

- I. Jesus speaks truth to the crowd about themselves and about Himself
- A. John 6:60-71 . . . Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" [61] But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? [62] "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? [63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. [64] But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. [65] And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." [66] As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. [67] So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" [68] Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. [69] We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." [70] Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" [71] Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.
- B. Pray
- II. Who is on the Lord's side?
- A. John 6:60-61 . . . Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" [61] But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?
1. Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" There are two lessons we can learn from this verse.
  2. First, we can learn that in spite of the large number who followed Jesus and counted themselves His disciples, not all were true disciples. Not all of those who followed Jesus truly believed in Him to the degree of accepting all His teachings, and doing what He said. In fact, we can conclude that the majority were not true disciples, for John says that MANY of Jesus' disciples found His words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood too difficult to accept.

- a. As I said last Sunday, the Greek word translated “difficult” means hard or harsh in a way that is so offensive that those who heard it were probably disgusted by it and would never imagine themselves doing it. In response to these difficult words, many of Jesus’ disciples withdrew and were not following Him anymore (vs 66).
  - b. This should not surprise us, for Jesus told the parable about the Kingdom of Heaven being like a field in which the farmer sowed wheat and an enemy sowed tares. Same field, two kinds of plants, one you eat and the other you can’t (Matthew 13:24-30).
    - (1) And Jesus also said that “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. [22] Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' [23] And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'” (Matthew 7:21-23).
    - (2) And finally, Jesus said, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. [14] For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).
  - c. The lesson to learn is that getting large numbers to attend church or to call themselves “born-again Christians” does not mean all are born again. Therefore, our focus ought not to be on numbers, but on repentance, true conversion, and godly living – for these are the marks of a true Christian.
  - d. And keep this in mind as we work our way through this section, for this truth comes up again.
3. The second lesson to be learned from vs 60 comes from the question, “who can listen to it?” And the “IT” here is the difficult words about eating Jesus flesh and drinking His blood.
- a. This question, “Who can listen to it?” is asking, who can accept this as rational and reasonable? To answer this question, let me ask another question. Why were these disciples of Jesus unable to accept what Jesus said as rational and reasonable? And the answer is unbelief.
    - (1) Whatever these disciples wanted with Jesus and from Jesus did not include trusting Him fully and unquestioningly.

- (2) And in vs 64, Jesus confirms that unbelief was their problem when He, “But there are some of you who do not believe.”
- b. I want to use this part of the story to point out that nothing Jesus says is too hard to accept – if we truly trust Jesus.
  - (1) And when I say accept, I mean there is nothing too hard to accept as rational and reasonable.
  - (2) And when I say truly trust Jesus, I mean believe that He is perfectly good, and that whatever He says is true, and that we can do what He says because He enables us to do it, and that we must do what He says if we are to have life within us and life forevermore.
- c. If you think or act as if something Jesus says is too unreasonable or too hard to accept, the problem is not with Jesus or His words, it is with you.
  - (1) For example Jesus says to store up treasure in heaven rather than on earth.
    - (a) And yet there are those within the church who consciously conclude that this way of life – at least in certain ways – is unreasonable. And there are those in the church who don’t think about what they are doing yet live as if this way of life is unreasonable.
    - (b) However, the problem is not with this way of life, but with those who want some of the things of this world and ways of this world more than they want the things and ways of God. It is the fleshly desires of their heart and their earthly focus that makes it appear as if this way of life is irrational and unreasonable.
  - (2) A second example that is commonly spoken of by Christian men as too hard or even impossible to fulfill, are Jesus’ words to us men, be we young or old, that we are not to look at a woman in a lustful way, for to do so it to commit adultery in our heart.
    - (a) The most common explanation I hear as to why this is impossible is, “It is hard!” Which is their way of saying it simply cannot be done. No man can live this perfectly or be this godly.
    - (b) The second most common explanation as to why this is impossible is, “Every man looks and lusts once in awhile. It’s only natural!” Which is their way of saying that since

every man does it, it is unreasonable for God to expect me not to do it.

- (c) However, the problem is not with the rule, but with the man who has not yet done what God has given him to do and enabled him to do in order to have his heart and mind in the right place in order to live by the rule.
  - d. Therefore, it is not what Jesus says that is so difficult, it is the desires of our heart for things other than what Jesus says and our unbelief that make it hard to accept and live according to what Jesus says.
4. But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?"
- a. The word grumble means to murmur or mutter with discontent, and to quietly complain. Are you a quiet complainer? Such grumbling may not be obvious to the rest of the world, but it is to God. He hears it. May we learn to be content with God, what He says, what He is doing, and what He is allowing.
  - b. Rather than explain why they shouldn't grumble, Jesus challenged the genuineness of their commitment to Him. In other words, would they believe and be a willing, faithful, and cheerful follower, or would they grumble and complain at some of His teachings, ways, and requirements, and as a result question His worthiness to be followed?
    - (1) This is an important question, because most often it is the things we don't want to give up, or we don't want to do, or we don't understand and won't put in an effort to try and understand that causes us to stumble.
    - (2) In other words, too often we are our own cause of stumbling. The writer of Hebrews put it this way, "Let us also lay aside every encumbrance (*whatever we have in our life that weighs us down so we cannot run well*) and the sin which so easily entangles us (*this is not our neighbors sin or the nations sin, but our sin which we have cherished and practiced*), and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus (*which requires looking away from other things so as not to be distracted from seeing Jesus*), the author and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2).
  - c. Do you stumble at some of the teachings of Jesus? Are some of His teachings more than you want to live up to because they limit your participation in some of the pleasures of the world or a

specific sin or two that you truly treasure? Do you ignore some of His teachings or treat some of His modeled behaviors as too unrealistic or too hard to put into practice?

- (1) Are some of His requirements and ways more than you want to whole-heartedly and faithfully obey?
  - (2) In other words, do you follow Jesus most of the time and most of the way, yet stumble over one or two areas and in so doing refuse to follow Jesus all the time and all the way?
- d. If Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then to follow Him partially is to reject and therefore miss out on part of the way, part of the truth, and part of the life Jesus has for us. This may not seem like much of a loss when viewed from the perspective of the earthly and fleshly things you hope to gain by partially following Jesus, but when viewed from the perspective of having the way, the truth, and the life that Jesus is, it is such a great loss that you will eternally regret having lost it.

- B. John 6:62 . . . "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?
1. In other words, you won't stop at not accepting just one of the things Jesus says, there will be more things you will stumble over.
- C. John 6:63 . . . It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
1. Without explaining exactly what He meant in vs 53-58, Jesus declares that what He said is to be understood from a spiritual and eternal perspective, not a literal and earthly perspective.
  2. In other words, Jesus was not talking about literally eating His flesh and drinking His blood, for at best, it may prolong our physical life, but it cannot give us spiritual and eternal life.
  3. However, the world measures life in such things as heart-beats, a sound mind, quality of life, possessions, wealth, position, and power. And it is true, these things represent a form of life that can be somewhat satisfying as long as it endures. But it is a shallow, fleeting form of life, and in the end it is gone forever.
  4. True life is measured by such things as faith in God, a changed heart, a transformed mind, godly living, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, submission and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, intimate fellowship with God, and love in its pure form – for these things are deep, rich, eternal in nature and eternally satisfying.

5. There is one final point I want to make here, and that is this: only the Spirit of God can give life. But notice what Jesus says, the Spirit gives us life through the words Jesus speaks (and spoke). Therefore, the Spirit gives us life as we read, understand, and proceed to live according to what Jesus says.

D. John 6:64-65 . . . But there are some of you who do not believe (*not all*). "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. [65] And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

1. Jesus was not looking to attract just anyone. The size of the crowd was not His measurement of success as a prophet or minister or as the Son of God. He was looking for something much higher, more nobler, and that would last throughout eternity. He was looking for those who had the kind of spiritual reality and quality required to believe in Him, accept and live according to His teachings, and endure to the end, for these were the ones His Father was granting to Him.
2. What about you? What do you prize most when it comes to church life? Is it numbers? Do you think that the larger the crowd the more successful the church? Or the more popular the preacher the more godly he is and the more he speaks for God? Are you prone to measure spiritual success by the numbers?
3. Imagine talking about the Christian faith, and about following Jesus, and about living a Christ-like life in a way that would drive more attendees away than it would draw in.
  - a. I can assure you that no one who measures success by the numbers drawn in would do such thing. Yet Jesus did. He said that in order to have life within, we must eat His body and drink His blood.
  - b. My point is that Jesus drove more away than He drew in. His numbers decreased rather than increased. Why? Because He cared about something far more vital, far more precious than large crowds.
  - c. He cared about reconciling sinners to God, and for that He needed true disciples who wanted to persevere so as to endure to the end.
4. Paul spoke about this matter of numbers in 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. [15] For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among

those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; [16] to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? [17] For we are not like many, peddling the word of God (*using sales techniques*), but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

5. Do you realize that to sell the gospel and church life you must present only – or at least mostly the positive side and the beneficial side and the self-serving side of believing in Jesus. Why? Because to sell anything you must appeal to people's self-interest and show them what they will gain from buying what you are selling.
  6. My encouragement to each of us is to follow after Jesus and call sinners to repentance and Christians to godly living. This may never be the path to large numbers, but it is the path to genuine Christians. This is the path Jesus took, and this is the path we should take even though the next verse shows it to be unsuccessful in relation to numbers.
- E. John 6:66 . . . As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.
1. This is not something to take pride in, but it is a reality that we are wise to accept as an inevitable outcome of preaching the whole gospel and teaching those who respond to observe all the Jesus commands us to observe.
- F. John 6:67-69 . . . So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" [68] Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. [69] We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."
1. Notice that faith comes first, for it is a decision of the mind and the will. We decide to believe in Jesus, and then we work out our decision.
  2. The practical assurance of our faith comes second, for it is the result of experiencing in daily life the outcome of believing in Jesus.

### III. Conclusion

- A. John 6:70-71 . . . Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" [71] Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.