

John Ch16v25-33 - True Faith In Jesus Can Stumble

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Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Sam Ross

[0:00] Thank you.

Would your Bibles please to John chapter 16? And that's on page 1084 of the Church Bible. John chapter 16.

And we're going to read from verse 25 to the end of the chapter. John chapter 16.

John chapter 16.

And we pray that you would help them in the coming days. And help them as they seek to raise her in the ways of Jesus.

[2:00] Lord, we also thank you now for this opportunity we have to read your word, which gives us new spiritual life.

And that's what we need this morning. But we cannot see Jesus as beautiful, as glorious, and as what we need most unless your spirit opens our eyes to see that.

Teach us now from your word. Lord, help us to understand it. We pray all of this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. John 16, verse 25.

Though I have been speaking figuratively. A time is coming when I will tell you plainly about my father.

In that day, you will ask in my name. I'm not saying that I will ask the father on your behalf. No. The father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

[3:16] I came from the father and entered the world. Now I'm leaving the world and going back to the father. Then Jesus' disciples said, Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.

Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.

Do you now believe? Jesus replied. A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered each to your own home.

You will leave me all alone. Yet I'm not alone for my father is with me. I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world. I have overcome the world. Do you ever doubt if you are really a Christian?

[4:37] Maybe sometimes you feel like a fraud. Like everyone in church thinks you have this great faith. But really you don't.

Inside there are more doubts than you are willing to admit. Your love for Jesus is just not what it once was. Or maybe you don't feel like a fraud.

But sometimes you do compare yourself with others when you look across the hall and church. And you think my faith is just so weak in comparison. I mean listen to the way that they pray.

Look at the smile on their face every time they speak about Jesus. Look how sure their faith is.

Even when they are going through a really hard time.

And then you look at yourself. And your faith seems so weak. Barely even hanging on. And you just know you have stumbled so many times.

[5:48] Now if that's you this text today has good news. Because it turns out we are in good company.

The disciples in this moment had an immature faith. And they were about to stumble really badly in that faith.

How will Jesus respond to them? Well in our text we are going to see two things. Number one.

What true saving faith in Christ is.

Number two. How our faith in Christ can be immature. And it can stumble. And yet still be true faith. First. Saving faith is belief in Christ. Which is shown by our love in him. Now the first thing we need to establish is.

[6:49] What does it actually mean to be saved? Maybe you've heard that word thrown around in church a lot. What does it actually mean? Well if you look down in verse 27.

Jesus gives a very simple summary of what it means to be saved. He says. The father himself loves you. Isn't that amazing?

Beforehand. Before hand. We were God's enemies. Because of our sin against him. Which condemned us. But now. We've been saved. From the judgment.

That we deserved. And we've been brought into. The love of the father. Forever. Adopted as his children. He loves us.

Just as he loves his son Jesus. We are safe in him. That's what it means to be saved. But in verse 27.

[7:45] Jesus goes on to explain. How we were saved. How do we get into this relationship. With the father. Most of us would naturally think. Well it's something that we do.

Must. Earn the father's love. Like maybe we earn it. By how much we serve God. Or by working really hard.

To follow his commandments. But Jesus turns that on his head. In verse 27. He says the father loves you. Because you've loved me.

And have believed. That I came from God. We are saved. Through simply believing.

In Jesus. Now John really wants. To get this across. In his gospel. An interesting fact. The word believe.

[8:45] Is written in his gospel. 97 times. In the other three gospels. Matthew. Mark. Luke. Only 36 times. Now every gospel writer.

Affirms that faith in Christ. Is necessary. John locks in on it. Now what. Is John saying.

We must believe. About Christ. In order to be saved. Well. Read from the end of verse 27. Jesus says. You have believed.

That I came from God. I came from the father. And entered the world. Now I am leaving the world. And going back to the father.

So here's what we believe. Number one. We believe. That Jesus. Came. From the father. He is God the son. He existed.

[9:42] With the father. In eternity past. Equal. With him. Jesus life. Did not begin. As a baby. In Mary's womb. No.

He never had a beginning. He is God the son. Eternally. That's what we believe. Here's the second thing. John says. We believe about Jesus. That the father.

Sent him. Into the world. To save. His people. From their sin. So through. His death on the cross.

Taking the judgment. We deserved. And through his rising. From the dead. Defeating. Our sin. And death. He has saved us.

Okay. That's what we believe. He came into the world. He did that redeeming work. For us. Here's the third thing. That we believe about Jesus. That after finishing.

[10:39] His work of redemption. He ascended. To heaven. Once more. To be at the father's side. In glory. In power. Forever.

We believe. That Jesus. Is in heaven now. Interceding for us. So. If you were to summarize. All of that. We could say. We believe.

Jesus is both God. And savior. And it's not complicated. It's not complicated. To believe that.

Jesus says. Even the smallest children. Can understand. And believe. That Jesus is both God. And their savior. Paul says. In Romans.

He says. If you declare with your mouth. Jesus is Lord. And if you believe. In your heart. That God. Raised him from the dead. You will be saved.

[11:36] There's no doubt. That is true. Saving faith. Our instinct is to say. Oh that's too easy. Surely there's something.

I've got to do. Surely there's a work. I need to complete. To earn. God's love. No. The gospel says. The work is done. Jesus did everything necessary.

To pay for your sin. You must simply believe. You must simply receive. In faith. What Jesus has already done. For you. That is true.

Saving faith. And if you are someone. Here today. Who has not yet believed. In Jesus Christ. As your savior. As your Lord. You don't need to know. Everything there is to know. About God. God. You may never even have. Picked up the Bible. Before in your life. You don't have to have. All religious. Lingo.

[12 : 32] Or know how God works. All you need to know. Is that you're a sinner. And Jesus. Is both God. And your savior. Believe. In his death.

And resurrection. For you. Declare him. To be your Lord. Today. And you will be saved. That is the promise. You will be forgiven.

Of all your sin. Past. Present. Future. You will be brought. Into. God the father's love. For eternity. That is saving faith.

And it's so. Simple. But there's something else. Jesus says. Comes alongside. Believing in Christ. I wonder. Did you notice it? As we read. Verse 27. Have a look at it again. He says. The father loves you. Because. You.

[13 : 28] Have loved me. And. Have believed. That I came. From God. Our faith. In Jesus. Is shown. By our love for him.

True. Love. For Jesus. Springs. From. Our faith. In him. Faith. In Jesus.

Can never be. Separated. From. What we feel. From our affections. What we love. Jonathan Edwards.

One scholar said. True faith. In great part. Consists. In holy. Affections. He's saying. A true Christian. Is not merely. To believe.

The right things. About Jesus. But to have. The right affections. For him. To love. Christ.

[14 : 25] As your treasure. Beyond all other things. Now the point. About true love. Is that you can't. Fake it. You can't. Force. True love.

My wife. Loves coffee. She. Earnestly. Desires. That I would love. Coffee too. For years. She has willed me. To love coffee.

She thought. That maybe. Being a teacher. Would help me. Love coffee. I didn't. She thought. That maybe. The exhaustion. Of having kids. Would make me love coffee.

But it didn't. None of it worked. I just don't think. It tastes good. So why would I love it? Sorry to all. The coffee lovers. In this room. This is hard for you to hear.

But it's the same. Actually. With loving people. In some ways. Right? Nobody chooses your friends for you. You can't turn on. True feelings of love.

[15 : 23] Like a tap. For someone that you've never loved before. Your love. Flows out of seeing.

The beauty. Kindness. Of that person. Over time. And so it is with Christ. When we believe in Christ. For the first time. It's because of the Holy Spirit's work in us.

He opened our eyes. To see. The beauty of Christ. His glory. His kindness. His mercy. And we began to love him. Where we never did before.

And the more. In our lives. That we see. Of the beauty. And grace. Of Christ. The more we love him. And that proves. Actually. That our faith in Jesus.

Is not just some cold. Intellectual assent. To a certain set of truths. About a man called Jesus. Who lived 2,000 years ago. No.

[16 : 20] It's a matter of the affections. It's a matter of love. Love. And love. Is one major way. In the scripture. That shows the reality. Of our faith.

Now maybe you're saying. At this point. If true saving faith. Is believing with my heart. That Jesus. Is God and Savior. What about the weeks.

That I doubt he's even there. What about the days. Of sin. When I doubt I'm forgiven.

Is that real faith. If I doubt. Or you might be thinking. If true saving faith. Is shown.

By my love for Jesus. What if I don't love Jesus. Like I did at first. What if my love. Has grown cold. What if there are days.

[17 : 23] That go by. And I can't even say. I've wanted to spend time. With Jesus. In his word. Or. To talk to him in prayer. Am I really saved? If my faith.

Is weak. And my love. Is like a little flicker. Is there. Is there. Well I think. If we look. At the disciples. Example.

Right here. And how Jesus. Responds to them. We can learn something. Really important.

Because. We just read. Jesus. Affirmation. Of these disciples.

True faith. He has literally just said. The father loves you. Because you love me. And you've believed in me. All right. There's no doubt about that. These disciples have true saving faith. And yet. In the rest of this passage. We're going to see the immaturity. The weakness. Of that faith. And the imminent stumble. These guys are about to have.

[18:21] In their faith. This faith is far from perfect. And yet Jesus says. It's still true. Saving faith. And that's amazing. So we're going to draw out.

Some of the implications of this. As we read. Let's. Look first at their. Immature. Faith. Have a look in verse 29. Then. Jesus disciples said. Now you're speaking clearly. And without figures of speech. Now we can see. That you know all things. And that you do not even need. To have anyone ask you questions. This. Makes us believe.

That you came from God. If you were asked. How do you know. Jesus is God. What would you say. You might say something. Along the lines of. Well. He rose from the dead. No one can do that. But God. You might talk about. How he defeated. Sin and death.

[19:24] How. Jesus reveals perfectly. Who God the father is. That's another proof. He's God. God. You might talk about. His flawless life. His power over nature. All these different things.

Now we must remember. That. What the disciples say here. Is just a little snapshot. Of. Their faith. And they.

This is before. They saw Jesus die. And rise again. And before the Holy Spirit. Filled them. So their faith is not yet. Fully matured here. But they do say.

We know your God. Because you know all things. And you can read our minds. That's how we know your God. Don Carson. One scholar says.

This confession of faith. Shows up. Just how weak. A foundation. Supports their. Immature faith. At this point. It would later.

[20:19] Strengthen. And mature. Over time. By the work of the spirit. But for now. This faith. Lacks. Maturity. They don't know. All there is to know.

About Jesus. And their reasons. For believing him. And his God. Are very weak. And yet. Jesus has just.

Affirmed. This faith. As true. Saving faith. Even. In its immaturity. How can he do that? It must mean.

That the maturity. Of our faith. The strength. Or size of it. Is not what matters. To Jesus. The thing that matters. Is who our faith. Is placed.

In. Though. It's an immature faith. These disciples. Have placed. All of this faith. In Jesus. And that's what matters. Jesus says.

[21:13] That's enough. It doesn't need. To be a perfectly. Strong faith. To be a true. saving faith. To be a true. Saving faith. It's not about.

How strong. Your faith. In Jesus is. It's about. How strong. Your savior. Is. Who you have put. Your little faith.

In. This. This. Is still. Saving faith. That we don't see everything.

And don't. Know. Everything. And have much. Room. For improvement. And growth. And that's why. Comparing ourselves. To others in church. Can be so unhelpful.

We can disqualify ourselves. From saving faith. By thinking. Oh my faith is so weak. Compared to them. I seem to have so many more doubts. I don't love Jesus.

[22:08] Like they do. And all those things. May be true. But if your faith is in Jesus. No matter how frail. Or weak. You think it might be. You're just as much in Christ. As the person.

Who's sitting beside you. Or the person. On the other side of the room. Now of course. We should long. For a stronger faith. We should long.

To be more mature. In our faith in Jesus. That's a good thing. To desire. It's not like we should be happy. With having a really weak faith. And loads of doubts. No. Yeah. We should want.

To grow. And strengthen. Over time. And that comes. As the Holy Spirit works. In our lives. It comes through reading God's word. Through walking with each other.

As brothers and sisters. Through receiving good teaching. On Sunday mornings. And other opportunities. During the week. In the life of the church. You know. The more mature our faith is.

[23:04] The more we enjoy Christ. The more we experience. His love. And his peace. Yes. This is a great. Thing. To desire. But. We're never going to have a perfect faith.

This side of heaven. And just remember. Even. In your weakness. Even in the frailty. Of your faith. If it's placed wholly in Jesus. It is true.

Saving faith. So take heart. One more application. On this point. For those who. Might feel stronger. In their faith today. Listening to this. We need to care for those.

Who are weaker. Or younger. Or lacking maturity. In their faith. And Paul speaks of this. In first Corinthians. Chapter 12. He talks about the church. Being like a body. Christ.

Is like the head. And all. The members. Of the church. Are like parts. Of. That body. And he says. The parts of the body. That seem to be weaker.

[24:02] Are indispensable. Each member. Must care. For one another. Especially the weaker parts. So. We must all work.

To help each other. And we must all work. For one another's. Growth. And maturity. In the faith. So. Think about that. What are you doing. To help those who are weaker. And how can you come along. And strengthen them. And encourage them. In their faith.

Faith. So. Firstly. Immature faith. In Jesus. Is. True. Saving faith. But what about.

A stumbling faith. In some ways. It's easier to believe. That. Jesus accepts. My weak. Frail faith. But what about.

[24:58] When I mess up. What about. When I stumble. It could be. When we indulged. In some sinful pleasure. We never should have gone near.

It could be. When we were too afraid. To speak about Jesus. When given a golden opportunity. In our family. Maybe. Maybe we lost our temper.

At a family member. And knew. We'd blown it. Or. Told a half truth. At work. Just to get. Ahead. It's one thing. To be weak. And immature. In our faith. But to stumble. In our faith. And in that time. Deny.

Jesus. By our actions. That's what can really cause. Doubts. In our hearts. That. That can make us. Feel like a fraud.

[25:56] Am I even saved? How can I come back. From this? Well look at Jesus attitude. Towards his disciples. Because they were about.

To stumble. In an awful way. They were about to. Run away from Jesus. At the point of his greatest need. Now have a look at verse 31.

And Jesus says. After the disciples. Have professed faith in him. He says. Do you now believe? That's a puzzling verse.

I struggled with that one this week. What is Jesus saying here? Is Jesus questioning. Their true saving faith? Well I think we've established.

Already in this passage. He's not. Because he just affirmed it. And if we're in any doubt about that. In chapter 17. About 10 verses ahead. Jesus again affirms.

[26:53] Their true saving faith. So Jesus isn't. Questioning their faith. Here. When he says. Oh do you now believe? It's not like that. It must mean something else. I think it's fair to say.

Jesus could read. Their hearts. Better than they knew. He knew. He knew. The weakness of their faith. At this moment. And though it was real saving faith in him.

It was going to stumble badly. In a matter of hours. Have a look. At what he says. In verse 32. He says. A time is coming. And in fact has come. When you.

Will be scattered. Each to your own home. You. Will leave me. All alone. Now you may know the story.

Jesus. After this. After chapter 17. Jesus. Takes his disciples out. Into the garden of Gethsemane. And when the chief priests. And leaders. Approach. To arrest Jesus.

[27:56] The disciples. Flee. After everything they'd seen. And heard. Everything they believed. About Jesus. They left him alone.

They were. Jesus. Chosen companions. Who he'd. Poured his life into. Over three years. And.

They ran. To save their own skin. In his.

Darkest hour. Now just get yourself. Into the shoes. Of those disciples. That night. Think about. How they were feeling. Think about.

The next day. That afternoon. How were they feeling. The pain. Of regret. The crushing. Sense. Of having. Disowned.

The lord of life. Himself. What does he think. Of me now. Surely. He won't accept me anymore. Surely.

[28:53] Everything that I. Said. In terms of my belief. Is. Cancelled out now. I've disproven. All that. And yet.

I still believe. In him. I've just. Failed him. So badly. I denied. Him. Well. Here's the amazing thing. Because. As the disciples. Were dealing with the pain.

Of their own sin. Jesus. Was literally. Dying on the cross. For it. As the disciples. Were wondering. Is there any way back? Jesus. Was making.

The way back. As they wondered. How could they ever pay. For the wrong they'd done. Jesus was paying for it all.

On the cross. Jesus died. For all of our stumbling. Into sin. Our faith may be weak. Our savior is strong.

[29:48] Our sins. They are many. His mercy is more. Don't think that you were ever. Written off. That you were damaged goods. Or beyond. The love of the father.

Because even if our faith. Is weak. And stumbling. If that faith. Is in. Jesus. We are safe forever in him. And in the father. Have a look.

What Jesus says. His very next words to them. Verse. 33. He says. I have told you these things. So that in me. You may have peace. Now after you've denied.

Jesus. After you've stumbled. In your faith. That's. That's when our minds. Are most filled. With doubts. And anxiety. Peace.

Seems the last thing. That you or I could have. In those moments. Jesus says. In me. You will. Have peace. In. Jesus. United.

[30:44] To. Him. Christ. Has committed himself. To us. Christ. Looks. You and me. In the eye. And says. I have made vows.

To you. I will never. Let you go. You will at times. Abandon me. I will never. Abandon you. Even when you stumble. I will never.

Leave you. You will. Always be mine. Because of your faith. No matter how weak. Or afraid it is. It is in. Me. And every time. You stumble.

You will come back. To me. For repentance. And your forgiveness. Will be guaranteed. There is no need to fear. You can. Have.

Peace. Even in your stumbling. Even. In your weakness. And as for these disciples.

[31:39] Well. Maybe you know some of the rest of their story. Their deserting Jesus. Was just. A stumble. You can read it all about how Jesus forgave them.

And empowered them. As imperfect as they were. To be his witnesses in all the world. And over time. Their faith grew. It strengthened.

It matured. Now it would never be perfect. But that's not what Jesus expects. Jesus accepts. Our faith.

As it is. Weak. In many ways. Stumbling. And yet. Faith. Placed. In him. I'm sure there are many times.

These disciples. Stumbled again. Even in their role as apostles. As the foundation of the church. And yet. They knew Jesus forgiveness. Every time.

[32:39] Even here. On the night before Jesus death. They were never apart. They were never apart. From Christ. Isn't that amazing? Jesus never left them.

Even when they fled. And neither will Jesus leave us. In our stumbling. In our weakness. Because it's not the strength.

Or the size. Of our faith that matters. It's who our faith is placed in. A weak. Stumbling faith. Placed holy in Christ.

Is true. Saving faith. Remember that. And when you stumble. And when you fall. Just keep. Coming back. To your savior.

In repentance. Knowing you're accepted. And knowing you are forgiven. Nothing. Can separate you from his love. And that gives you peace. A peace that the world cannot give you.

[33:45] Because Jesus has overcome this world. He. Has overcome all of our sin. And all of our stumbling. Let us thank him. For this amazing.

Salvation and assurance. Now. Let's pray. Let's pray. Jesus.

We are sorry. For our doubts. We are sorry. For our sin. And how we stumble.

And wander from you. Even though. We know you are both God. And savior. We repent of that. And yet. And yet.

We thank you. For the assurance. That we are safe. In you. Lord Jesus. We thank you.
[35:06] For the relief. That it is not the size. Of our faith. Or the strength. Of it. That counts. As true. Saving faith. But it is. Who.

We have placed. Our faith in. Today. Strengthen us. Encourage us. Where we feel discouraged. Where we know doubts.

Where we have stumbled. Remind us. That we are safe. In Christ. Let this. Just encourage us. Further on. With Jesus. Or place that longing. In our hearts. To grow. To mature. To know more. Of your love.

And your peace. To enjoy. You. More and more. Help us. By your Holy Spirit. To remember these things.

[36 : 02] Amen. Amen. We are going to sing a song. And I think this one really helps us. It kind of brings together.

What we have thought about today. Use this song as a prayer. Amazing words. When I fear my faith will fail. Christ will hold me fast.

This is a great song. To take the focus off our own weakness. And our own stumbling. And put the focus back onto. Our strong, Savior.

[illegible]