

**The Cost of Discipleship – Part I**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 8:30-32**  
**January 27, 2013**

Turn with me in your Bibles to John 8. We'll be looking at Verses 30-32 this morning, a wonderful, glorious passage that speaks to us about the blessings that come to disciples of Jesus Christ, and also about the nature of discipleship itself. In fact, I borrowed the title for this morning's message from a book by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. That name may be familiar to some of you. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a man of God, a pastor who was ministering God's Word during the 1930's in Nazi Germany. As the Nazis rose to power, there was a real courting of the church by Adolf Hitler. He was very much a person who was against a lot of outward things like alcohol, obvious sin, and so he got a lot of hearing from a lot of the churches. "Hey, he's against the same stuff we're against." But clearly he was an evil man with evil intents through and through. Bonhoeffer, because he preached the Word of God, recognized this quickly and preached out against Nazism and the evil of it, and because of that he was arrested. He spent the last years of his life in jail. In fact, he was tortured, beaten, and continued to maintain the truth of the Gospel, faith in Christ. He was killed only a few days before his city was liberated. They were about to be liberated. The allies had come in and were taking Germany, and his captors murdered him just a couple of days before the allies got there. He wrote a book, and the title of the book is The Cost of Discipleship. That's the title for our message this morning because Jesus is, as He encounters a number of people who have a measure of faith in Him, what He does is He issues really a call to discipleship, but really by clarifying the cost of discipleship. So that's the title of the message this morning, 'The Cost of Discipleship'.

What we're going to see in this text, Verses 30-32, as well as in the rest of the chapter is Jesus clarifying and confronting belief, initial belief with painful precision as to the cost of following Him. It's interesting, quite instructive, and I think when you look at a passage like this it's hard to believe that the state of the evangelical church has gotten as far astray as it has. I mean, the last 50-60 years there has been such an easy believism approach to Christianity that to profess faith in Christ is to definitely be saved, to have an emotional experience, to come forward at an event, and to pray a prayer is to definitely always be saved. Now listen, the reality is that God does save in an instant, and salvation is by grace as we were just singing. It is completely free. We bring nothing to Christ except our sin and ugliness, but as we lay hold of Christ He makes us new. He gives us a new life, but the fact that salvation is free does not mean that salvation will not cost you

everything. The balance of the New Testament picture of the Gospel is that Jesus is continually making clear that salvation, that being a disciple of His, will cost you everything. He does that in this passage. He does it throughout His ministry. You think about words like we see in Luke 9:23:

***Luke 9:23 ~ ...“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.***

Luke 14:

***Luke 14:26 ~ “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.***

Hard words because to follow Christ, to come to Christ, means to give up everything for Him. He’s the great treasure, the treasure hidden in the field that the man finds. He finds hidden and he goes and sells all that he has, that he might have that treasure. So read with me today, John 8. Our focus is Verses 31-32, but I’m going to start reading in Verse 30 to connect us to the context. The passage we looked at last week ended with that hopeful, encouraging assessment in Verse 30.

***John 8:30-32 ~ As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. 31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”***

Let’s go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, as we come to Your Word this morning, we’re aware as always of our great need, our need of Your grace just to illuminate our understanding. To open our spiritual eyes, to open our minds and our hearts, and so we ask You to speak to us this morning by Your Word, by the power of Your Spirit. Father, we ask that You might search our hearts and help us to be more and more faithful followers of Jesus Christ. For Your glory we pray, in His Name, amen.*

One of the things we see is that one of the key themes in John’s Gospel is true, saving faith as contrasted with temporary and shallow faith. You might turn with me over for a minute just to set the context and read this passage in context. We see what John has already said about the nature of what it means to be a Christian

in this Gospel. This is Jesus' first stop in Jerusalem after His baptism. Some years before our present text he says in John 2:23:

***John 2:23 ~ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.***

***...many believed in His name,...*** Many believed in Him as the Christ. Many were convinced in seeing the signs that they saw that Jesus was truly the One sent from God. But look what it says about these same people in Verse 24.

***John 2:24-25 ~ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.***

It says they believed and there is a play on words going on, the word 'entrusting' in Verse 24, ***...Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself...*** It is the same root word of faith. He didn't believe that they were faithful and so He didn't give Himself to them. He saw their faith as something spurious, not genuine. In fact, John 3 then, we had the account of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, a very religious person who knows a lot of the Word of God, a Pharisee, a teacher of Israel, but what does Jesus say to him? "If you want to see the Kingdom of Heaven you must be born again. You must have a changed heart." It's not just a shallow faith. True, saving faith must go all the way down into the depth of the soul and change the person within.

We see the same thing in John 6. Remember in John 6 is one of the great signs or miracles of Jesus in the feeding of the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. Jesus feeds 5,000 men. That number 5,000 is the men that were there, so there's probably really, when you add women and children in, a crowd of about 20,000 people. With five small loaves, and two small fish, He feeds 20,000 people and there are 12 baskets of leftovers, big baskets of leftovers. The people see this happen and look at their response. They had a type of believing faith response.

***John 6:14 ~ Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."***

"This is the One we've been waiting for."

***John 6:15 ~ So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.***

They knew He was the Christ. “He’s the Prophet. He’s the One that needs to be king. He’s our deliverer.” What happens in the rest of the chapter, John 6, Jesus, when encountering this initial kind of faith, He tests it, and proves it by teaching. “You say you believe that I’m the Christ, let Me demonstrate to you what that really means that I’m the Christ.” As He explains to them in the words, Jesus said to them, ***“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”*** They’re like, “What do you mean you’re the bread of life? You’re the bread that’s come down from Heaven. We know His father and His mother, how can He say this? See, they keep stumbling at what He says. Finally He says, “You have to eat my flesh and drink my blood.” It says late in the chapter, Verse 66, many of His disciples withdrew and no longer walked with Him. What you see is this pattern throughout His ministry. Jesus was not concerned primarily with swelling the ranks of His followers.

When there would be a response to His preaching, and this is what has happened in evangelical circles, is there is an initial response and the desire is to get them baptized, signed up, numbered, and ensure that you never have to doubt your salvation. This is the kind of thing that’s been taught to you. You had an experience. Let no one ever question your salvation. Don’t you ever question it. Write down that you repented and believed on August 2, 1980, whatever it was, and never doubt. That’s completely inconsistent with the New Testament. The New Testament says that initial faith can sometimes be spurious. There can be in fact, great joy in initial faith.

Remember the story that Jesus told of the parable of the sower? A certain man goes out to sow and the sowing of the seed is metaphorical for the preaching of the Gospel. He goes out and he shares the good news of Jesus Christ and what He’s done. The seed falls on four different types of soil. It falls on the wayside, that means the pathway. The birds eat it and the seed doesn’t even get in the ground. It falls among rocky soil, and the seed actually blossoms. It blooms and you see the plant come up quickly, but then when the sun comes out, the seed on rocky soil withers and dies. When He was talking about rocky soil, He was talking about soil that had a thin layer of soil on top of stone. It was stony soil. Limestone in Palestine. Right below the surface of the soil there would be some limestone. There might only be an inch of soil there. So what happens when a seed germinates, it gets into the ground, it grows down before it grows up. It establishes its root

system. So seed that falls on good soil spends time establishing its root system before you see any evidence of it outwardly, to the eye. The seed that falls on that rocky soil that Jesus is talking about, there is no opportunity for there to be a root system established. It short-circuits itself and comes up more quickly so it looks like it's genuine. Jesus says the seed on rocky soil is like those who receive the Word with joy, but when affliction and persecution comes, turn away. What He's saying is that they weren't really ever saved. It's the seed that bears fruit, bearing fruit, 30, 60, 100. Everyone is not the same and there are periods of fruit-bearing, and there are periods sometimes of not fruit-bearing because the nature of Christianity is that we can backslide, but that the basic pattern is that true salvation manifests itself in endurance. That's exactly what Jesus is saying here. He's doing the same thing. He's testing. He's not looking just to say, "Okay, guys. Fill out a card. Now you're a Christian." He responds instead with, "You say you believe, let Me see." He's more concerned with the souls of people than that. He's concerned to be sure that they're saved.

#### 1) Answering the Call to Follow Christ:

So in this, we have a very helpful diagnostic to evaluate our own Christian lives, our own discipleship. Have we been born again? Are we truly following Christ? The Cost of Discipleship. I want us to look this morning, He basically in Verses 30-32, gives us three aspects of the cost of discipleship. We're going to organize our thoughts around these three points. The first is that what Jesus does is say, "What does it mean to be a disciple?" To be a disciple, a genuine disciple, means that you are answering the call to follow Christ. The first point is a call to follow Christ. That's what it means to be a Christian truly is that you are answering the call to follow Christ. Not just to make a momentary decision. Not just to say, "Okay, now I believe. I've got my fire insurance and now I'm going to just live my life with that assurance." No, to become a Christian is to follow Christ, what He says here in the passage.

***John 8:31 ~ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;***

"You are truly disciples of Mine if you continue in My Word." Now the first thing we need to look at is the word 'disciple' itself. It's a call to follow Christ, I said. The first point, and this really is explained when we look at the word 'disciple'. It's a very important word in the New Testament. A disciple, the noun disciple, an English word, comes from a Greek noun which is actually rooted from a verb. The verb means 'to learn'. So a disciple is a learner. In fact, in Greek culture a disciple

was someone who binds himself to a teacher in order to learn, to acquire practical and theoretical knowledge. He binds himself, this was Socrates, Plato, they had disciples, but in Jewish culture it took it to an even deeper level. The Rabbi and the Rabbinic culture, that the way that a man would learn the Torah would be to join himself, bind himself to a Rabbi, a teacher, in almost a servile relationship, as a servant. A master/servant kind of relationship. This is the way it was in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. In binding yourself, you were looking to that teacher to teach you, to really in a sense, to mediate to you the Torah, the law, the Word of God. The learner could read their Bible on their own, but in reality, as a disciple, they were constantly looking to the teacher to explain to them, to mediate the truth. So when Jesus comes on the scene and says, “Listen, if you want to be saved, you must become My disciple,” is what He’s essentially saying. You must attach yourself to me. You must bind yourself to Me, and learn from Me, and let Me mediate to you all that God has said in His Word.” It’s that kind of Christ-centered focus. It’s following Jesus. Becoming a Christian is not just making a decision about whether you want to go to hell or Heaven. That’s an obvious, no-brainer, isn’t it? The call to become a Christian though is a call, not just to make a decision about what you would like your eternal destiny to be, it is a call to a relationship, a living relationship with a person, your teacher, your Rabbi, that you will bind yourself to. Jesus is claiming there in the presence of many learned Pharisees and Rabbis that He is the One that everybody needs to follow. “Forget Gamaliel, forget Hillel, forget these other guys, bind yourself to Me.” It’s one of the reasons they found His teachings so offensive. They felt like He was infringing on their turf, and He was. He was claiming a unique position.

So it says a lot about what it means to become a Christian. It’s not a momentary event, it’s not just an emotional experience, it is a radical alteration of one’s life. It means that no matter what, I may still continue to do the work I’ve done. My work may be to be an architect or a salesman, and I don’t change that when I become a Christian, but in reality I change everything. It doesn’t just mean I had an experience, but it means I’ve radically altered my life. My purpose for living has changed. Now I’m a follow of Jesus Christ. I want everything I do in my life to be pleasing to Him. That is the call to follow Christ. That’s the first aspect of the cost of discipleship. It’s a call to follow Christ. So that’s the first mark of genuine discipleship, and the question is: Are you now, have you ever started following Christ, and are you now following Christ?

Now what can happen as we become Christians, true Christians, there’s a point where Lordship is a part of salvation. You don’t get saved by just saying, “I’d like to add Jesus to my life.” No, Jesus is everything. He’s got to be everything at some

point, and if He's not, then we've not been saved. But as a Christian, we sang earlier, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing", and one of my favorite verses in all of the hymns is that third verse: "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Take my heart, Lord. Take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above." The hymn-writer expressed in that tendency that we, because we're like sheep, we tend to wander, we tend to stray, we tend to forget what we're here for. But the Christian is the one who has made that initial commitment and when God uses His staff to get him, "Oh, yes. It's all about You. I'm sorry, Lord, I forgot, but I'm here, I'm back now. Forgive me and let me follow You." So it's not perfection but the direction of your life. Are you now following Jesus Christ?

## 2) A Call to Continue in the Word of Christ:

The second thing that He says about the cost of discipleship, it's not just a call to follow Christ, it's a call to continue in the Word of Christ. ***"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;...*** That *'if'* stands there before us. *If. "If you continue in My word,...* and then that word *'truly'*. ***...then you are truly disciples of Mine;...*** Here it is clear that Jesus is talking about the fact that there are many there in front of Him that are not truly disciples. In fact, the text is going to bear it out just like it did in John 6 and in John 2. There is this initial expression of faith. Many of those who heard Him believed in Him, but what does it say as you read through the rest of the chapter? Immediately, after Verse 32, when He says, "You shall know the truth. The truth shall make you free." They argue with Him. "Hey, we don't need freedom. What are You saying? We're not enslaved." He says, "Everyone is a slave of sin. Everyone who sins is a slave of sin," and they keep arguing with Him throughout the rest of the chapter. "What are you saying about our father? You're saying our father is not our father? Abraham is our father." Jesus says, "No, your father is the devil," and they don't continue in His teaching. Their initial assessment of Him they're okay with, but the more He clarifies, the more they reject. That is evidence of spurious faith. True faith continues in His Word, even the hard words of Jesus. It believes not only the first words Jesus speaks to us, "Repent and believe the Gospel," or "I am the Christ." It doesn't just believe those words, true faith believes all that Jesus says, and keeps on believing all that He says.

Charles Spurgeon in his sermon on this passage says this. Listen to what he says about true faith.

*To believe on Him in truth is also to believe implicitly. We believe all that He may yet say. We accept not only what He says which we can fully understand now, but*

*we also accept that which is as yet dark to us. We so believe in Him that we go with Him in all His teachings, be what they may. We not only go as far as He revealed Himself to us, but we are prepared to go as much farther as He pleases. What He says is the truth of God to us on the sole evidence that He says it. It's all we need. He said it, so therefore, we accept it. We believe in Jesus, not because we judge that what He says can be endorsed by our understanding, though that is indeed the case, but we accept it because He says it.*

There is a lot of meaning in that. It means that a Christian is someone who has submitted himself to Christ. He doesn't have to keep proving Himself to His followers. I mean, there is a sense in which He continues to demonstrate the truthfulness of His Word to those who are faithful. There is a sense in which true believers wrestle and wonder. We looked at Habakkuk the other night, Wednesday night. The name Habakkuk means 'wrestle', 'wrestling with God', trying to understand God's ways, because God has ways that are not our ways. As high as the Heavens are above the earth, so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts. So we sometimes find ourselves completely puzzled, in awe, of how this could be what God wills, but the Christian is the one whose disposition is to put himself under the word of Christ. Though I don't understand it or see it clearly, I will submit and trust You.

The unbeliever, the shallow faith, does the opposite. Spurgeon continues. This is the non-genuine faith. He says:

*There is another kind of faith which was produced by the Savior's testimony. It had much of hope in it, and yet it never came to anything. There is a temporary faith which believes Jesus in a sense, and after its own way of understanding Him, or rather of misunderstanding Him. This faith believes about Him, believes that He was undoubtedly sent of God, that He was a great prophet, that what He says is to a high degree reasonable and right, and so forth. This faith believes what He has just now said, but it is not prepared to believe on Him so as to accept everything that He may say at another time. This unsaving faith believes everything that commands itself to its own judgment. It does not, in fact, believe in Jesus, but believes in itself, and in Him only so far as He agrees with its own opinions. This faith is not prepared to obey Christ and accept Him as its Master and Lord.*

*This was the kind of faith these Jews possessed. It was a faith which was so crowded up with a mass of favorite prejudices that before long, it was smothered by them. They might accept Jesus as the Messiah, but then He must be the kind of Messiah that they had always pictured in their own minds, a leader who would*

*defeat the Romans, who would deliver Palestine from the foreign yoke, to rebuild the temple, to glorify the Jewish race. They half hoped that He might turn out to be a great leader for their own purposes, but they did not believe in Him as He revealed Himself as the Light of the world, as the Son of God, and as One with the Father.*

What is your attitude toward the Savior? Are you coming to Him on your terms? *I like what I've heard here, and I pick and choose what I have seen there.* Or are you coming fully surrendered? *Because You are the Holy One of God, I come and entrust myself to You. I will follow You wherever You lead, not just when You go where I want You to go.* I mean, think about just the picture of that. Someone says, "I will follow You." Everybody says, "I will follow You," and there is this mass of people that are going to follow Jesus, and Jesus is leading. He walks, and they say, "But I don't want to go that way. That's a hilly area. I don't want to go that way, so I'm not going to follow Him there, but I'll try to catch Him around the next bend." That's what he's talking about. *I'll follow Jesus as long as He rebuilds my marriage. I'll follow Jesus as long as He makes my life work. I'll follow Jesus as long as He doesn't make me suffer too much.* You see, I believe that He wants to do these things for me. I'm defining the Savior in my own terms, and when we're defining the Savior in our own terms, we do not know the Savior. We must repent of that. How can we come to the Lord of lords and King of kings and dictate anything? *You are glorious. You are the Holy One of God. You are the perfect Man. You are truly God Himself. You left glory. You came down. You gave Yourself, everything for me. You bore my wrath at Calvary. I will not come to You dictating anything. I just want You.*

That is the nature of it, and it's evidenced when someone continues under the hard words of Jesus. We find ourselves encountering hard words all the time. There are passages that you read and you struggle with. *I don't understand why God says this. I don't understand why He says this in this circumstance. Why did He treat Job like He treated Job? I mean, wasn't it enough the first layer of things that happened to him?* When you look at that carefully, what you see is the Lord is leading and guiding sovereignly everything that happens. Remember, Satan's actively working, but remember what happens in Job? Satan comes to God and they're talking. He's reporting to God in some way, and God says, "Have you considered My servant Job?" God starts the conversation. "I want you to take a look at Job." It wasn't Satan's idea to bring up Job. God says, "Have you seen a man like Job? He fears God. Look at his life, his holy life," and Satan says, "Well, he only does that because You've blessed him. Let me touch all that he has, and he will curse you to Your face." And God says, "Okay, touch everything that he has,

but don't touch him." God pulls back the hedge of protection. Satan couldn't touch him. "I can't touch him because You've got a hedge around him, but let me touch him and he will curse You to Your face," and so God says, "Okay," and God pulls back the hedge around Job's life. And what happens? Remember, it was terrible.

You read that chapter and it says that Job is sitting there and he gets word. Several of his servants were tending the different flocks that he had. He had a flock of camels. I can't remember exactly the particular, but sheep, oxen, and donkeys. He's got these different flocks in different places, and what happens is the Sabeans attack and the Chaldeans attack. It's like his camels get taken by the Chaldeans. His sheep get taken by the Sabeans, and they kill every one of his servants except one, so that there's one man left to run back home to Job and tell him what happened. Job is sitting there, this wealthy man, and he hears, "All of your camels have been stolen. A large part of your wealth is gone like that, and all of your servants except me, who were tending that, were killed, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While his words are still in his mouth, it says another servant appears at the doorway and says, "I've got to tell you. The Chaldeans came. They stole all of your donkeys and they killed all of your servants except for me. I alone have returned to tell you." And then a third one comes and says, "I was at your oldest child's house and he had a banquet, a party, for all of your children, and every one of your children were there. A great wind blew and it caused the house to fall and it collapsed and killed every one of your children, and all of the servants in the house except one. I escaped and have come to tell you."

Job had lost his wealth and lost his family in the blink of an eye, and he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord." So he maintains his faith. He maintains his integrity. And then in the next chapter, Satan appears before God, and God says, "Have you considered My servant Job? You know what happened. You said he was going to curse Me to My face." This is reading between the lines. The Lord's asking him, "Have you considered My servant Job?" and he said, "Skin for skin. He only serves You because You won't let me touch him. Let me touch him, and he'll curse You," and God says, "Okay, you can touch him," and He pulls back the hedge farther, "but do not take his life."

Satan gives Job these terrible boils, this terrible affliction, that from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, he's covered with these agonizing, painful abscesses, and in misery he goes out and he sits on the garbage heap, sits on the dump, the local garbage heap, and he begins to scrape himself with the potsherd, trying to deal with the itching, and the pain, and the agony. His wife, looking at him in his misery, comes out and says, "Job, why do you still maintain your integrity? Curse

God and die. Just put yourself out of your misery. Commit suicide. By cursing Him, He'll kill you, and then you'll be out of your misery," and Job says, "Why do you speak as one of the foolish women speaks? Shall we accept good from the hand of the Lord and not adversity?" In all these things, Job did not sin with his mouth or blame God. God was sovereign over all. Job knew the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. The Lord gives good things and the Lord gives adversity. The text endorses what he said. That's exactly right. God is sovereign. But he puts it in context of what's really true. "What do I deserve? I deserve nothing. Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked will I return," he says. "I deserve nothing good." In truth, we deserve only wrath.

So when you have the full realization of that, it changes how you see things. That's a part of what it means to come to truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ is you come to understand what I deserve, and the sense of entitlement dies. All I'm entitled to is hell. That's what I deserve. If God gave me what I deserved, I would have hell right this instant for all eternity. So the true believer, though, when hard words and the hard ways of God press in, they continue to cling to God. They continue to cling to His word. They continue to look to Christ. And it doesn't mean there are not moments of doubt. Job, after his great response in chapters 1 and 2, spends the next 37 chapters wavering. Then the Lord comes down and speaks to him and straightens him out. "Who is this who contends with his Maker?" And the Lord says, "You're telling Me that I've done something wrong? Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world? Where were you when I made the great deeps? Where were you? Who do you think you are to talk to Me and tell Me I've done anything wrong? Are you so wise that you can tell the eagles when they're to lay their eggs, and you can tell the cows when they're supposed to calve? Are you so wise and so all knowing that you know these things and you can contend with your Maker?"

Job says, "I put my hand over my mouth and I will say nothing against You." Job had known the Lord already. Job says, "I had known of You with a hearing of the ear, but now I have seen You with my eyes and I repent in dust and ashes, for now I have seen." That's really the way the Lord answers, and this is a much more beautiful and wonderful gift, but we just don't know it. We want God to make our lives go the way we want them to go, but what He does with Job is Job basically says, "Why?" After Chapter 2 when he says, "I'm not going to curse God and die," he wonders, "Why did the Lord let this happen to me?" He had all these questions, and the Lord basically didn't answer his questions. Or the Lord said, "The answer to your questions is not to know why. It is to know Me. That's the answer. That's the only answer I'm giving you is to know Me."

It's the same thing with Habakkuk. "Why are You doing what You're doing?" Habakkuk's asking. "Why are you letting the evil prosper?" And then God says, "I'm going to take care of the evil. I'm going to send the Chaldeans in. The Babylonians are going to come in and they're going to wreck everything," and Habakkuk says, "What? You're going to bring the Babylonians? They're wicked. You're going to use them, the most wicked people in the world, to judge Your people who are being sinful? But why would You bless the more wicked and judge us?" And basically the Lord says the same thing to him. "Are you going to tell Me what to do? You look at Me. The Lord is in His Holy temple. Let the earth keep silence before Him." That's what He says in Habakkuk 2:20.

In reality, when you humble yourself before the Lord and you continue in His word, you will find that He has always done the most perfect thing in what He's done. He does not make mistakes. Job finds that out. Remember how he blesses him? He comes to know Him. He sees His glory, and then it says that God begins blessing Job again so that the wealth and the blessing upon Job at the end is greater than it ever was before. But besides that, he knows God. He's come to know the Lord and see His glory and His beauty. That's what we were created for. That's what we long for. We don't realize. We forget, but the reason you and I were created was to be the image of God, that is, the reflector of His glory, to see His glory, to marvel at it, to stand in awe of it, and to reflect back to Him the radiance of His worth, to see the most beautiful.

We know it's innate in human beings to want to see excellence. I mean, different people have different things that we love. Some of you love to hear music done very, very, very well, and some of us just are happy if it's done okay. We don't know the difference. Some of you recognize the artistry of some painting. You see the brush strokes and the use of color, and you say, "Wow, that is phenomenal." Others of us don't see it so well. Some of us can say, "Wow, what an amazing drive that quarterback engineered in the football game. Did you see how he spread the ball around?" and all of that. I can get off on this actually a little bit here. And others don't care about that so much, but what is in every single one of us is the desire to see things done well, to see beauty, and glory, and excellence, and when we see it, our hearts leap within us. We talk about it when we achieve something. One of the most wonderful things when you've had some success is to talk about it with those you love, later, and you relive it. It's almost better in the reliving than it was in the reality of it. God made us that way. He made us that way, and it's a reflection of the fact that He's made us to look and to affirm the worth of all things, in its appropriate balance, and the most beautiful, and the most majestic, and the most excellent, is God Himself.

Everything that He is, He does perfectly. He is Holy and righteous in all of His ways. He is so powerful that He hangs the planets and the galaxies in their place and maintains them by the working of His power. In all of these complex things that are going on, He's also maintaining the tiniest molecules that make up the smallest cell of your body, and He's keeping that going. He's keeping our breath going. Every single person on the face of the earth, He knows the number of hairs on your head. He has all of that knowledge, and in spite of all of that, He's not too busy. He's interested in every single person in this room right now. He knows your heart. He knows your need. He knows whether you truly come to know His Son, our Savior, today. He knows if that's already happened, and if it has, He's calling you to Himself to walk closer and more deeply and to surrender more fully. And if you haven't, He's beckoning you today, "Come and be saved." Look upon Christ. He is willing to save. He's a sufficient Savior. There's no reason that you should hold back from Him.

Such is the glory of our God, and so it only makes sense that in an eternity, where we will spend eternity, there will be no monotony. That's unthinkable. We can't measure because we are such small creatures. We tire of things. We get bored of things. We can't imagine what it is to know the infinite glory of God and every day to keep knowing more about Him. Isn't it true that anything that you study and you study well, that you see as you learn more, that you know less? The more you study it, the more you see that there is more to know, and you come to know things more. It's wonderful to know what you know, and you're like, "This is so wonderful, but there's so much more there." Take the stars, take a piece of clover on the ground, and study, and study, and study, and you will see there's only more to know.

If that is the case with the handiwork of our God, what must it be to see His character? What must it be to contemplate His ways and to have Him reveal more and more of Himself throughout all eternity? We will be thrilled before Him, increasingly thrilled before Him. We will rejoice in His presence more after a thousand years that we've been there, more after we've been there a million years, more after we've been there a billion years. It will be sweeter and better, never lessening. That is what we're called to. And so in the meantime, it costs you everything. If you're going to be a follower of Jesus Christ, Jesus says, "You will submit to Me." You don't know the way that you should go. I don't know the way that I should go. He knows the way that we should go, and we submit to Him, we surrender to Him, and He says, "Now I'm going to lead you in paths of righteousness for My Name's sake. I'm going to satisfy you. I am the Bread of Life. I am the One who gives Living Water. You need Light. I am the Light of the

world. I'm everything that you need. Just surrender to Me. Place your trust in what I did at Calvary. There I took all of the wrath for every one of your sins that you ever committed. I took all of the guilt and the pollution and the anger of God." He took the righteous anger of God against all of the wicked sins that we've done, and Jesus bore them in His body on the cross. He suffered for them. He paid the sin debt in full, and if you believe that and you believe that death could not hold Him but that He rose from the dead on the third day, and you give yourself to Him, He is your Savior forever, and He will lead you in the best way. You will find yourself often puzzled. You will find yourself perplexed. You will find yourself tempted to say as Habakkuk did and as Job did, "Why is God mistreating me?" but if you're really His, you will continue to follow Him. Though you may stray away for awhile, you'll come back. The true follower comes back and perseveres.

So the hard words and hard ways of Jesus are actually an avenue and an opening to know Him more, and that's something that we need to learn, and I found this in my life. When I had the greatest doubts, when I've had times where His ways confounded me, or I've had times where I felt so inadequate in some area to do something – He's calling me and I'm saying like Moses, "What are you doing sending me? Here am I. Send Aaron." But when you find yourself in those moments, what happens is if you continue to seek Him and trust Him, eventually you see that was the best way. I never imagined all that God was going to do through that. Now, sometimes we don't because we haven't yet surrendered. If you've gone through something and you haven't yet seen that, it may well be because you haven't yet surrendered, or His timing is not yet there. Job had to wait until it was the right time, and then God showed him His glory. But the cost of discipleship is a call to follow Christ and it's a call to continue in the word of Christ. May the Lord help you to heed that call, answer that call, and know the wonder of following Jesus.

Let's pray together...

*Our Father, we stand in awe of You, and we confess just the amount of unbelief that remains in our hearts that causes us to doubt You with shocking regularity. Lord, we acknowledge that when You just give us a glimpse, a momentary glimpse behind the veil to see how Your plan works, we are completely swept away with Your perfect wisdom, Your infinite kindness, and Your complete trustworthiness. God, help us. Help us not to wander. Help us to trust, and to stay close, and to cling to Jesus as our Shepherd.*

*Father, for those this morning that You are working on to bring to Yourself, who haven't really given themselves to You, they've had a faith that was a shallow faith, a faith that was a belief in what they wanted to believe about Jesus, but that weren't ready to follow You no matter what, today show them that they can trust You. Help them repent and turn to You, and receive You as all that they need and all that they could ever want. Grant them new life. Father, we pray that You might become our all in all, that Your Son might be the increasing focus of our lives, the thrill of our hearts, and the contemplation of our minds, that He might be the center of everything so that we might be the people that You want us to be, and that we might begin to taste even more clearly the glory of Heaven. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.