

## The Final Section of the Bread of Life Discourse

### John 6:60-71

John 6:60-71 - *“Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”*

<sup>61</sup> *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. <sup>64</sup> 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. <sup>65</sup> 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.”*

<sup>66</sup> *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. <sup>67</sup> Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” <sup>68</sup> But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

<sup>70</sup> *Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” <sup>71</sup> He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.”*

### Background Notes

In verse 60 we read, *“Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”* Then in verse 66 we read, *“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”* Who were these “disciples” who “went back”? Are these the Twelve Disciples whom Jesus selected and called? No! In verse 67 we clearly see that the Twelve Disciples were in a different category: *“Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”* They didn’t walk away.

*“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”* The “disciples” who turned away from the Lord were many of the people from Galilee who had followed the Lord in his travels. They had listened to His teaching. They had seen His miracles, including the miracle of the feeding of five thousand - but now they turned away.

Many of them had expected that the Lord would become the political leader that they were expecting – a leader who would head a rebellion against the Roman occupation. Now they realized that Jesus was not a political leader, as they had hoped. Their popular enthusiasm for Jesus as a political Messiah was over.

Furthermore, they just couldn’t handle the Lord’s difficult teachings about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They were offended by this teaching! We have emphasized the fact that this teaching doesn’t have anything to do with the

Lord's Supper, or taking Communion. These events took place a year before the Lord's Supper was instituted, and the Lord certainly didn't mean that people should literally eat His flesh and drink his blood.

In fact, notice in this section the Lord said: *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life"*(v63). In other words, the words that He had spoken to them were not to be taken literally – they were to be understood in a **spiritual** way. The Holy Spirit gives life, and the means by which He gives life is by the Lord's words. It's a spiritual work of God all the way. Nothing we do physically - including physical eating and drinking - is involved. In fact, *"the flesh profits nothing."*

Many of the people who had once followed the Lord could not handle this teaching. To them, it was offensive and scandalous. They could not stomach the fact that you must believe in Christ just as if you were "eating His body" and "drinking His blood"!

In addition, they couldn't handle the fact that there was nothing a person can do to "make points" with God. Your own merits or good works don't count. You can't earn your way to Heaven by your own good works. And the fact that you can't even come to God unless you are first drawn by God was too much for them to take. Look again at verses 65-66: *"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."*

## Doctrinal / Teaching Points

### 1. Not every disciple is a true believer.

As a result of the Bread of Life discourse, many of Christ's disciples left Him. Notice, they were not just random people who had seen a few miracles. No, they were described as "disciples" – but they turned away and no longer followed Him. This proved that they were not true believers.

The good news here is that everyone didn't leave Him. *"Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" (v60). And "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" (v66). Many left Him, but not all! Many, but not all!*

Look at what the Lord said to the disciples who continued to follow Him: *"But there are some of you who do not believe."* (v64). Notice - there are **some** of you who do not believe. But the good news is that some disciples stayed. Some of them believed, and continued to follow Jesus. Not just the Twelve, but others as well. They became part of the early Christian community.

The mark of a true disciple is perseverance. John 8:30-31: *“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”* The mark of a true disciple is perseverance. A true disciple continues to hang in there, despite difficulties! Not every disciple is a true believer, but the true disciple perseveres.

The word disciple means “learner.” Many followers of the Lord were learners. They were not only interested in the miracles of Christ; they were actually interested in the Lord’s teaching. Some of them wanted to learn even though they were not true believers. What about you? Are you more than a disciple? Are you a true believer?

When I was working as a research engineer, a technician who worked for me became a “disciple” of Jesus Christ – but unfortunately, he was not a true believer. He began to attend church and Bible studies in our home. He completed a number of Bible courses. This went on for close to a year - and then he turned away! He had been a disciple. He was not just a random follower, or someone who had a little interest. No, he had been a disciple - but not a true believer. What about you? Remember – not every disciple is a true believer.

## **2. Not every doctrine is easy to handle.**

Look again at verse 60: *“Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”* Those who turned away said this was hard saying, or a difficult teaching. They would have to renounce themselves, and appropriate Christ - as if eating His body and drinking His blood? They simply could not handle this teaching! It was too difficult for them.

This is still true today. Some doctrines are not easy to handle. For example, take the doctrine of the foreknowledge of God and the doctrine of election. These doctrines are not easy to understand and handle. Notice, by the way, that these doctrines are contained in this passage, in verses 64-65: *“‘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.’”* Notice also verses 70-71: *“Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.”*

Putting these doctrines together is not easy – for anyone, including the would-be disciples and Judas then, and for us today. It’s not easy to understand and handle the fact that everyone is responsible to come to Christ, and yet no one can come unless it is granted to him by the Father. *“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”(v65).*

You are predestined, and yet you’re responsible for your destiny! That’s difficult to understand – and difficult to handle. Not every doctrine is easy to handle.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. Will you turn away because of difficult doctrine?**

Many of Jesus' followers turned away because they could not handle His difficult teaching. Harmonizing the doctrines of predestination and election with the doctrine of free will is difficult. The doctrine of an eternal hell with eternal punishment is not easy to handle. It's not only unpleasant, it's hard to handle. The doctrine of the distinctive roles of men and women in the church is difficult for many believers to understand and handle. Will you turn away because of a difficult doctrine?

### **2. Let's follow the logic of Peter!**

In verse 67 the Lord said to the Twelve, *"Do you also want to go away?"* Notice what Peter replied: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

Now that's great logic - it really is! Peter essentially said, "Lord, even if we wanted to turn away because of Your difficult teaching, to whom would we turn? We're sticking with You, because You have the words of eternal life!" Peter went on to make that great statement: *Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Right on, Peter!

Let's follow Peter's logic. There may be difficult doctrines in the Bible, but is it logical to turn away from the source of salvation just because you can't understand or don't like some difficult doctrines? That would be crazy! Don't risk it! Why risk ending up in hell because you couldn't understand or refused to handle some difficult doctrine?

I think that's essentially what the Lord was saying to those would-be disciples: *"What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?" (v62).* To paraphrase His words: "You're turning away because you can't handle this difficult teaching? But what are you going to do when the resurrection and the ascension happen – events that will certainly validate all of My teaching? What are you going to do then? You'll realize then that you were wrong to turn away, even though the teaching was difficult! You should have at least accepted what I was saying."

So let's trust God. Let's believe that He knows what He is saying and doing, even though we may not understand or appreciate difficult doctrine. Set that tough doctrine to the side! Trust in Christ, and wrestle with the difficult doctrine later. Someday we will understand more.

Let's follow Peter's logic: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life... we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*