

Title: **“FROM THAT TIME”**

Text: John 6:60-71

Subject: *Perseverance*

Date: Sunday Morning — May31, 2009

Tape: John #51

Reading: *Matthew 13:1-23*

Introduction:

(John 6:60-71) “Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? (61) When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? (62) *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? (63) It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. (64) But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. (65) And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. (66) From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (67) Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? (68) Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. (69) And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (70) Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? (71) He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.”

“*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*” (v. 66). — Note those words, “*from that time.*” — **This was a time of great importance in the history of our Lord's earthly ministry.** It was a time when the vast majority of those who had been following our Lord forsook him. They wanted a miracle, but not a Master. They wanted a wonder worker, but not a Sovereign Savior. **This was a time of great importance to the Jewish nation.** God's Messiah had come. The law and the prophets were being fulfilled before their very eyes. God himself assumed human flesh and dwelt among men. But he was despised, rejected and hung up to die upon a cross. Therefore, God removed all light from that nation, left it desolate and destroyed it. **And this proved to be a time of great importance to the church and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

“FROM THAT TIME”

Her first real trial had come. Just when she began to gain some influence and respectability among men, many who had joined themselves to her forsook her. — *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”* **What was this time?**

1. IT WAS A TIME OF DECLARATION.

Our Lord plainly declared the gospel to these men. He had told them many spiritual truths concerning himself and his kingdom. They were confused and offended by his doctrine. So many turned away and walked no more with him.

- **He had declared God’s eternal purpose of grace** (37-40).

(John 6:37-40) “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. (39) And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

- **He had declared his own deity** (v. 46).

(John 6:46) “Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.”

- **He had declared his divine sovereignty** (v. 63).

(John 6:63) “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.”

- **He had declared man’s inability** (vv. 44, 63, 65).

(John 6:44) “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

“FROM THAT TIME”

(John 6:63) “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.”

(John 6:65) “And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

- **He had declared that salvation is the work of God alone.** — Chosen by the Father — Redeemed by the Son — Called by the Holy Spirit
- **He had declared that salvation comes by divine revelation.**

Salvation is the gift of God. It is not what man does for God that saves his soul, but what God does for man. God alone can make you a new creature in Christ. God alone can give life to dead sinners. God alone can make you an heir of eternal glory.

2. **THIS WAS A TIME OF DECISION** (vv. 53-54).

(John 6:53-54) “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. (54) Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

These men must choose Christ and feed upon him, or they must choose the dry husks of empty ritualism and Judaism and drink from the polluted cistern of self-righteousness.

3. **THIS WAS A TIME OF DEFECTION** (66).

Many of those who had followed Christ and professed to be his disciples forsook him. They went back to their old companions, to their own hearts’ lusts. They went back to their old, empty religion. They went back, and walked no more with the Lord.

Proposition: There are many who follow Christ for a while, and afterwards turn away from him; but there are some who, clinging to Christ with a steadfast faith, cannot leave him; and the only difference between the two is the free, sovereign, distinguishing love, mercy and grace of God.

“FROM THAT TIME”

There are some very obvious lessons in the passage we have before us. Yet, obvious as they are, they are lessons that are missed altogether by most. So listen carefully, with your Bible open before you, and ask God the Holy Spirit to teach you.

1. Here’s the first lesson that is obvious in our text. — **THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST IS OFFENSIVE TO LOST MEN.**

Both the religious and the irreligious are offended by the doctrine of Christ, specifically by the doctrine he taught. We do not have to guess what that doctrine is (vv 60-65). — **It is the doctrine of salvation finished by Christ.**

(John 6:60-62) “Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? (61) When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? (62) *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?”

Our Lord Jesus ascended up to heaven because he had finished his work. He had finished all he came to finish.

Another thing that offends men is the doctrine our Savior proclaimed in verse 63, the blessed declaration of the fact that **salvation can be obtained only by God’s sovereign, quickening Spirit.** In every place there are some who believe and some who believe not; and the determination is altogether God’s work. The matter is determined from eternity by God’s decree in election (Acts 13:48; John 10:25), by Christ’s accomplishments in redemption (Galatians 3:13-14) and by the Holy Spirit’s irresistible grace and quickening power.

(John 6:63) “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.”

- It was the Spirit that quickened the dead body of our crucified Substitute. His flesh did not quicken itself to life.
- It is the Spirit that makes the Word preached to have quickening power. — “*The flesh profiteth nothing!*”

“FROM THAT TIME”

- It is the Spirit that quickens the dead sinner. — *“The flesh profiteth nothing!”*

Another thing taught by our Savior is so offensive to proud man that none can or will receive it, as our Savior here declares it, except they be taught of God and quickened by the Spirit. — **That is the doctrine of man’s utter inability in all things spiritual** (vv. 63-65).

(John 6:63-65) “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. (64) But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. (65) And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

- No man can believe, except the Spirit quicken him. — — *“The flesh profiteth nothing!”*
 - No man can understand the things of God except the Spirit quicken him. — *“The flesh profiteth nothing!”*
 - No man can revive his languishing soul (Song of Solomon 5), except the Spirit quicken him. — *“The flesh profiteth nothing!”*
 - No man can keep himself from evil (Peter in the Judgment Hall), except the Spirit quicken him. — *“The flesh profiteth nothing!”*
 - No man can restore himself when fallen (Peter at Galilee after His Fall), except the Spirit quicken him. — *“The flesh profiteth nothing!”*
2. **MANY WHO SEEM TO BE CHRIST’S DISCIPLES GO BACK, AND WALK NO MORE WITH HIM.**

(John 6:66) “From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”

Many follow Christ for a time, but are stumbled when they hear that salvation involves a personal union of faith with Christ. Many in this passage were following Christ. They were evidently much taken with Christ. They called him a prophet. They wanted to make him a king. They followed him across the sea. Yet, when he told them that he is the bread of heaven, they murmured. When he told them that they must eat his flesh and

“FROM THAT TIME”

drink his blood to have eternal life, they said: “*This is a hard saying;*” and it was for this reason they turned back, and walked no more with Jesus.

So it is now. Some of you are much taken with Christ. You have some anxiety about your soul. You like to hear good sermons. But when you are pressed with the claims of the Son of God, when you are pressed to eat his flesh and drink his blood, you say, “That is a hard saying, who can hear it?”

Many follow Christ for a time, but when they are told that Christ must dwell in them, they stumble and fall. They go back, and walk no more with Jesus. So it was here. The multitude that followed Christ were pleased with a great many things he did. When he fed them with the five barley loaves and the two fishes, they said: “*Lord, it is good for us to be here.*” — “*This is in truth that prophet that should come into the world.*” And when the Lord Jesus told them of bread from heaven that would give life, they said most devoutly: “*Lord, evermore give us this bread.*” But, when Christ said: “*He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him,*” by and by they were offended. When he told them that he would be their life, and would dwell in them, they said: “*It is a hard saying, who can hear it?*” They believed not—they went back, and walked no more with Jesus. So it is with many today.

- They cannot grasp how a man can be made a new creature. So they are stumbled by it.
- They are stumble by the fact that all who are born of God are made partakers of the divine nature. — They laugh and poke fun at the doctrine, stumbling down to hell in proud rebellion.
- When the Savior says: “*Ye must be born again*”—“*He that eateth me, even he shall live by me*” — they say: “*This is a hard saying, who can hear it?*”
- Many are awakened to follow Christ, but when they find that they must be drawn to Christ—that all is of free grace—by and by they are offended.

How many there are who receive the word as seed sown upon stony ground where it is quickly scorched out by the sun of adversity, or among thorns where it is choked out by the weeds of earthly care, the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches!

“FROM THAT TIME”**3. THOUGH MANY GO BACK, BLESSED BE GOD, THOSE WHO ARE CHRIST’S CANNOT GO BACK BECAUSE THE SAVIOR WILL NOT LET US GO BACK** (vv. 67-69).

(John 6:67-69) “Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? (68) Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. (69) And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

True believers never quit the Savior. They cannot go back because **they are the objects of special love**. When the crowd went away he did not go after them. — He spoke not a word. But when his own believing disciples thought themselves in danger of being led away, he speaks to them: “*Will ye also go away?*” — Ye whom I have chosen. — Ye whom I have washed. — Ye whom I have sanctified and filled with hopes of glory. — “*Will ye also go, away?*” Oh! How anxiously Christ watches over you. He is walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and his word is: “*I know thy works.*”

- True believers cannot forsake Christ because they are heirs of an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken.

(Jeremiah 31:3) “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

(Jeremiah 31:31-34) “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: (33) But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

“FROM THAT TIME”

(Jeremiah 32:38-41) “And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: (39) And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: (40) And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. (41) Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.”

- They cannot be lost because we are God’s elect.
- They cannot perish because Christ purchased them.
- They cannot go back because they are kept by God’s power and grace.
- They cannot go back because they are sealed by the Spirit.
- They cannot go back because God, who gives us eternal life and sustains it, cannot change.

Eternal life is the gift of God! Eternal life comes to men as a matter of free grace! Man does not have eternal life by nature. Eternal life does not evolve from man’s sinful heart by some mysterious process of “spiritual evolution.” It is given to men graciously. It is performed in the heart by the power of God’s sovereign grace. The very word “give” forbids the idea that eternal life comes to men as a matter of debt or reward. *“The gift of God is eternal life.”*

- There was nothing in our hearts or conduct which caused God to bestow eternal life upon us (Jer. 31:3; Rom. 8:30; Eph. 2:1-4).
- And there is nothing in the believer’s heart or conduct which can cause God to take away his gift of eternal life (Isa. 54:10; Psa. 89:30-36).

(Psalms 89:30-36) “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. 35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto

“FROM THAT TIME”

David. 36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.”

R. L. Dabney wrote, “God was not induced to bestow his renewing grace in the first instance by anything which he saw meritorious and attractive in repenting sinners; and therefore the subsequent absence of everything good in them would be no new motive to God for withdrawing his grace.”

- It is contrary to the nature and character of God to take away his gifts so freely bestowed (Rom. 11:29).
- This gift of eternal life is a gift, freely bestowed, is in no way dependent upon the contingencies of this present, mortal existence.

If we acknowledge that eternal life is entirely the gift of God, in no way earned by or dependent upon the goodness of man, it must be concluded that those to whom eternal life is given are eternally secure in Christ (Eccles. 3:14).

(Ecclesiastes 3:14) “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.”

Any child who has not been blinded by religious error must recognize that **eternal life must of necessity be eternal**. I realize that “eternal life” refers more to the quality of the believer’s life union with Christ than it does to the duration of his life. But it certainly implies a life of eternal duration. When our Lord says, “eternal,” he means eternal. How can life be eternal if it comes to an end? If I have received from God the gift of eternal life, it is not possible for me, by any act of mine, or upon any grounds, to lose it and perish. *“The gift of God is eternal life.”*

NOTE: That which is born of God, the new nature created in us by the power of God cannot sin and cannot die (1 John 3:5-9).

The believer’s life must be eternal because it is a life in union with Christ. We who believe are so really and truly joined to Christ that we cannot possibly perish, unless he also perishes. We are truly one with Christ. He says, *“Because I live, ye shall live also.”* This union between Christ and his people is an immutable, indissolvable union.

“FROM THAT TIME”

- We are married to Christ (Hos. 2:19-20; Eph. 5:30).
- We are members of Christ’s body, the church (Eph. 1:23).

Can you imagine Christ with a maimed body? Perish the thought! Yet, his body would not be complete if so much as one member were lost.

The believer’s life in Christ must be a life of eternal duration, because **we are preserved in life by the power and grace of God the Holy Spirit** (Eph. 1:14; 4:30). The Holy Spirit was sent into the world both to call and to preserve God’s elect. He is the Giver of life and the Preserver of life. The Spirit of God is the seal of the new covenant.

- A seal is a mark of ownership.
- A seal that which keeps something legally secure.
- A seal suggests permanent freshness.
- A seal means everything is okay!

4. **THE TRUE BELIEVER CANNOT GO BACK BECAUSE WE HAVE NONE TO GO TO BUT CHRIST.**

“*Thou hast the words of eternal life.*” To unconverted minds the words of Christ are hard sayings; to his own, they are tried words—words of eternal life. The very thing that drives the world away from Christ, draws his own disciples closer and closer to him.

- The world is offended when Christ says we must eat his flesh—it is a word of eternal life to the believer.
- The religionist goes away when he hears of Christ dwelling in the soul—the believer draws nearer, and says: Lord, evermore dwell in me.
- The will-worshipper walks no more with Him when he hears, It is all of grace—the believer bows in the dust, and blesses God, who alone has makes him to differ: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*”

“*We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*” This is what rivets the believing soul to Christ — the certain conviction that He is a divine Savior. If Christ were only a man like ourselves, then how could he be a Surety for us? But we believe and are sure that he is the Son of the living God, and therefore I know he is a sufficient Surety for us. To whom else can I go for pardon?

If Christ were only a man like ourselves, then how could he dwell in us, or give the Spirit to abide with us for ever? But we believe and are sure that he

“FROM THAT TIME”

is that Christ, the Son of the living God, and therefore we know he is able to dwell in us, and put the Spirit in us forever. To whom, then, can I go for a new heart but unto Christ?

Have you thus been taught of God? Then blessed are you; *“for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.”*

5. **SALVATION IS ALTOGETHER THE RESULT OF OUR SAVIOR’S CHOICE** (vv. 70-71).

(John 6:70-71) “Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? (71) He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.”

(John 15:16) “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

6. **EVEN THE MOST EVIL DEEDS PERFORMED BY MEN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HELL ITSELF ARE ORDAINED AND OVERRULED BY OUR GREAT GOD FOR THE SALVATION OF HIS ELECT** (vv. 70-71)

(John 6:70-71) “Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? (71) He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.”

(Acts 2:23) Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:”

Amen.