This is that disciple who saw these events and recorded them here. And we all know that his account of these things is accurate. And I suppose that if all the other things Jesus did were written down, the whole world could not contain the books.*" The work of Jesus was not and even today *is not* done in secret or in a hidden corner someplace. God openly shows Himself, His miraculous and His victorious, along with the difficulties, the pain, and the persecutions of a walk of faith in Him. There should be no surprises.

The clock is today ticking on our “day of salvation.” Isaiah 55:6 tells us to “*Seek the LORD while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.*” And Heb 4:7 “*Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.*” Back in verse 35 of our chapter we read “*Then Jesus said to them, ‘A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.’*”

Again we read Matthew 10:32 “*Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.*” The word ‘confess’ means more than just speaking up for Jesus in front of another. The original use of the language means “*to agree with...to say the same thing as...*” as well as to *declare*. So truly to confess has an innate aspect of agreement and unity. Thus Paul warned us in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 “*With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on everything we taught you both in person and by letter.*”

Of course we know that Godly and Biblical confession happens within the unity of body life fellowship, it cannot happen just alone. That doesn’t mean that we are not each unique with different personalities and characteristics. But it does mean that to confess Jesus is to acknowledge all that Jesus said, all that His Word declares without reservation, without a modern revisionist revelation. And all of that takes place *with others*.

Today the world, *and sadly the greater church so often*, loves the praise of men more than the praise of God. That’s why we have all these modern changes in traditional biblical position and doctrine. Things that used to be sin are now acceptable practices because, “*if you can’t beat them, join them*” is the new battle cry. Because of such we, have *a form of godliness but deny its power* (2Ti 3:5). Meaning we can look like a church and not really be one at all.

The folks in our text ‘believed’ in the classic sense of the word. But they did not *obey*. They failed to confess Christ as God. Romans 10:9 calls for both belief and confession ...“*For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* Confession is a natural result of, the *fruit of, the evidence of, true belief*. It’s not a secondary hoop to jump through to secure salvation, but necessary just the same in that it is the manifest proof that we *have* salvation. Confession does not directly *affect* our salvation state, it just participates in the *manifest proof* that we **are** saved. And then following thus, obedience is overall the evidence of our soul state.

Jesus herein clarifies His position for all within earshot, as well as for all generations to follow. Jesus clearly binds Himself wholly to Father God in a relationship beyond anything we personally can obtain. He claims a supernatural unity, a bond with Jehovah that expressly places Himself as literally *one with Him*. We may be the “sons of God,” but that is by *adoption*. Jesus is the only ***begotten*** Son, literally God in flesh. One of a kind. The only one. John 1:1 and 14—*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.... and the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.*

This testimony before us would be Christ’s parting message, His last cry to the Jewish nation. His last call for His chosen nation to come out of the darkness and into the light. From this point forward He would speak only privately to His disciples. Yet the Jewish populace would not confess Him because they feared backlash and the cost of public acknowledgment. The door was closing.

Few men will ever know this level of commitment and transparency. Isa 50:7 speaks of such a passionate position; “*Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will not be put to shame.*” The fact is, often a part of us wants to be Christian, but we still want to be viewed as cool to those in our world. We have to be the diva, so rarely will we set ourselves aside for His glory and say it the way it is. I mean, we don’t want our Facebook friends to think we don’t have it going on.

In such, our very salvation is in question. Chapter five of John, verse 44 asks the question: “*How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?*” The reality is that we will all lose secular friends when we choose to follow Jesus. It is a stark fact. Seldom do we actually have to depart from them to “*come up from them and be separate*” (2 Cor 6:17), for generally they will slowly slip out the back because you are creeping them out with this Jesus stuff.

That does not mean we will never need to break earthly fellowship with an unbeliever. Some people hang on to relationships with Christians even though any suggestion of them ever believing themselves is personally horrifying. But they remain

because the Christian has ‘good vibes.’ There is a natural peace and joy in the believer, so people can tend to gravitate toward that peace and joy. In this we testify of God’s glory and miraculous. We are not called to shun these people. But it also would not be a righteous thing to hang around all the time with people who do not share our world view. Amos 3:3 says “*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*”

I have a lot of acquaintances who are not born again. I have no friends who aren’t. In John 17:14-16 Jesus prayed to the Father “*I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*”

Someone once said that the book of John is “a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant may swim.” This is what commentator Charles Erdman meant when he said, “Its stories are so simple that even a child will love them, but its statements are so profound that no philosopher can fathom them.” (Blue Letter Bible)

Jesus in verse 46 returns to a profound, yet simple analogy that is one of His favorites. The picture is clear. This world we are living in is truly a dark place. It seems to be getting darker every day. The darkness is not going away, but we don’t have to live in it. Jesus has come to be our light in the midst of all this darkness. With Him in front leading the way, we can see where we are going, what in truth is reality, and what is but a shadow, a whisper, just a bump in the darkness of night. We can see where we are walking in life and thus we can do so with boldness.

John 3:19-21 “And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

Mankind is truly without excuse. According to Wycliffe Bible translators, the Bible, *or at least parts of it*, has been translated into 2642 languages, with multiple billions of copies having been printed. It is well accepted that the Christian Bible has sold more copies than any other book in history. Jesus need not judge and condemn mankind. The Word of God will do that for us. There is little room for ambiguity. We know what He wants. It is ours to choose whether we will do it or not.

Our part is to choose whether we will accept the light, or whether we will live our lives in darkness. Fumbling around in the dark, feeling our way through our lives. Tripping, stumbling, and invariably hurting ourselves as we fall. The choice is ours: **light or darkness**. Because Jesus came not to condemn us, but to save us. We are going to be judged by the Word of God. We will not be judged by our good works. We will not be judged by what we think religion is. No, we will be judged by the Word of God.

John 1:4-5, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

Many years ago, Sarah Todd Cunningham, a visiting Senator from Hawaii, voicing impression of these United States, aptly said, “*Too many people, in too many cars, in too much of a hurry, going in too many different directions, to nowhere for nothing.*” Is this what you want for your life? Running in the darkness from here to there and going nowhere?

This is the end of Jesus’ public ministry. His last words to those who shouted, “Hosanna! Hosanna!” and then a few days later shouted, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” He tells them again, “*I am just telling you what God wanted me to tell you.*” *What God wants to give you is eternal life. The choice is yours. Light or darkness. Death or life.* Jesus ends not with an “*I think*” or an “*I hope*” as so many today will refer to their standing with God and their eternal destination. Jesus ends with an “*I know*” What do we know for sure this morning?