

John 10:22-42

Marks of True Faith

And many believed on him there – v. 42.

Since John's purpose in writing his gospel is to persuade his readers to believe in Jesus Christ, it's not hard to understand why, then, he places such an emphasis on believing. No less than 86 times in John's gospel you find that word *believe* or *believeth*. It occurs in all but 3 of the 21 chapters of John's gospel. You can analyze John's use of the word under a couple of headings.

You could call one heading – an indicative heading. This would be those verses found in the various narratives that simply indicate that someone or a group of people believed. Examples:

2:11 *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.*

2:22 *When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

Our text this morning fits into this indicative category. So we read in v. 42 *And many believed on him there.*

Another category could be the invitations that come from Christ calling for men and women to believe on Him that they may have eternal life.

6:47 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

7:38 *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

Yet another category could be called purpose statements:

The purpose of John the Baptist's ministry is given to us in 1:6,7 *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.* And by now I trust you're familiar with the purpose statement of John's gospel given to us in 20:31 *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

If I were to take a verse of Scripture from another portion of the New Testament in order to make it a title to John's gospel, I think I could draw that title from Acts 16:31. This is Paul's exhortation to the Philippian jailer – *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

Believe! Believe! Believe! – that what John calls upon you to do. And don't think for a moment that because you profess to be a Christian that there's no place for you to hear and heed such an exhortation. You tell me you believe? I'm glad to hear you say it but are you happy with the degree of your faith? Is there no room for improvement of your faith?

We'll see later on how following one of the strongest affirmations the disciples make – in fact listen to it, it's found in Jn. 16:30 *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* That sounds pretty bold and confident doesn't it? and yet in the very next verse we hear Christ's response to their boldness – 16:31,32 *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

This is why the Christian needs to constantly attend to his faith. That faith definitely goes through seasons of high tides and low tides. And then or course if you've never exercised faith in Jesus Christ then these exhortations and promises apply to you. How I hope and pray that each one here who has not yet gained a saving interest in Jesus Christ will hear His words spoken directly to your heart by Christ through His Spirit and through His word: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life (6:47).*

Now one of the things we've noted on at least a couple of occasions is that John has in mind a certain quality of faith. We've noted how there were those that are called believers and yet they show hostility toward Christ. We saw this back in chp. 2 - Joh 2:23 *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast [day], many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.* That sounds good doesn't it? And yet in the very next verse we read: *But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*

Perhaps the most astonishing example of this phenomenon is what we saw in Jn. 8:31-33 *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?* The hostility would become so fierce between Christ and these "believers" that before the chapter is over we find them picking up rocks to stone Christ.

So we need to keep that ever in mind that there is a kind of "belief" so to speak that doesn't prove to be saving faith. The question we need to consider now in connection with our study in Jn. 10 is what kind of faith are seeing when we read in v. 42 *And many believed on him there.* Is this the same kind of belief that Jesus wouldn't commit Himself to? Is it the same kind of faith (so called) that results in hostility against Christ?

I'm inclined to think that this is not that kind of faith. It's not the pseudo-faith that doesn't lead to salvation. And the reason I say this is because the many that are referenced here stand in contrast to those Jews that so desperately tried to find a way to explain away the miracle that Christ performed in the last chapter of healing the man born blind.

Look again at the words of v. 19ff *There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?*

Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

This division is manifested again in the last section of chp. 10. You find the hostility of Jews being very intense. Verse 31 *Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.* Verse 39 *Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand.* Do you see the use John makes of the word *again*? This has become the repeated actions of Christ's adversaries. They're constantly trying to apprehend Him and stone Him.

In connection with those acts of hostility we read how Jesus then *went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode* (v. 40). And from this remote location we're told that in contrast to those that were hostile towards Him *many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there* (vv. 41,42).

What I'd like to do this morning, then, is to look at the marks of these believers that believed on Him there.

The Marks of True Faith

I want to call your attention to these marks with the aim that you may examine the quality of your own faith. The first mark of true faith, then, is found:

I. In the Willingness to go to Christ Outside the Camp

Note the words of v. 42 especially the last word of the verse: *And many believed on him there.* We're told in v. 39 that Jesus escaped out of their hand. That's a rather ironic statement when you think about it. The Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, the One that went about doing good and healing many of various diseases, casting out demons and teaching as One who had authority – The One who was in the beginning with God and was Himself God becoming flesh and now in this text having to escape out of the hand of those that would apprehend Him and execute Him.

They could not apprehend Him, however, because His hour had not yet come. But having escaped out of their hand we're told in v. 40 that *He went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.* Where John at first baptized was the very place where Christ Himself was baptized. This was a place marked by spiritual power when John the Baptist preached and large crowds came to hear him and were impacted by his ministry. The impact of John's ministry could still be seen as felt as those that resorted to Christ in that place recall John's ministry in v. 41 how John performed no miracle and everything John had said about Christ had proven to be true.

The thing I want you to see from the words of v. 42 now is that Christ left Jerusalem. The scene of this narrative opens in Jerusalem. Look at v. 22 *And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.* Jerusalem was, of course, the capital city of Israel. This is where the Israelites would come at different times of the year for the

observance of the various feast days. Passover would be in Jerusalem. The day of atonement would be in Jerusalem. The temple was, of course, at Jerusalem and so we find Christ walking in the temple in Solomon's porch (v. 23). The feast of dedication mentioned in v. 22 may strike you as something curious. This feast does not correspond with any of the feasts mentioned in the Old Testament. This was a feast that originated during the intertestamental period and celebrated the victory of the Maccabees over the Seleucids in the 2nd century BC. This feast is still observed today by Jews. We know it as Hanukkah and it's celebrated about the same time that we celebrate Christmas.

The point I'm now making is that those who chose to follow Christ, those who resorted to Him in that remote location beyond Jordan had to leave this central place of religious activity and go to Christ outside the camp. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us in Heb. 13:12 *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. And in the next verse he exhorts his readers: Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

What does it mean, then, to go to Jesus *without the camp*. What did it mean for those followers of Christ who resorted to Him beyond Jordan and *believed on Him there*? It meant that they had to be willing to see Christ above the status quo, so to speak. And they had to be willing to bear the reproach of identifying with Christ at the expense of being excommunicated by the Jewish authorities.

That may not strike us as being any big deal especially in our day and age when being excommunicated may mean little more than having to find another church which church probably cares little about a member being excommunicated by another church. To the Jews of Christ's day, however, it meant being ostracized from society. You were regarded as a betrayer and traitor to your country.

Eventually it would mean, as we discover in Acts 8 being driven from your home into exile. And it meant prison and it meant being sentenced to death as Saul of Tarsus shows us before his conversion. In our day, today, it means being regarded as ignorant and superstitious. It flies in the face of science and history, we're told, to believe a book that speaks of creation in 6 days and a universal flood, and a prophet being swallowed by a big fish, and a Messiah who performed miracles and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

Such stories might be useful for teaching moral lessons the way Aesop's fables teach lessons, but to actually say that there's historical veracity to the events recorded in the Bible is anti-intellectual. I wonder this morning – are you willing to go to Christ outside the camp? It's interesting that the author of Hebrews says exactly what going to Christ that way means. It means bearing His reproach.

There's also the reproach in these most recent days of affirming the truth of marriage between one man and one woman and the reproach of maintaining moral purity until marriage. And there's the reproach of placing your faith in a bloody sacrifice and seeing

yourself as a sinner in need of that sacrifice. Are you willing to go to Christ outside the camp?

This is the kind of question we're going to have to ask ourselves all the more in the coming days. Let's face it – there hasn't been, generally speaking, a high price to pay for believing in Christ in our land. You may be regarded as a little odd by some folks but beyond that what kind of price have we had to pay for identifying with Christ? When I look at the narrative of this chapter we've read from this morning in John 10 and I note the pattern of repeated hostility, it occurs to me that it became increasingly dangerous for those disciples to walk with Christ.

We'll see in the next chapter that when Christ calls on His disciples to go to the place where Lazarus had died, Thomas will respond by saying *Let us also go, that we may die with him* (11:16). It's easy to pass over that statement without taking into account the emotions and the courage that it would have taken at that time, given the hostility that was being shown toward Christ time and again to go to Lazarus with Christ.

And so are we called to go to Christ outside the camp. During the mid 1900's going to Christ outside the camp meant leaving the mainline denominations that had sunk into apostasy. And in more recent times it meant leaving the popular evangelistic campaigns that gave legitimacy to apostasy and to Roman Catholicism. The Fundamentalist movement at its best was a movement that went to Christ outside the camp and sought to plant new churches and establish new institutions of learning that would be unashamed to bear the reproach of identifying with Christ and identifying with the Bible.

So this is the first mark, then, of true faith. The person who has it is willing to go to Christ outside the camp. *And many believed on him there*, our text reads. And where is there? It's outside the gate; it's beyond Jerusalem. Have you gone to Christ outside the gate? Are you willing to bear the reproach of truly believing in Christ?

The next mark of true faith is found:

II. In the Acceptance of Christ's Identification of Himself

I and my Father are one – Christ says in v. 30. It's interesting to note how false cults will misinterpret these words in such a way as to suggest that Christ only means that He and His Father are one in purpose. Listen to these words from a modern day theologian and preacher:

“This text has been ripped from its context time and again in church history. In the fourth century, Arius used this verse to argue that Jesus was one with the Father only in the sense that they agreed on the same mission. In other words, the Father and the Son thought alike; they embraced the same ethic. But Arius denied that Jesus was God. Jesus, he said, did not share in the being of God or the essence of God, only the agenda of God. In our day, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons interpret this text the same way; they hold that it cannot be interpreted as an expression of deity for Jesus.”

“To get at the true meaning of Jesus' words here, we must consider them within their context both the immediate context and the broader context of the whole book, and even that of the whole Bible. We know that since the very first chapter of this Gospel, John has been laboring the point of the deity of Christ; he began by saying that in the beginning, Christ "was with God" and "was God" (1:1). We see this purpose fulfilled again in this passage. Jesus said of His sheep, "I give them eternal life" (v. 28a). No creature has the power or the authority to give eternal life, but Jesus claimed to have that power and authority. Unmistakably, He claimed to be God.”

This preacher's interpretation is confirmed by the reaction of the Jews toward Christ. Verse 33 *The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.* In spite of the way the cults fail to understand what Christ meant, the Jews understood Him perfectly. And it made them angry. They viewed Him as committing blasphemy. And for a mere man to make such a claim it would be blasphemy, but Christ was not a mere man.

And so He called on them to look at His credentials in terms of the works He had done. Verses 37,38: *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

Believe the miracles, Christ is saying in effect. The man born blind came to the right conclusion when he said to the Pharisees in 9:32,33 *Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

I wonder this morning – do you believe in the miracles performed? There have been those, you know, who search for what they call “the historical Jesus.” These are they which try to remove from the Bible all references to the supernatural and then they consult other sources outside the Bible in order to discover “the real Jesus” so to speak. They have no faith. Oh they have the faith, I suppose, to acknowledge that there must have been a real man in history by the name of Jesus. But they have no faith that Christ and His Father are one. They have no faith that He opened the eyes of a man born blind and they certainly have no faith in a virgin born Savior who kept the law and died for our sins and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

Do you accept Christ's identification of Himself this morning? Do you believe in the works He performed? Do you believe the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Him? Do you believe the Scriptures that bear witness to Him? I need to point out before I leave this point a very important statement Christ makes about the Scriptures. This statement is found in a couple of verses that on the surface seem puzzling – vv. 34-36:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; 36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Before I explain these verses let me first call your attention to Christ's view of the Scriptures: *the scripture cannot be broken*. You see what a high view Christ had of the Scriptures? They cannot be broken. You may recall from the Sermon on the Mount that He also said *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled* (Mt. 5:18).

Make sure you align your view of Scripture with Christ's view of Scripture no matter what "scholars" so called may tell you about Scripture. And what about this statement that Christ makes about men being called gods? The statement is from Ps. 82:6. I think the best and most concise explanation I've found for Christ's words here are found in the Reformation Study Bible:

Under the old covenant, human judges could be called "gods" because they were viewed as acting in God's place in dispensing justice. The Hb. word *elohim* is used not only to refer to the one true God but also to denote false gods, angels, and, very rarely, men exercising divine functions (as in Ps. 82:6, cited here by Jesus, in which the human judges' mortality appears in the next verse). Jesus' argument may be understood as follows: "Rather than taking offense because this word is used of Me, you should examine My credentials, which prove My Father has sent Me into this world."

That same preacher I cited earlier adds this: "By citing this verse, which gave evidence that some mere mortals were called gods, Jesus was not implying that He was a mere mortal too. That's not the way the argument was going. This is a "lesser to the greater" argument. Basically Jesus was saying to His adversaries, "If it was OK in Old Testament times for people who were mere mortals to be called gods, how much more legitimate is it for one who is God incarnate to be called God?"

So you have a number of indicators by which to test your faith for its authenticity. Have you gone to Christ outside the camp? Do you believe in His identification of Himself as the Son of God? Do you believe in His miracles? Do you believe John the Baptists' testimony regarding Him that He is *the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*? Do you believe the Scriptures and the testimony they bear toward Him?

Remember John's purpose in writing his gospel – He wants to persuade you to believe. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31). Oh may the Lord give faith to those who don't yet have it and may He increase the faith of those that do.