

**John 6: 60-66; “The Spirit Gives Life”, Sermon # 44 in the series –
“That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall,
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What does it take to be a Christian and to live the Christian life? What does it take to believe and to continue to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ through thick and thin; to persevere to the end of your life and hear the “Well done, good and faithful servant?” We see from these verses that I just read to you, that it takes being able to receive the hard sayings of Jesus just as much as the more pleasant sayings. It is wonderful to hear Jesus say that He is the bread of life, and that He who comes to Him will never hunger, and that he who believes in Him shall never thirst. It is pleasant to think about Jesus feeding the five thousand and having compassion on the multitudes. It is a great encouragement to think that the Lord Jesus is able to supply all of your physical needs for food every day, and that He actually does do this for all the people in the world in accordance with the Father’s will. But it is not so pleasant for many people to think about the fact that they must take into their mind and their heart the difficult sayings of Jesus and continue to follow Him, when those sayings do not make sense.

What does it take to be a Christian and receive the hard sayings as well as the pleasant ones? It takes the Holy Spirit giving life to you. It takes the Spirit giving life to you if you are not murmur against God and Christ. It takes the Spirit giving life to you in order to see the vanity of a fleshly understanding of spiritual things. And it takes the Spirit giving life to you in order to keep from going back and walking with Christ no more. These are the all-important realities of the Christian life, which I pray that each of us will seek to understand. If you see these realities, you will live accordingly.

1st of all – It takes the Spirit giving life to you if you are not to murmur against God.
(verses 60-62)

Therefore, many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” “When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you?’” “What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?” “It is the Spirit who gives life.” Now, if we look back in this passage of John chapter 6 which we are studying, we find that there was a whole lot of murmuring going on. It began back in verse 38 when Jesus said that He had “come down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him”. He said – “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” In verse 41 it says – “The Jews then murmured against Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven.’” “And they said, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?’” How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven?’

Now, I want you to see that those who murmured here, Jesus calls “His disciples”. Jesus knew in Himself, it says, that His disciples murmured about this truth; that He had come down from heaven to do the Father’s will. Their murmuring began concerning the truth of His Incarnation. A disciple is a follower of Christ; one who is a learner, learning from Christ’s lips and His life. We see here that it is possible to profess to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and yet not to receive His sayings. But the question that each of us should ask ourselves is – If I cannot receive the difficult sayings of Christ, how can I truly be His disciple? I think that we should understand that you cannot. What was needed on their parts, was for them not to draw immediate conclusions, but rather to ask relevant questions. If Jesus made a statement saying that His Father was God, they should have asked Him how He could speak in those terms. For they thought that Joseph was His father.

The aim of the true disciple of Jesus is not to murmur about what you hear preached or taught to you about Jesus, or any subject for that matter. If it is the word of God, or the words of Christ, you should rather carefully think about what is being said. Think of it in terms of its being God's way of teaching you how you can be Christ's faithful disciple. Jesus has said that His yoke is easy and His burden light. But He also said that the way to eternal life is narrow, and few there are who find it. So, what Christ has called you to, is to listen to what is said by the pastor, or any another mature Christian, and compare it with what the Bible says. Be noble-minded in this holy way. We do not have Jesus standing in front of us as they did then. But there are actually just as many things to learn about how the Christian life should be lived, as there were then. There are things which the Lord would have you to do, to show forth your true faith in Jesus, such as writing up a testimony, or speaking it in front of the congregation, or being baptized, or joining the church, that you might not think that it is your duty to do at first. But look at the Scriptures and see what they say, and then ask questions if you need to.

But if you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ, it should not be a strange thing to you, that God has expectations of your life; that He has duties for you to perform and of obedience to His commands which you should consider. He expects that you will change the way that you live and do things; and that you will, by the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, bring your life into conformity with His sayings; even the most difficult of them. In Luke 9: 26 Jesus says: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." This is one of the most important truths that you can learn. Ask yourself – Can I hear the words of Jesus and not murmur about them? If you find that you cannot, then you should pray and ask that the Lord the Spirit will help you to do this. It is the Spirit who gives life. It is the Spirit who will give you the ability to hear, and to receive, and to act upon the hard sayings of the word of God in the right way, without becoming defensive and without drawing rash conclusions; that what is being asked of you is somehow not right or reasonable.

Each person who considers themselves a true Christian will compare what they hear with the word of God, and they will pray and ask wisdom from the Lord, the Holy Spirit concerning it. I am trying to impress upon you this important truth; that it is required of every Christian that they not become defensive about what they know or what they do not know, but simply to look squarely at the truth of the Bible which is being preached to you, and think – Am I living my life submitting to the truth of God's word; just as if Jesus was standing right in front of me? Do I receive Jesus' hard sayings as well as the ones which are most pleasant? I think that the truth of the matter was, for many of these people who murmured, that they really did not want to accept the fact that He was their Messiah; the One who had been sent to them from God. They did not want to believe that He was the Son of God and the Son of Man; the God-Man who had come down from heaven through His Incarnation, to save them from their sins. Evidently they did not think that it was possible that Jesus could come down from heaven at all, and that if He had come down from heaven, He would be a much more powerful and impressive Person than He was. They knew that He was the Son of Mary, but they did not realize that Joseph was not His Father; that God was His Father. They could have asked a question: Jesus, how could You come down from heaven? No man has ever come down from heaven. But they assumed that their own ideas of Jesus were correct. They thought that they were looking at a mere man, or at most, a prophet.

Let me apply this truth to you, who are listening to me here today. Do you believe in the Incarnation of Christ; that it was absolutely necessary for Him to come down from heaven to do the will of the Father in your place, and to suffer in your place for your sins; to die and then to rise again, and ascend to heaven so that He could forever make intercession for you? This is a truth that you must believe in order to be saved. This truth is the gospel. These people who we

are studying in this text could not believe it. They thought it was a hard saying. And so they proved themselves not really to be Jesus' disciples, by their reaction to His words of truth to them, concerning Himself. In order to be saved, you must believe that you are a great enough sinner that Jesus had to leave the halls of heaven and come down and do the Father's will at every point to make up for the many ways in which you have fallen short of doing God's will. He had to become the Bread of Life, so that you could become a partaker of spiritual things. Jesus had to die so that you could eat his flesh and drink His blood in this most holy way, that we are thinking of; His going to the cross to suffer the punishment that you deserve, because you have not perfectly kept His law; neither have you loved God with all of your heart; nor your neighbor as yourself.

Let it not be the case with anyone here that they are offended by the truth of Jesus' Incarnation. "What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?" Jesus said to these men. He says to each one who does not want to receive His hard sayings: Would you think it better if I had never come down to earth and fulfilled all righteousness and suffered on behalf of sinners? Is it right for you to take offense at My hard sayings? Do you really think that there are just a few easy truths to learn about the Christian life? No, be patient, my dear friend; do not murmur, but receive all the truth of the Bible, and you will prove His words to be true in your experience.

Now 2nd - It takes the Spirit giving life to you in order to see the vanity of a fleshly understanding of spiritual things. (verses 63 and 64a)

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing." "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." But there are some of you who do not believe." This is the great principle of living the Christian life; the Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. It is a principle of truth which is sometimes hard to understand and receive, not only by unbelievers, but by believers also. I believe that Jesus was trying to tell these "disciples" the same thing that He had once taught to Nicodemus; the man who came to Jesus by night, seeking the truth about entering the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to Jesus in John 3, verse 2 – "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." And Jesus answered him – "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old?' "Can he enter his mother's womb and be born?" You see, Nicodemus was thinking of Jesus' words in a purely literal physical way. He didn't yet understand that Jesus' words are spirit and they are spiritual life to the one who is going to be born again, or the one who has been born again. And so Jesus says to him in verse 5 – "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." A few verses later Nicodemus said to Jesus – "How can these things be?" And Jesus said to him – "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"

No, Nicodemus did not know these things. They seemed like foolishness to him at first, and they astonished him. He later came to understand them because the Lord opened His eyes to the truth. It is as the apostle John said in 1st John 5: 20 – "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ." "This is the true God and eternal life." But these men in our text did not have understanding; they had not really come to know Jesus Christ. When Jesus says – "It is the Spirit who gives life", He is speaking of the Holy Spirit's work of bringing spiritual life to the soul of a person who does not know the Lord. They may think that they know God already, but Jesus knows that they are spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins, and spiritually blind to the truth of their need of Him.

The Spirit, according to the will of the Father in election, and by His glorious working in the New Birth brings the life of God into the soul of a sinner by opening the heart and mind to truth. This takes place only according to the will of God and not because the person is looking for it or wanting on their own. By nature, people want to know God only on their own terms, if they want to know Him at all. If you want to know God on your own terms it is because you believe that you are really alright without Christ and His grace saving you from yourself and your sins. You don't believe that much needs to change in yourself. But if the Lord is calling you to Himself, the Father will draw you to Christ, and the Spirit will open your mind to see your need of Christ, and your need to repent of all of your sins. The words of the gospel are words that according to the will of God, are anointed with the Holy Spirit's power when they are preached, or when they are spoken. And they become spiritually powerful to change your heart in accordance with the exercise of your faith. Faith is a grace which is created within the sinner's heart by the Holy Spirit. Faith is a receiving and trusting grace that rests upon the promises of God concerning Christ.

The heart is actually opened by the Lord the Spirit, and it is turned to look upon Christ favorably. The feelings and thoughts that you might have against the necessity of your trusting in Christ, and against the idea of repentance, are all suddenly gone. Once the truth of God's word is received and believed savingly, that is with true understanding, then the Holy Spirit plants the seed of righteousness there in your heart, and the Spirit circumcises your heart. He takes away its hardness, and He gives to you, the person who could not understand, spiritual eyes to see and spiritual ears to hear the truth. You are given a New nature in the form of a seed planted in your heart. The Spirit takes all your resistance to true spiritual things away, and He makes the thought of looking to Christ for salvation desirable to you, the sinner; whereas once you had been totally opposed to Him. This is irresistible grace. This is the effectual call of God.

But after conversion, there is still a great need, O Christian, to have regard for the Spirit's work in your life. For in the circumcision of your heart, the reigning ruling power of sin in your life was broken forever. But still, there exists within your breast the remains of the Old Man, the Old Nature. You are crucified with Christ, and you have crucified the flesh with its lusts and passions, but there is still an ongoing work of sanctification which you are called to participate in. There will still be occasional motions of your heart, you will notice; thoughts and feelings which are not right, which are warring against the Spirit's motions in your heart. The flesh wars against doing what you really want to do. You have been renewed in righteousness and you really want to do the will of God, and you are determined by grace to do it; that is, it is your highest aim to follow Christ, to do His will, and to live righteously and godly in His sight. This is what you now strive for, You have begun your Christian life in the Spirit, but it is possible that you may now think that you are being made perfect by the flesh. This is a mindset that you must do battle with. Galatians 3: 3 – “Are you so foolish?” “Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

The mindset that I am speaking of now is that mindset that says: I am more impressed with what men are able to do by their own physical strength and worldly wisdom, than I am with what God is able to do with them by His grace, in relation to their weakness. In other words, sometimes a true Christian does not know where his true strength lies. He thinks that if he merely knows certain truths that he is wise. No, blessed are you if you do and keep the word of God. But a Christian can fall into the mindset that if he keeps the Lord's commandments outwardly that his heart's motivation does not matter; that it is not God's glory which is his highest motive, it is man's glory which is the highest motive. It is not love to men's souls that he has, but a love to be right and to prove that he is right to others. This is a very spiritually dangerous and dreadful place to be, for it is the mindset of the flesh.

Our text is teaching us here that it is only the Spirit who can lead you into the truth of how important it is for you to be strong in the Lord, not in yourself. It is only the Spirit who will lead you in very practical ways to be humble, and put away the pride of the flesh and the boastful pride of life, and learn Christ's way of a humble, holy, loving obedience to God. It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), nothing good dwells", says Paul. (Romans 7: 18) And so he also says in Galatians 5: 22 – "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." "Against such there is no law." "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." Oh, how great a thing it is when a Christian sees how important it is to live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit! In the Spirit's working there is every good thing. How wonderful a thing it is when you realize that all of Jesus' words are spirit and they will give you spiritual life if you will receive them all and believe them all.

3rd - It takes the Spirit giving life to you in order to keep from going back and walking with Christ no more. (verses 64-66)

"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." "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." "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." I believe that the key to living the Christian life is to live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you. Jesus says in our text – "But there are some of you who do not believe." It is by faith that we come to Christ. It is by faith that we live for Christ, learning to keep all of God's commandments. If you are a true Christian you will not set aside the grace of God. Righteousness did not come to you by your keeping the law. And the Lord does not supply you with the Spirit, and do wonders in your life, in building your Christian character, by the works of the law. He does it by the hearing of faith, and in faith in Christ you go about to keep His word. You were justified by faith, and you will be sanctified by the Spirit's working in relation to your faith in Christ, and your obedience to the word of God. A great part of your growth in grace will come about when you have a good understanding of the doctrines of grace; those precious doctrines of God's sovereignty in salvation and his supplying you with grace to live the Christian life. The doctrines of grace have a good way of humbling the pride of men.

The words that Christ has spoken, which are recorded for us in this passage, speak of these doctrines of grace. In verse 64 Jesus says – "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." "And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him by My Father." Now, why would He say this here, at this particular point in the interaction with these men? I believe it was because Jesus knew that it would be wise and right for Him to tell these proud, self-sufficient men that He knew that some of them did not believe. He was telling them that salvation was not by their works but through believing in Him. The comment from John is that "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him, and that that this was the reason that He would go on to say – "No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." He wanted to show them that salvation is of the Lord. It does not come by the free will of man.

These men were Christ's disciples, but they could not receive His hard sayings. They thought that knowing God was a matter of their deciding to do so. They had decided for Christ, but they were not saved. They are called "disciples of Christ" in this passage, but still they did not really believe in Him; that is, they did not believe that He was the God-Man, and they did not see that they were so sinful that they needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood; that is to

spiritually partake of Him. Why were they not true disciples? Because they did not want to consider God and Christ as holding their eternal destiny in their hands; they wanted to think that it was because they were basically good people who were striving for righteousness according to the law. They were rejecting the righteousness of God in Christ. O let this never happen to anyone here; that they are so proud as to think that it is anything of their own works that saves them from their sins. They will be bitterly disappointed at the last. In verse 66 we are told that from that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. What a sad testimony to the spiritual blindness of these people. They were once disciples of Christ but now they went back. They went back to the false system of works righteousness talk by the Pharisees and scribes and rulers of Israel. They no longer believed in the way of salvation which Jesus had taught them; faith and trust in Him. They went back to believing in themselves, in the supposed strength of their own reasoning and in the deceiving doctrines of those leaders in Israel who did not know the Lord, but who were very religious. They had wanted to make Jesus their earthly king after He fed the 5,000. But now they would deliberately walk away from the Lord of glory.

Let us all see the deceitfulness of sin, and how wrong it is to attempt to live the Christian life from selfish motives. The only way that you can follow Jesus is if you trust in Jesus not as a mere man, but as the God-Man. And when you receive His sayings; the pleasant ones and the hard ones, He will by His Spirit prove to you that this was the right thing to do. When you trust in Jesus and will not turn back from following Him, you will know the reality of sins forgiven and His surrounding you with favor as with a shield. He will sanctify you by His truth and His grace. He will providentially lead you and guide you into all the truth, into very practically learning God's good way of obedience and keeping His commandments. And all this will come about because the Spirit is life. He is Christ in you, the hope of glory. And as you trust in Him and follow Him in accordance with His word, and pray in the Spirit, He will be with you, and everlasting joy will upon your head.