

To Whom Shall We Go?

In today's text we observe the response of Jesus' disciples to His profound teaching in John 6 on His being the bread of life and our need to eat His flesh and drink His blood. What we discover is that there is a massive defection among His disciples because they are offended by His teaching.

John 6:60-71

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? **62** Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? **63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. **64** But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) **65** And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. **67** So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" **68** Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, **69** and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." **70** Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." **71** He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

In this passage, John is teaching us some major life lessons.

I. **Many of Jesus' disciples will not believe (vv. 60-66).**

Notice the sequence here. It begins with the disciples' grumbling about Jesus' hard saying. They ask, "Who can listen to it?" The hard saying may be that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood, or it may be that no one comes to Him unless the Father draws us. Whatever the case, the disciples find it impossible to embrace what Jesus is saying. Jesus warned of such defections in Matthew 24: 1-14. We should not be surprised in our own day when even those who appear to be following Jesus within His church decide to turn away.

Notice Jesus' response to the grumbling among His disciples: He presses more deeply on the offense of the Gospel. He asks, "Do you take offense at this?" then He explains that the offense will even be greater when they see that the Son of Man has been crucified and then through resurrection and ascension rules at the right hand of God. Rather than backing down when the disciples are offended, He continues to teach the truth.

Then we notice that the disciples actually "turned back and no longer walked with him." This is one of the saddest verses in the Scriptures, revealing that those who had come to know Him at some level now decide to turn their back on Him. This is why Jesus teaches later in John 8:31, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." We must *continue* with Him in order to be saved. Bruce Milne, in his commentary, puts it this way, "Being a true believer... will mean remaining true to Jesus when he and his word are dismissed. Being a true believer will mean following him loyally when his truth is hard to understand and even harder to apply, when his claims seem largely contradicted by tangible realities and when the multitudes turn away from him and we find ourselves part of a small and ostracized minority."

II. **Jesus challenges those who remain (vv. 67-69).**

Jesus asks a very important question to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" He asks this not for His sake but for theirs, that they may articulate their faith in Him. Simon Peter gives a remarkable answer, saying, first of all, that the options are limited because no one else has the "words of eternal life" and no one else is the appointed "Holy One of God." Peter expresses some of the elements of true faith. Lesslie Newbigin expresses it this way, "To believe is to have been brought to the place where one knows that one has to rely completely

on Jesus, and Jesus alone.” Peter declares that he has nowhere else to go. The great Baptist preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon, puts it this way, “Better far that we die than that we deny our Lord.”

III. **Jesus encourages those who remain (vv. 70-71).**

Jesus is quick to remind Peter and all of us that before we ever chose Him, He chose us. This is greatly encouraging as we realize our salvation is based not on what we have done or will do, but ultimately on what He alone has done for us. Jesus also makes it clear that He has chosen Judas, who eventually betrayed Jesus. Why did Jesus do this? Out of supreme love: He chose Judas that Judas may lead Jesus to the cross, where our Savior laid down His life for His friends.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did so many of Jesus’ disciples grumble (vv. 60-61) at His teaching? Why do many grumble about His teaching today?
2. What is noteworthy in Jesus’ response (vv. 61-65) to His disciples’ grumbling? What does this teach us about how we should respond to those unhappy with Jesus’ teaching?
3. How does one explain the disciples’ massive defection in view of John 6:37?
4. When Jesus asked the Twelve if they, too, want to leave, what impresses you most about Peter’s answer in verses 68-69?
5. What do we learn from Jesus’ response in verses 70-71?

Going Deeper

1. What do you find most difficult about the defections in our day from the teaching of Jesus? How do you need to strengthen your response to those intellectual and spiritual defections?
2. How do you most need to be encouraged by Jesus today in your ministry to stand for the truth of God’s Word?