

John 6:60-66

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[0:00] I get the privilege of preaching from two passages at the end of John chapter 6, one today and one next Sunday, Lord willing.

! I have an amazing passage that communicates some very encouraging truths.

! Today I will be reading the entire section because there's a sense in which they're both intertwined. But each one does stand alone and has a chiastic center that we'll be looking at.

So today let's look at the whole passage and then we'll be focusing just on the first. John 6, 60.

It is the spirit who gives life.

[1:37] The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.

For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him. And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the father.

After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, do you want to go away as well?

Simon Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

And we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God. Jesus answered them, did I not choose you, the twelve?

[2:49] And yet one of you is a devil. He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

Heavenly Father, we look to you and your word this morning, asking that your spirit would move among us, illuminate us, allow us to breathe the fresh life that your word provides.

Help us to see your truths and cling to them, cling to Christ, instead of drifting away. Through your spirit, feed our souls and strengthen our faith today.

In Jesus' name. Amen. There are a few passages in scripture that show the divide between true and false disciples as well as this one does.

In the midst of a crisis of faith, where many of Jesus' disciples turned away from following him, Peter makes an amazing, faithful confession.

[4:09] Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

Now, I believe that confession is a clear demonstration of the drawing love of the Father, the life-breathing breath of the Spirit, and the keeping power of our Savior.

This same kind of faith and divine preservation can be seen throughout the history of the church. Through the crises of faith that happened in each generation, and though from generation to generation that crisis or crises differed, God has continued to preserve a remnant of true believers who remained faithful to him.

And you don't have to look far around you to see the same contrast in our generation. We've seen pastors, worship leaders, Christian authors, even friends or family members who once professed faith, now saying, I am no longer a Christian.

Their reasons vary. Some talk about suffering. Some talk about unanswered prayer. Church hypocrisy. Unanswered peace. The difference between science and the Bible.

[5 : 48] Apparent contradictions in the Bible. Moral restrictions. Divine justice. And the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ.

And they can use any kind of new terminology they want to justify it, but it is simply unbelief. At the same time, the church is still alive and growing and in many places thriving.

God's faithfulness to his people is unchanging. And he wants to strengthen you today to endure well. The question I believe this text puts before us this morning is how do we respond when Jesus's words confront us or when others walk away?

And the wisdom I believe this passage also provides is this. When confronted with Jesus's difficult teachings, he wants you, he wants me to hold on to his words, to be strengthened by the life that the spirit gives through them.

I believe this text shows us at least three reasons to cherish and hold on to Christ's words. One, because they expose your sin.

[7 : 24] Two, because they are your life. And three, because he holds on to you. So let's start with considering the first reason to hold on to Jesus's words.

Verses 60 through 62. Hold on to his words because they expose your sin. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the son of man ascending to where he was before?

Now, verse 60 introduces us to another group of people. They weren't just the crowds that followed because of the signs. They weren't the religious leaders from Judea called in this passage the Jews who were already predisposed to find fault with Jesus.

No, these were his disciples. People who had committed to follow him and to learn from his teachings. But they found Jesus' words hard.

[8 : 44] The term used here, skleros, translated hard, doesn't mean hard to understand. It means hard to accept.

they obviously didn't understand all that he was saying. But they resisted what they did understand. John's use of the term grumbling in verse 61 puts these disciples in the same category as the unbelieving children of Israel who grumbled in the wilderness when the manna, when they got tired of the manna.

the claims Jesus made earlier about coming from heaven and his superiority to Moses most likely bothered them as well.

And his words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood provoked them and exposed the true state of their hearts. They really didn't believe.

this is what Jesus knew in himself when he responded to their grumbling. He then says to them, do you take offense at this?

[10 : 00] Then what if you were to see the son of man ascending where he was before? Now this response might not be easy to understand but I believe it is instructive.

he refers to himself as the son of man a messianic title and he speaks of ascending to where he was before another affirmation of his pre-existence both things that they had trouble believing.

Yet he used those words to indicate that their offense was unfounded. In essence he was saying if you can't accept my words now how will you respond when you see me exalted?

And perhaps understand that that exaltation had to come through death and resurrection. And what's the greater offense anyway?

The image of eating flesh and blood or of death of the Messiah king through envy and jealousy.

- [11 : 20] Their offense wasn't just a metaphor, wasn't just about the metaphor, it was about his identity and his mission. He had said earlier, don't work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give you.

They couldn't accept that. They couldn't accept that he was the son of man from heaven and they couldn't accept what he was saying about their own misplaced priorities.

Whether they could understand it or not, Jesus was simply saying that eternal life comes through believing in and partaking of him as the one who gives his flesh and blood for the life of the world.

The apostle Paul refers to the preaching of the cross as a stumbling block to the Jews and as folly to the Gentiles.

But he adds that those who are called both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- [12 : 38] But these disciples considered hard and couldn't believe is that God has provided for you to live through Christ.

Even when we don't fully understand his words, we must hold on to them for our own eternal good. How do you respond when Jesus' words expose your sin?

Do you receive them with faith or do you struggle with them? Every difficult teaching of the Bible exposes what's in our heart.

It shows us where we're at. And let me tell you, after 40 years, it doesn't get any different, any better. When you open your Bible and the words cut deep, someone said, remember, they are words that heal.

God's truth is like a surgeon's scalpel. It may sting, but it never cuts to harm. It cuts to heal. And so, when confronted with Jesus' difficult words, hold on to them.

- [13 : 59] When they show you your sin, take them before God in prayer. So that's the first reason, then, to hold on to Jesus' words because they gracefully expose our sin.

Now the second reason. Hold on to the words of Jesus because they are your life. for 63. It is the spirit who gives life.

The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. In this verse, we come to the central verse of the passage, the chiastic center, what some have called the interpretive heart of the passage.

church. And Jesus really is continuing his response to their offense as well as expanding on the teaching of the way to life.

The disciples' unbelief had blinded them to the most significant part of Jesus' teaching. Their focus on the flesh and blood imagery and the idea of coming from heaven caused them to miss the entire point of his message.

- [15 : 19] He had been showing them the way one gains eternal life and that was centered in him. The word life is mentioned directly and alluded to in various ways 25 times or more in this chapter alone.

It speaks of never hungering, never thirsting, never being cast out, being raised on the last day, never dying and living forever.

Now, in this passage, he adds, it is the spirit who gives life. Well, that thought echoes Ezekiel 37.

If you remember Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones where God tells Ezekiel to call to the corners of the earth for the breath to come and it did and brought those bones back to life.

And then God interprets that vision for him, saying this is the spirit of God and the spirit breathes life into the people of Israel.

[16:36] And then again in John 3, we saw that there Jesus tells Nicodemus, you must be born of the spirit. The flesh is no help at all.

No amount of human effort, reasoning, or religion can produce eternal life. Only the spirit can. And with this word, Jesus addresses the real issue that's in the heart of man, self-reliance.

D.A. Carson writes, this phrase sums up the entire problem of human self-reliance. We cannot produce spiritual life through human means.

But notice, the spirit gives life through the words of Christ. the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

The words themselves, even the difficult ones, are spirit and life. Andreas Kostenberger writes, Jesus' words are spirit because they are animated by his spirit and communicate spiritual truth.

[18:00] They are life because they mediate the life of the kingdom to those who receive them by faith. J.C.

Ryle adds this, the Christ's words, when received and believed, quicken the soul, feed the heart, and sanctify the life.

life. The same spirit who gave life to sinners then works through the word of God today. You cannot separate spiritual vitality from the word of Christ.

When you receive his word in faith, the spirit uses it to awaken and sustain life in you. So, what if you feel spiritually dry?

Don't look to something novel. Don't look to the wisdom of this world. Look to Christ. Go to Jesus. Hold on to his words.

[19:15] Feed your soul on the word of God because his words are spirit and life. Read the scriptures daily. Meditate on them deeply.

Obey them joyfully. Someone once said, if your Bible stays closed, your faith will grow cold. But when you feed on the word, the spirit will breathe life into your soul.

And I believe that's what God intended when he said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

So, hold on to Jesus' words because they expose your sin, because they are your life, and now thirdly, hold on to the words of Jesus because he holds on to you.

But there are some of you who do not believe. for Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.

[20:28] And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

Jesus states plainly what we have assumed all along that there are some of you who do not believe. And John comments that Jesus knew this all along.

And knowing this, I think it's interesting that he didn't soften his message. he didn't try somehow to eliminate the response, the offense.

You see, unbelief is more than doubt. It is resistance. It is rebellion against the truth.

It's not just innocent doubt. It's rejection. rejection. And John's gospel portrays unbelief in various ways.

[21 : 42] It's the rejection of the light. It's the love of darkness. It's the hardness of heart. And yet Jesus knew also that this unbelief would serve God's plan.

He knew who it was who would betray him. God's And at this point we are told that many turned away from him.

Unbelief results in that apostasy. But Jesus' final words in the section are both challenging and confronting or comforting.

Yeah, they're both that too. No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. These words are also hard words for many.

No man can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. He stated that once before and he's telling them that this is the reason why I said it before and he repeats himself.

[23 : 03] And the context in which he said that before was the grumbling of the Jews. How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

And his answer was no one can come to me unless the Father draws him. And here he says it a little different.

No one can come to me unless it's granted to him by the Father. Now those words challenge our pride. It challenges us deeply because the implication here is that it really has nothing to do with you.

And I have to admit that this is probably one of the in the what is it 40 years that I've been a Christian probably one of the most difficult words I've heard people complain about Christians complain about this idea that no one can come to him.

And the objection is well how can God not give you and me a choice? And that is the implication here that these people who walked away really didn't have a choice.

[24 : 23] But that's not true. All it says is that no one can come to me unless it's granted to him by the father.

You see these people had a choice. They made that choice and their choice followed the natural inclinations of their unbelieving heart. God. They were free to choose and they chose what they wanted.

And it's still true today. To come to Christ requires more than a simple choice.

It requires the grace of God. God. Because all men have inherited our father's Adam's nature. And that nature is a nature of sin and death.

And it takes the grace of God to draw. It takes the grace of God to give us faith.

[25 : 34] faith. In fact that is the implication of what Jesus had said earlier as well. I didn't write this down but I have to read it.

So let me look for it. In verse 35 Jesus says I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst. Now this is an example in Greek of a Hebrew parallel ism.

And it's a synonymous parallel. It says two things that are basically the same. One whoever comes to me shall not hunger.

And two whoever believes in me shall never thirst. The parallels are come to me and believe in me.

[26 : 45] And shall not hunger and never thirst. Both references to life. God and the implication there is that coming to Christ is the same as believing in me.

And so when we read this chapter here or this verse here where Jesus emphasizes at this critical point of a crisis of faith where he could have said anything.

He could have tried to soften his message. He could have tried to encourage them to faith somehow. He basically concluded that no one can come to me believe.

In other words believe unless it is granted him by the father. Definitely hard words but the word of God.

These words challenge our pride. They remind us though that salvation is by grace alone. And they bring us comfort assuring us that those to whom the father draws Jesus will never lose.

[28 : 04] That's the assurance we have verses 37 through 39. All that the father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. This is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day.

This is why we need to hold on to Christ's words. One of my favorite psalms is in is psalm 63 and one of my favorite verses in that psalm my soul clings to you your right hand upholds me.

Two sides of the coin my soul clings to you your right hand upholds me. Over quite a few years now I've had the privilege of holding many babies in my arm 14 of my own children 29 of my own grandchildren plus many others and I learned early that babies have and Renee tried to tell me it was something about a moral or palmer reflex and she wasn't sure which one it was in this case but they have this reflex so that when you're holding them and if you were walking and stumbled a little bit they would react and I remember one time specifically when one of my children were holding onto my hand while I was walking and I did sort of release my grip a little bit and I felt a strong little finger hand grabbing onto my finger and it was a it was a great feeling to experience that and and

I realized that if I were to slip and release that grip would never have held that baby there was just no way but he gripped anyway he gripped because that's what he needed and this verse reminds me so much of that experience my soul clings to you your right hand holds me take heart if you belong to Jesus he will not let go you might feel weak your grip might slip but his grip never does when others walk away don't interpret that as a failure of the gospel it's a an exposure of unbelief when you abide when you keep holding on remember it's because the father the spirit and the son are holding on to you so what is

Jesus saying through this passage hold on to my words even when they're hard when they're hard they reveal truth expose!

[31 : 46] sin and point you to grace hold on to them because they are your life the spirit breathes through them hold on to them because I am holding on to you my grip is stronger than your weakness when others walk away and many will remember what Jesus says he wants you to endure well when truth offends listen when faith feels weak rest in his strength because the very words that once seemed hard are the words that give you life hold on cherish!

Cling! Rely on! Never let them go! Let's pray together!