



John 6:60-71
Will Ye Also Go Away?

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

61 When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you?"

62 "What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"

63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they 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 would betray Him.

65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

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

69 "Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

Jesus preached these words in the synagogue at Capernaum. There were many present there listening to Him. Given the miracle of the feeding that He had just done, and the plot to make Him king, it was probably standing room only that day. But while many heard these words, very few profited from them. The majority rejected the message, saying to themselves, ***this is a hard saying, who can understand it?***

Now the word translated "hard" there is σκληρός. It means "harsh" or "rough". The saying was not *hard to understand* it was *hard to accept*. "To some Christ's sayings appear hard to understand. To others, as in the present case, they appear hard to believe, and harder still to obey. It is just one of the many ways in which the natural corruption of man shows itself." – JC Ryle. As another commentator put it, ***"to this day many a man's refusal of Christ comes not because Christ puzzles and baffles his intellect, but because Christ challenges and condemns his life"***

I recently saw a video that illustrates this concept rather well. I don't know if you know about this but Oprah has created her own new-age religion, and as part of the initial kick off for it, she was answering questions from callers and one person asked her how it was she had come to this point, ***"Oprah: I was able to open my mind about the absolute indescribable hugeness of that which we call "God." I took God out of the box because grew up in the Baptist church and there were, you know, rules and, you know, belief systems indoctrined.***

And I happened to be sitting in church in my late 20's and I was going to this church where you had to get there at 8:00 in the morning or you couldn't get a seat. And a very charismatic minister, and everybody was just, you know, into the sermon. And this great minister was preaching about how great God was and how omniscient and omnipresent, and God is everything.

And then he said, and the lord thy god is a jealous god. And I was, you know, caught up in the rapture of that moment until he said "jealous." And something struck me. And I was like, I think about 27 or 28. I was thinking God is all, God is omnipresent, God is—and God's also jealous? God is jealous of me?

And something about that didn't feel right in my spirit because I believe that god is love and that god is in all things. And so that's when the search for something more than doctrine started to stir within me."

Oprah heard something that offended her natural sensibilities, her conception of God, religion, and salvation, she didn't like the idea of God being "jealous" Incidentally God is Jealous, that is biblical, not Jealous of Oprah, (what kind of ego do you have to have misinterpret the word that way?)

Exodus 20:4 " You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

God is very jealous for your love, He wants your whole heart, he doesn't want to share it with false idols who can't save. He is rightly jealous because He alone is worthy of your love, and incidentally, given that He alone can save you, His jealousy is good for you in the long run. He wants your love not because it adds anything to Him, but because of it means eternal life to you.

But Oprah, like so many others, found that to be harsh, and so offended, she left Christ's church to create her own religion. In these verses the issue was over Christ's discourse about his flesh and drinking his blood, his listeners were hung up and offended by the idea of physically eating flesh and drinking blood, when in fact Jesus was talking about believing in Him, and the even more offensive idea that only by believing in Jesus could men be saved. He made this even more clear when He said *"The flesh profits nothing."* Look its not my flesh, or literal bread, or anything physical that can do any good to the soul. You get spiritual benefits through the heart not the mouth.

HE says It is the spirit that give life, and His words, His teachings, applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, are the way that this life is given to us. Paul points this out graphically in Romans 10:6-17

Romans 10:6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above)

7 or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

...

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. {explain – don't have to do something to be saved, but rather hear and believe the WORD}

We also see even in the midst of all this unbelief, another testimony to the Deity of Christ. In verse 63 he remarks on what they were thinking and *asks in essence* would you believe even if you saw me ascend and go back to heaven? Indicating once again that He was no human prophet, but the promised Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14, which means God with Us. It is because he is the God man, that as verse 62 tells us Christ knew what was in their hearts, what they were thinking.

Jesus knew from the beginning who amongst the wider circle of disciples was truly his, and who was merely a hanger-on. And he also knew who was a true Apostle and who was not. In fact, these verses make it clear that Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot would be his betrayer when he chose him – incidently Iscariot simply means “man of Kerioth” – the town he came from.

Have you ever considered the testimony to the patience and love of Christ, to His longsuffering in that from the very beginning He knew that Judas was going to betray Him, and yet for three years He walked with Him, ministered to Him, and treated Him with the same patience, compassion, and affection as the other disciples? Doesn't that make that kiss in the garden particularly poignant and heart wrenching?

And what a warning it is to our own temptations towards hypocrisy! Friends, remember, you may be able to deceive Christ's disciples, but you will never be able to deceive Christ. Therefore, remember it is infinitely better for you to be weak and stumbling in your faith, than to be deceitful, untrue, and insincere.

Now Jesus doesn't want you to be confused as to why so many will not accept his words, that is why he said in at shouldn't surprise us though that some cannot accept His words, he says in verse 65 – **"Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."** In fact the tense in the Greek *is I keep saying to you*, no one can come to me unless the Father brings them. As we have seen already in John, and will continue to see as we go through this gospel, believing the gospel and coming to faith is not easy, in fact according to Jesus it is impossible for the natural man. Unless God the Father gives someone the grace to believe they will not do so. It's kind of ironic, isn't it? Jesus explains that the reason men stumble at his “hard sayings” and don't believe in Him is that haven't been predestined and effectual called to faith by the Father, which is yet another saying that is hard for men to believe. You want to really offend someone? Tell them they are dead in their sins and they can't be saved unless God the Father graciously chooses to save them.

Now see if you can follow me here. The very fact that Jesus does that shows the utter lack of pragmatism in His preaching. Unlike I might, Jesus doesn't think, this particular teaching is pretty hard to accept, so I'll just give them that one by itself. Instead, he says you have difficulty with that? Try this, and this, and this... That in itself shows the absolute confidence of Christ that the Father will bring all His chosen Sheep to Him. The preaching of Christ shows us that your salvation doesn't

depend on your being given an agreeable message that is easy for you to accept. The preaching of Christ shows us that same gospel that will offend and drive away the reprobate will draw and save the elect. What does that mean, well while our preaching should be understandable, and gentle, and winsome, it means we don't have to compromise or be pragmatic. Contrary to popular thinking, we don't have to strip out the hard things, and the doctrines, and water it down in an attempt to make it suit every palate. And if someone says to you, "Oh no, we do!" say Why? Jesus Didn't! the Apostles Didn't! Did they not know how to preach the gospel?

Final Application: I want to leave you with a warning and an exhortation. To those of you who are following Christ, know this - it is *inevitable* that something in the Christian faith, some teaching of the Word is going to rub you the wrong way, prick your conscience where you don't want to be pricked, or force you to a long hard look at some aspect of your life, your faith and beliefs, or your practice, and your first reaction will be to become angry, to refuse to submit, and it is at that point that your great enemy will hit you with one of two temptations.

The first temptation will be to do what the synagogue hearers did in these verses, he will tempt you to simply stop walking with Christ. He'll provide you with a hundred and one justifications for doing exactly that.

The second temptation is something that the synagogue hearers couldn't do at the time, and that is to reject the historical Christ and the historical Christian faith, and to create your own "Christ" a Christ who is the way you want him to be, a Christ who is tame and safe, a Christ who never confronts or exposes your sin and calls you to repentance, or drives you out of your comfort zone. That Christ, however is not the real Christ, that is an idol of your own making, an expression of your desires, not the mighty savior of the bible. For instance to go back to Oprah "*God in the essence of all consciousness isn't something to believe — God is. God is. And God is a feeling experience, not a believing experience. And if your religion is a believing experience, if God for you is still about a belief, then it's not truly God.*"

So what should you do when those things that rub you the wrong way?

Follow Peter's example. Peter didn't say at this point, "*Lord all your other so-called disciples may have difficulty accepting these things, but it's a piece of cake for us. What's next? Challenge us some more.*"

No, Peter's answer to Christ's critical question displayed indicated it was hard for them as well, but showed that ultra, critical, absolutely necessary element that is indispensable for following Christ – HUMILITY. **Even if what you say is sometimes hard for us to swallow, even if at this moment you and your teachings aren't popular and everyone else is walking away, where will we find a true guide to heaven if we abandon you? What merely human Rabbi or religious teacher can give us eternal life if we reject the counsel of the Son of God?**

Note also, that whenever Peter showed this kind of humility, he did well, but when he evidenced pride – as in all the *not so Lord moments* and the declaration, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble" he did poorly and garnered nothing but admonition. There is no place for chest thumping in the Christian faith, for telling the Lord you know better, or thinking you are SuperChristian and that everyone else is a lowly worm by comparison.

So in those moments when you find yourself, challenged, confused, offended and tempted, then is moment to pray, to cry out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" In those moments we need to trust and obey and as Ryle counseled, "If we find any of Christ's sayings hard to understand, we should humbly remember our present ignorance, and believe that we shall know more by and bye."

When you are tempted to go elsewhere remember that what Peter said here is true. Where else can we go to be saved? Jesus and only Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and only He has the words of Life. If you, reject those words, turn your back on Him, and go away, you are turning your back not only on Him but salvation. So when you are tempted, say in you heart, ***to whom shall I go? Jesus, You have the words of eternal life***