

A HARD SAYING, WHO CAN HEAR IT?

JOHN 6:60 • TV-72A

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By

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John 6:60

“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?”

I’m going to speak to you today on this subject: **“THIS IS A HARD SAYING, WHO CAN HEAR IT?”**

Now my text is found in **John 6:60**. You follow in your Bible as I read; if you will: *“Many therefore are His disciples.”*

We’re not talking about the 12 disciples; we’re talking about those who followed Him. The disciples many times are learners or followers of Christ. In this case, multitudes of people have followed Him because of the miracles which they saw, because of the teachings of Christ, because of the loaves and fishes which they ate.

But many of His disciples when they heard this said, *“This is a hard saying; who can hear it?”* Now, in another translation, the amplified version, that verse of Scripture is translated in this manner; “When His disciples heard this many of them said; this is a difficult and strange saying. This is an offensive and unbearable message; who can stand

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to hear it? Who can be expected to listen to such teachings? So they went back and walked no more with Him.”

Now what had the Lord said or taught that caused this division and rebellion among these people who sought the miracles, who ate the loaves and fishes, who listened to His teachings, who said, “This man speaks with authority, not as the Scribes and Pharisees.”

What has He said that causes them to exclaim: “*This is a hard who can hear it* (a difficult saying; who can be expected to listen to such teaching)?” What had offended these people?

Well, He said in the verses before this: “*Except you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man you have no life in you.*”

Now one, great old preacher of the past said this, “This is one of the Lord’s ultimatums.” Several times our Lord sets forth a Scripture using the word, “*Except.*”

Now I want to look at six of them today. This may be the most important message you’ll ever hear. I’m confident that if you listen carefully and if God leads you to write some of these things down and write down the references of the Scriptures and later on look it up, and study to see if these things be so, I am confident; I am fully persuaded that God will use this message to help you to understand the way of life.

Now here are six ultimatums; these are called “*hard sayings*,” these are called difficult and offensive sayings, and many people exclaimed “*Who can hear it?*”

Who can listen to such a message? Who can be expected to receive a message of this sort? Now, here are six of them:

First of all: in **John chapter 3:3** our Lord said: “*Except a man be born again; (now there’s that word again; it’s the Lord’s ultimatum), except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God*”

Now there’s no possibility of misunderstanding His Word. He said: “*Except a man be born again he cannot see* (or enter into) *the Kingdom of God.*”

Now, whatever the new birth is; it’s essential to salvation. Whatever the new birth is; it’s essential to being saved. Now, is this a hard saying to you? Would you be like those people when our Lord said, “*Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man you have no life in you?*”

They said, “This is an offensive thing, this is a hard thing. Who can be expected to listen to this?” Would you say that? Are you going to inquire into the new birth and find out what it is, what our Lord is talking about, and what is He saying, “*except a man be born again he cannot see* (understand or enter into) *the Kingdom of God?*”

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It would be well for us to find out what the new birth is; what is the new birth? Well the Bible has some answers:

First of all: This new birth, and remember as we go through this statement that our Lord said; *“Except you are born again you cannot see the Kingdom of God”*

Now you can ridicule it and you can make fun of it. You can make fun and mock people who say they have been born again, but you better listen because the Master Himself said; *“Except ye are born again ye cannot (you won’t) enter the Kingdom of God.”*

Well now, the first thing that I know about the new birth is this; it is of God; now I know that, it is of God. Jot this down, **John 1:11-13:** *“He came unto His own,”* that’s the Jewish nation, the Jewish people, the Jewish prophecy, the Jewish ceremony.

Our Lord was a Jew. He was a fulfillment of all of the prophecies and the prophets given to the Jews, the Tabernacle, and the Priesthood. *“He came unto His own and His own received Him not.”*

They said, *“We have no king but Caesar. We will not have this man reign over us.”* Don’t write on that cross, *“He’s the King of the Jews. Write on that cross, He said He was King of the Jews.”* They rejected Him.

“But as many as received Him, (Jew or Gentile), to them gave He the power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood,” that is not of family inheritance.

You don’t inherit salvation; it’s the gift of God. You don’t get salvation from your parents, like a king gets a throne from his daddy. *“It’s not of blood, it’s not of the will of the flesh, it’s not of the will of man; it is of God.”*

The new birth is of God! Only God can give spiritual life. *“You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.”* So; here’s the first thing I know about the new birth; it is of God.

Secondly: It is the work of the Holy Spirit!

Why, our Lord said in **John 3:6:** *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”* Now, when I was born the first time I was born of an earthly father and an earthly mother. And I am flesh and blood; I received it from them.

When I was conceived, when I was begotten, when I was shaped in the womb, when I came forth I was born of the flesh; *“And that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit (in the new birth), is spirit.”*

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“And the wind bloweth where it listeth and you hear the sound thereof and you cannot tell from whence it cometh or whither it goeth, even so are they who are born of the Spirit. We are born of the water and of the Spirit.”

It’s a miracle, it’s mysterious, but it’s of God and it’s by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Like the angel said to Mary when He told her she would bear a Son and He would be the Saviour and the Messiah.

She said: “Well I can’t bear a son; I don’t know a man.” And He said, *“The Holy Ghost will come upon you and the power of the highest will overshadow you and that which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.”*

And this is the same thing that happens when a sinner is born again; the Holy Ghost comes upon him. What is the seed? Well, the seed is the Word of God; being born again by the Word of God.

Look at **1 Peter 1:23**; write that down; *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever.”* And then **James 1:18** says, *“Of His own will begat He us through the Word of truth.”*

So, it’s the Holy Spirit. This new birth is of God. It is by the agent, the Holy Spirit. It is by the instrumentality of the Word of God.

This new birth is a new creature. It’s not just getting religion, it’s not just form, ceremony, doctrines, rules, laws, regulations, and doing this on Sunday and something else on Saturday; the new birth is a new creation.

“If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.” He’s born of God. He’s begotten of the Holy Spirit. He’s begotten of the Word of God and He’s a new creature in Christ Jesus.

This is mysterious and this is a miracle. It is God creating something out of nothing. It is God bringing into existence a life that prior to this time did not exist; it’s God making you a new man, the new man which is created in Christ Jesus, in opposition to the old man that is of the flesh.

“Except a man is born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” That’s clear and if words mean anything at all, if you can understand words; that’s the Lord’s ultimatum. You can’t change it.

Secondly: Luke 13:1-5, and twice in this Scripture our Lord says this: *“Except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish”*

This takes in all of it, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant and Jews, rich or poor, old or young, black or white; Christ said, *“Except ye repent you shall all likewise perish.”*

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Now, I could spend a lot of time today arguing about what is repentance and trying to define repentance or arguing about whether repentance is to that day or this day or another day. But our Lord makes it quite clear: “*Except a man repent, (whatever it means) he will perish. Except ye repent ye shall fall.*”

Now, I’ve heard some good definitions, repentance is a turning. Somebody said, “Oh what a turning. Repentance is a change, but oh what a change.”

It was written and is found in **Isaiah 55**; “*Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord.*”

In other words, that’s a change of manners, a change of mind, and a change of masters. And that’s a pretty good definition of repentance, let him change his thoughts, let him change his ways, and let him change his master. Let him return to the Lord. That’s repentance.

But repentance is more than that and when you try to define repentance, somebody said, “You kill it.” Repentance is not a definition; it’s an experience, it’s a heart experience but let me tell you where it comes from:

First of all: Repentance is the gift of God!

That’s right; if you will look at **Acts 11:18** the Scripture says: “*God hath granted repentance to the Gentiles.*” And then, if you will turn to **Romans 2:4** you will find this speaking to the Gentiles, “*The goodness of God leadeth you to repentance.*”

You don’t repent of your own; you repent by the grace of God. You repent by the mercy of God. It’s the gift of God. “*God hath granted repentance.*” The goodness of God led you to repentance. The work of God preceded your conviction. It preceded your mourning. It preceded your turning and it preceded your repentance.

Secondly: Repentance is born of Godly sorrow!

Now there are a lot of people who feel real bad when they get caught in sin; they’ll go on in sin and pay no attention to it and to their relationship with God until somebody catches them and then they start crying and then they start begging and then they start deciding to change, when somebody catches them.

But wait a minute! That’s not genuine repentance. “*That’s an earthly sorrow that worketh death.*” If you read **2 Corinthians 7:9-10** you’ll find that, “*Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.*” What do we mean by Godly sorrow?

We mean just this that we are sorry for our sins before God and that we recognize our sin in the light of God’s holiness, in the light of God’s law, that we realize our sins are not

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against men; our sins are against God. We have violated His law and His righteousness. It's godly sorrow that leadeth to repentance.

For example, David said in **Psalm 51**; "*O Lord against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight that thou mightiest be justified when thou speaketh and that thou mightiest be clear when thou judgest, (when you pronounce judgment upon me).*" It is godly sorrow that leads to true mourning and true repentance.

Thirdly: And then repentance is to acknowledge the truth!

Listen to **2 Timothy 2:25**: "*If God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*" that's right repentance acknowledges the truth; repentance does not alibi; true repentance does not excuse sin.

True repentance does not try to justify self. I don't say, "Yea I did this but somebody else was responsible. Yea, but I'm guilty but I wouldn't have done it if certain circumstances had not prevailed, and certain environmental forces had not been operated upon me."

No sir! I'm guilty. It's nobody's fault but my own. I acknowledge the truth, the truth about myself, the truth about my sin, the truth about my guilt, the truth about God's mercy, the truth about God's grace, the truth about God's sovereignty, the truth about God's Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the truth about God's mercy.

I acknowledge the truth. That's real repentance when a man faces his guilt and admits his guilt and says to God, "I repent, I'm guilty, and I don't justify myself. I'm not trying to clear myself. I'm not trying to play, 'holier than thou;' God I'm guilty." Now you are getting close to repentance.

Fourthly: I'll tell you something else about repentance; it's continual. It's not an isolated act. Somebody said, "Well I repented one time." You never did unless you still are. Somebody said, "Well I repented and I believed and I kind of drifted away." You never did repent. Repentance is a state of being. It's a continual attitude. We have repented, we are repenting, and we shall continue in repentance.

Once we see our guilt; it remains, the guilt of it, the feeling of it, the embarrassment over it, the mourning before God over it, it continues and it grows stronger. That's right; guilt never leaves a true honest person, never.

It's there all the time because we see our heart. We know what we think, what we say, what we do while others only look upon the outward countenance but we know, "*that God looks on the heart*" and our hearts are open to God and understood by God.

"*He remembers our frame. He knoweth that we are dust.*" We ought to know it too. David said: "*My sins are ever before me.*" That's repentance, continual.

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Our Lord said: *“Except you repent you will all perish,”* We’ve got to find out what it’s all about. We better seek repentance and ask God to give us repentance.

Thirdly: Matthew 18:3; now listen, don’t leave me, **Matthew 18:3;** our Lord said, *“Except ye be converted and become as a little child you’re not going to enter the Kingdom of God.”*

This is serious isn’t it? Do you know what the Lord means by this, *“Except a man be born again he will never enter the Kingdom of God, except a man repent he’ll perish.”* And now He said, *“Except you be converted and become as a little child, you shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of God?”*

My friend; God says, *“Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall. He that exalted himself shall be abased.”*

Do you know when our Lord listed the seven things in the book of **Proverbs chapter 6:17** that He hates above all things; He said: *“Six things that the Lord hate, yea seven, are an abomination to Him.”* You could never guess if you haven’t read it, what’s the first sin He mentions, what is the first sin?

Some people say, “Well, murders.” Somebody else says, “Well profanity.” Somebody else says, “Well adultery.” Somebody else will say, “Well, theft.” None of them; the first thing He mentions is a, *“proud look.”*

Seven things God hates, seven things that are an abomination to Him: but first of all, *“A proud look.”*

Oh the sacrifices of God are a broken heart. *“A broken and a contrite spirit, O Lord, thou will not despise. The Lord saveth such as thee of a contrite spirit. The Lord is nigh unto them of a broken heart. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart.”*

Let me tell you something; if the Lord is not pleased to bring us low, bring us down at His feet in humility, in contrition with a broken spirit; God will have to judge us because He will not save rebels.

He will break the wild ass’s colt and He will put the yoke upon him. He’ll put the harness upon him. He’ll put the scepter of Lordship over him or he’ll never take him into His Kingdom. You’ve got to be broken. You’ve got to be converted.

You’ve got to be brought down, your proud human spirit has got to be submissive to the Lord and that’s so: *“Except ye be converted and become as a little child, (willing to be taught, willing to be led, willing to be the servant of God) you will never enter the Kingdom of God.”*

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Fourthly: Matthew 5:20; our Lord said: *“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees; you shall not enter the Kingdom of God”*

Now that shocked the disciple because they knew the Pharisees. Who were the Pharisees? Well the Pharisees were the professional religionists. They were the people who read the Bible, preached and prayed on the street corners.

They were the people who attended the synagogue and lived there, most of them did. They were there all the time. They were the people who tithed, who fasted, who prayed, and taught the Scriptures.

They went out to proselyte converts. They were people who were professional religionists. They were in it all the time. And our Lord said, *“Unless your righteousness exceeds theirs, you’re not going to see the Kingdom of God.”*

They’re not saved, they’re not God’s children and you’re not either unless your righteousness exceeds theirs. And the disciples said, “Well who can be saved? If these men aren’t saved, who is? And our Lord said, *“That which is impossible with men is possible with God.”*

Well let’s look at these Pharisees. What kind of righteousness did they have?

First of all: It was their righteousness! Our Lord was careful to say that, *“Except your righteousness exceeds their righteousness.”* It was not God’s righteousness; it was theirs. *“They were going about to establish their own righteousness.”* Read **Romans 10:1-3.**

It was their righteousness and it was an outward righteousness. Our Lord called these Pharisees hypocrites, *“He said they are careful to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter but inside, full of envy, jealousy, strife, lust, and all these things.”*

He said, *“They indeed; appeared outwardly beautiful to men but on the inside they are full of excess and extortion.”* And He said, *“They are like whited sepulchers; on the outside they are beautiful but on the inside they are full of dead men’s bones.”*

So, their righteousness was theirs and it was outward and it consisted of two things; it consisted in quitting certain sins and performing certain religious acts. Listen to the Pharisees out at the temple; he said, *“God I thank you I’m not like other men. I’m not an adulterer, I’m not an extortioner. I am not unjust.”* That was his outward righteousness. Now watch; he goes on, *“And I tithe and I fast and I give alms to the poor.”*

Because he set forth his religious duties; he had quit certain sins and he was performing certain religious duties and our Lord said, “He was a lost man who did not know God and was not justified.” That’s why He said it was, *“Their righteousness.”*

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Well what is our righteousness? What is this righteousness of which our Lord said “*It must exceed theirs?*”

First of all: It’s not ours at all, it’s the Lord Jesus Christ’s righteousness. That’s right! Paul said: “*O that I may win Christ and be found in Him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, (which is filthy rags) but the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ.*” It is not our obedience at all; it’s His obedience.

Read **Romans 5:19:** “*By the disobedience of one, (Adam) we became sinners; by the obedience of one (Christ) we were made righteous.*”

So this righteousness which does exceed the professional religionists, which does exceed the works crowd, those that are going about to establish their own righteousness and make themselves acceptable to God by what they don’t do and what they do.

The believer’s righteousness is the righteousness of God which Christ worked out here on this earth in human flesh by obeying every jot and tittle of the law as our representative, going to the cross and dying and rising from the tomb and interceding for us at the right hand of God, who gives us a perfect righteousness. And it is in us and it is for us and it exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Fifthly: John 6:44, another ultimatum and of itself. Our Lord said, “*No man can come to me except my Father which sent me draw Him.*”

And you can call this “high doctrine” or “low doctrine.” You can call it “fatalistic,” “hyper-Calvinism,” or “antinomianism.” Just put any name you want to but it’s God Word. “*No man, (whatever it is, talent, gift, intelligence, disposition, or denomination, or whatever) no man can, (is able, has the will, and has the desire) to come to me.*”

To come to Christ is to believe on Him, to receive Him. “*Except my Father, (not excluding the Son, who purchased us and the Holy Spirit who calls us) except my Father draw him, (that is call him, convict him, awaken him, reveal Christ to him).*”

We call on God but you realize it’s because He called on us. We love Him, why, because He first loved us? “*Herein is love not that we loved God. He loved us and gave Himself for us.*”

Yes sir; Abraham came out of Ur the Chaldees because God called him out. Yes Noah built an ark because, “*He found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*” Yes, Paul on the road to Damascus cried, “*Lord, what will you have me do?*” But it wasn’t until the Lord of glory smote him down into the dust.

We call because He called. “*Salvation is of the Lord and no man can come to me except my Father which sent me draw him.*” And if we believe that we’ll be like the old leper.

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When Christ came down from the mountain and the old leper ran to meet him, helpless, hopeless, in desperate need, in desperate circumstances, and fell on his face before the sovereign Lord Jesus Christ and he said unto Him, *“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”*

“Now I can’t do it myself and my pastor can’t do it, my momma can’t do it, my daddy can’t do it. My wife and husband can’t do it and my son and daughter can’t do it. You’re the only one who can make me clean. You are the only one who can give me repentance and faith. You’re the only one who can give me the new birth. You’re the only one who can give me life eternal. Lord; that’s what I want, and I won’t let you go unless you bless me.”

Sixth: John 6:63 and 64: *“Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you have no life in you.”* This thing of salvation is not just walking an aisle. It’s not just shaking a preacher’s hand.

And it’s not just coming to the altar. It’s not just coming to the front just to partake of Christ; it’s to take Christ into myself. It’s to enthrone Christ in my heart. It is to receive Christ into my mind. It’s to partake of Christ as I partake of my food at the table. It makes Him a part of myself.

To be redeemed is not only to believe some facts about the Lord Jesus Christ but to receive Him, His person, not just His doctrine or His church, but Christ Himself, *“To as many as received Him to them gave He the right to become the sons of God.”*

“Except you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God,” to receive Christ unto yourself by faith, except you do you have no life!

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