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John 6:60-69

“From FLESH and DEATH – to – SPIRIT and LIFE”

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Something as simple as changing your internet service provider / your cell phone company / your home phone / your cable company – can be a real pain. They don’t want you to change. So, they make it as difficult as possible – with contracts, bundling of services, all sorts of fees for disconnection, connection, this or that. Then, if you MAKE the switch, you might regret it! You might wish you stuck with what you had, and it might not be as cheap and as wonderful as you were led to believe.

We all know it’s not that big of a deal – people are faced with **real** problems out there. But, it speaks to an underlying issue that we as human beings struggle with: ***we don’t like to change***, we’re leery of it, and we resist it.

This becomes a very BIG deal, because Jesus came along to change everything! A real relationship with Him both requires and produces real changes in the lives of people. When Jesus showed up and invited people to come and follow Him – quite naturally they were sceptical. He wasn’t what most people expected the Messiah to be. He didn’t seem to be interested in politics or power at all. The people He hung out with weren’t all that influential. He didn’t look for support among the rich and powerful elite. In fact, He continually confronted, embarrassed, and offended them.

His teaching – especially this message here in John 6 – made it extremely difficult for people to accept and follow Him. He was trying to lead them in a totally new and different direction. He wanted to help them see and understand the spiritual truths and realities He came to reveal to them – but . . . they (for the most part) weren’t interested. They didn’t accept His claim that He is the Promised One who came down from heaven to give eternal life to all who believe in Him. They were upset and walked away offended. Even His own disciples had trouble accepting the things Jesus said. That’s where our text begins as we conclude this section of **John 6**.

John 6:60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

Jesus was trying to lead the people away from “flesh and death” – to “spirit and life” – but that was not an easy change to make. They couldn’t make the transition from the physical to the spiritual; they didn’t understand. Well – Jesus goes on to address their grumblings:

Verse 61: Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? 62 What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!

Commentators disagree on what Jesus means here. Some think he was saying that the miracle of His ascension to heaven might convince them that He’s speaking the truth. I’m not so sure about that, they had already seen so many incredible miracles. I seem to think that He’s saying basically, “*What if I just left and went back home, what would you do then?*”

Regardless of how you understand that statement, Jesus is making abundantly clear: either you stick with Him, or go home. Stay where you are – content with a life wrapped up in earthly / fleshly things, that will end before you know it . . . or . . . come along with Him and experience a Spirit-filled life that will never end.

He goes on: **verse 63: The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 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. 65 He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”**

66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

The disciples were going to stick with Him – but it would not be easy. Following Jesus carried a big price tag. They would leave their homes, families, and careers. They would be going against what the powerful religious leaders believed and taught. Their culture and heritage would all be tossed upside down. They would eventually lose their lives for following Jesus – but they all (except for Judas) stuck with Him, despite their moments of weakness. They realized

that He indeed had the words of eternal life, and they are experiencing that LIFE to this very day.

In the first centuries following the events of Jesus' death and resurrection, it was exceptionally hard for Jewish people to abandon everything and embrace Jesus as the Promised Messiah. Families were torn apart. It was not easy to accept the teachings of Jesus and let Him give them something entirely new. Their culture was so important to them – and now the rituals, customs, dietary restrictions they had grown up with . . . were all tossed aside. It was likewise challenging for gentile believers (who came from a totally different background and heritage) to start a new life following Jesus. Thankfully, many did – and discovered the incredible truth and life our Lord won for them, and wanted them to have.

By God's grace **we** have entered through that "Narrow Door" (as Jesus described it) and come to believe and follow Him too. We've discovered the new life produced by the Holy Spirit – a life of forgiveness, peace and truth. But it is not easy for us to embrace Christ's words and follow Him either. We are constantly being tempted to turn back, to a life apart from Him.

His teachings can be hard to accept. We might grumble too when He tells us something we don't want to hear. The bulk of our lives can so easily be wrapped up in earthly / physical things. We toil for this or that, we run after wealth and possessions hoping they will bring us happiness. We spend an abundance of time and energy on physical / fleshly things. And – Jesus tells us plainly: ***the flesh counts for nothing.***

Often the circumstances of life can make it hard to follow Him too. Problems at work, in the home, health problems – can make us doubt His love / His presence / His forgiveness / and His promises. ESPECIALLY when it's hard to follow Him – take His hand and trust Him anyways. He has words of Spirit and Life that He wants to share with you. He has gifts for you that only He can give:

- PEACE – knowing that we are forgiven, and that when all the troubles of this short life are over, we still have eternal life.
- HOPE – knowing that because He lived beyond the grave, and rose from the dead . . . we will too.
- JOY – trusting His guidance, wisdom and presence as He leads us, step by step, closer to home.

It is hard to follow Christ and stick with Him – while the crowds go home. But, you won't be disappointed. He is the Holy One of God!

If indeed, as He told us, the ***"flesh counts for nothing"*** – then why are we still here, in the flesh? God plans to use our short lives here to help others make that transition from "flesh and death" to "spirit and life". God wants us to be asking ourselves, ***"How can my life be used to help others find eternal life?"*** Don't be surprised if people are sceptical. Don't be surprised if they are hesitant to hear about Jesus or look into His word. Don't be surprised if there's not many people out there who are willing to have their lives be thrown upside down by someone named "Jesus".

It might not be popular following Christ and sticking to His words, but WE all know how wonderful it is. May God help us help others to discover what an awesome privilege it really is to follow Christ – where else can we go? He has the words of eternal life!