

## John 6:60-69

<sup>60</sup> *On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”*

<sup>61</sup> *Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup> The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. <sup>65</sup> He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”*

<sup>66</sup> *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*

<sup>67</sup> *“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.*

<sup>68</sup> *Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”*

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I need to start off today with a disclaimer. I want you all to recognize the fact that I don't particularly enjoy sharing stories of my life and encounters, especially from the pulpit. Personally, it makes me feel like I'm bragging that my life is somehow more interesting or important than the people I'm speaking to, which I'm not. But I am going to share one this morning with you simply because of its relevance to the text we are studying.

There was a man, we'll call him Chris, who was going through a Bible Information Class with me. He was making excellent progress, attentive, sensitive, and always had great questions. We were pacing through the lessons, he loved Jesus, and knew that he was God and man and died for his sins, he loved that Jesus loved him more than anyone in the world could possibly conceive of. But during one lesson, Chris is sitting and looks up at me: tears that had been kept at bay, now drip over and down a wrinkled cheek. “Hey, what's going on Chris?” “I'm sad. I'm sad because it's so hard. It seems so easy for everyone else but it's not for me. I just know that I'll never have as strong a faith as you or the other people here in church.” Chris's background was in physics. And we had just gotten to the teaching of creation, and he was struggling with his faith fighting against what he had dedicated his whole life to.

Chris is having the same battle that some of Jesus followers were experiencing. We are at the tail end of what is called the bread of life discourse, where Jesus speaks to a number of his followers and strengthens his claims to be the Son of God, declares that he is the way to eternal life. In the synagogue these people heard Christ lecture on how his flesh is bread and his blood is real drink. How he came down out of heaven and the only way to God the Father, is the son: Jesus of Nazareth standing right in front of them.

The people who had been following Jesus seem to echo what Chris felt in that moment doesn't it? Because when they say **“This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”**, it's not a blurb of confusion, as if what Jesus is saying is some mystic wisdom that cannot be figured out. No, this is a hard teaching in a different way. A better way to describe it, might be to call it: Abrasive. This is a teaching of the Lord which his followers understood but it was hard for them to accept in their hearts. It rubs them the wrong way. They grasp what is said and what the implications are, but they do not agree with it, or it is unpleasant for them to say, this I believe. For the followers of Christ, it's not that they didn't understand, but having hearing that Jesus body is real food and his blood is real drink, they bristled. To an Old Testament baked jewish person, this idea was probably even a little insulting. For Chris, it's not that the brilliant man didn't understand creation, it's that he couldn't see how it could be true or have faith in it.

And it does not matter where you are on your faith journey, I am fairly certain that you have your own sections of scripture that you hear and think along those same lines: You could be someone like Chris, who sees the

Bible saying 6 days, God made this. And all of your life and with the books you've read and the data that exists, don't match up even close. **\*This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it.\***

They could be teachings of the Christian life and application. For example, If some one sins against me, even heinously, criminally, in a life changing way, and they repent, I forgive them. Or, I work hard at my job and got an education and am careful about how I spend my God earned money, and if I have metaphorically two coats which I worked hard for, I am supposed to just give one to somebody who has none? **\*This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it.\***

They could be a teaching of doctrine. Like God is love and he wants all people to be with him in heaven for all eternity. He sent his Son to pay for the sins of the whole world to accomplish this, but someone doesn't believe in Jesus. They deserve to be sent to Hell for endless suffering? **\*This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it.\***

The list could go on. Because all of us, in our own hearts have experiences and ideas which do not match up with what Jesus tells us to be explicitly true and right. And when God tells us the opposite of how we feel we feel that abrasion in our own personal ways.

How do you react to the the teachings that are hard? When the words of life bring internal strife? Well you have two options laid out for us in the text. Option 1: **\*From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.\*** That's one option. Just quit. The followers of Christ just gave up. They left the synagogue where the Savior was speaking and found a new master to follow. They decided that the difficulty of the teaching that Jesus spoke of that led to everlasting life were not worth it. They placed a chasm between themselves and the thing that challenged them. That's something that easy for us to do. Cut ties. Avoid the abrasion. Ignore it. Leave the metaphorical synagogue.

Option 2: **\*Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.\*** What did the 12 do? The only thing that can overcome the difficult teachings: Stay close to the Savior, be connected to the Holy Spirit, stay with the words of eternal life.

In these two options we see the answer to our question: how are you supposed to accept the teachings that are hard? You can't. You will never be able to in yourself or by yourself. Through sheer will or apathy. Through natural knowledge or best intentions be able to accept those difficult teachings of God let alone approach the Father or Jesus Christ.

The only way to do it, is through Jesus Christ himself. Peter's words show that the only way to accept the words of life are when God imparts them to us through the means of Grace in his Word. God's word works in supernatural but not a magical way. It creates your faith, yes, but then it also strengthens your faith in it. It is the powerful means by which God overcomes our sinful nature and the lies that are told by ourselves, the world and the devil. Through contact with these words, God's words, it increases faith in those very words which you have read. It's an amazing miracle. That when you read Scripture, God increases your faith in those things which are difficult, by being closer to it.

It's all by Grace. Our faith in the salvation of Jesus Christ, is only enabled by the love of God the Father, through only the work of the Holy Spirit. Those things and teachings and morals which go completely against our nature as human beings are embedded and imbued in us by God alone.

So dear Christian friends. I leave you with this warning and encouragement: We are not perfect people, our faith is not perfect either. There will be times and things you read in Scripture that will challenge you and be difficult to accept. Don't run away from Jesus and his Word. Don't avoid it, or ignore it. Use it as an opportunity to grow

closer to it. Stay connected to the Word of God which strengthens your faith in it. When you get to a section that is hard to accept say along with Peter: **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life."**