

John 6:63-71 "You Have the Words of Eternal Life."

JOH 6:63-71 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." 70 Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" 71 (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Last week we ended with a very interesting portion of God's word which addresses the very nature of our salvation, and that is how it is entirely a spiritual work from God.

JOH 6:63 "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

One of the things we glean from this is how it is the Spirit of God who imparts this life; in other words, it is the Spirit who opens our eyes as He gives us eyes to see, and prompts and empowers us to reach out by the faith He gives to accept the free gift of salvation found in Christ alone.

In theological terms this is referred to as regeneration or rebirth. The apostle Paul uses this language regarding our salvation when writing to Titus.

TIT 3:5-7 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth [regeneration] and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

And so, whenever we consider our salvation we must acknowledge that it was God from first to last who not only desired that we be with Him forever, but who also took the first step, from the promise to Adam and Eve in the garden, to the cross and ultimately

to personally calling us out of the darkness of our sin, as our Lord actually accomplished our salvation for us in Christ.

But the other thing we should point out, which verse 63 does, is to show the means by which God accomplishes the actual declaring of this good news which effectually brings about life in a person through the Holy Spirit's direct involvement.

This is part of what Jesus meant when He said, "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." (vs. 63b)

And it is this aspect of salvation where we personally play a part in advancing the Kingdom of Christ; the words [we] have spoken, which are spirit and life.

It is the word of God which must be at the forefront of this battle for the souls of mankind. We see this truth being spoken of all throughout the Word of God.

JAM 1:18 He chose to give us *birth through the word of truth*, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

1PE 1:23-25 For *you have been born again*, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, *through the living and enduring word of God*. 24 For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

And it is this word which we must give to the world; this word which speaks of God's promises of us being with Him forever, and His promise of the Messiah Jesus who accomplishes this. This too, Peter points out.

2PE 1:3-4 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

I like the way A.W. Pink puts it in his commentary of this passage. He says, "The great need of today, as of every age, is the faithful preaching of God's word; "not with exciting words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1Cor.2:4). What is needed is less anecdotal preaching, [story-telling], less rhetorical embellishment, [eloquent speech], less

reliance upon logic, [man's wisdom], and more direct, plain, pointed, simple declaration and exposition of the Word itself."

I've always wondered why it is that since we have all the words God has chosen to give us in the Scriptures to reveal Himself and His salvation for mankind, why we wouldn't want to devote our lives to this revelation instead of skirting around the edges of this word from God.

And in the context of our passage this has to do partly with the words which lead to this life found in Christ. In other words, the gospel message. We can get so bogged down with trying to convince people into the Kingdom of God with all of our lengthy discussions and lofty logic that we sometimes miss the simple message.

That simple message is that we are all sinners deserving God's wrath. But God sent His Son to die for our penalty of our sin. He then defeated death and the grave by rising from bodily the dead. If you will simply turn from your wicked ways and believe what He did on your behalf, you will have eternal life. Is that what you would like?

I did a word count on just that couple of sentences that I gave you. It's 61 words. And these 61 words would parallel whatever amount of words Jesus, or the apostles, or any other saint who has shared the gospel has used, and agrees with the words we have recorded in our text. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

I do not mean to suggest that whenever we talk with people that we won't use a variety of words to greet people, to find out about their lives, to discover their needs, to learn about their families and situations in life they encounter. This is called getting to know someone.

But in the final analysis it is the words of life which bring people to Christ; the simple gospel with a simple invitation. At some point it is the gospel they need to hear.

And in like manner, we as believers must seek the words of life we have all throughout the Scriptures so that we can be conformed into the image of our Lord and Savior. This is why we put such a high priority on the simple teaching of this word of God as we go through it verse by verse.

Our Lord Jesus was a magnificent teacher of the word He had given to Moses and all the prophets through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And yet, many people did not believe because their hearts were far from God. And yet, that never deterred Jesus from giving people these words of life.

JOH 6:64 "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."

I find this a fascinating statement. Keep in mind that there were thousands of people who were following Christ at this point; people who were considered His disciples, His learners and followers.

And yet, knowing that many of these people would not believe, Jesus continues to give them the truth. But in addition to this truth this shows us the omniscience of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is still God and knows all things, even the individuals who would not believe and ultimately betray Him.

In this short statement Jesus was declaring, as well as prophesying, that many of these same people would be the one's who would find themselves shouting before Pilate, "crucify Him, crucify Him."

Here Jesus is giving these people words of spirit and life and yet He knows that many, if not most of them, will not believe and will actually go so far as to betray Him. This is the hardness of man's heart which only God can break through. This is why Jesus repeats a statement He made earlier.

JOH 6:65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

In other words, God must give the ability to reach out to Him as His Spirit regenerates the lifeless spirit of men who, left on their own, would only continue to reject and betray Him.

But in this statement He does not mean to give a message of hopelessness, but rather is promising that He will in fact do this very thing of causing this new birth in people. But as we see, all of this spirit talk is more than these spiritually lifeless people can handle at this time.

JOH 6:66 "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."

As I said last time, these disciples being spoken of are the thousands who followed Him from the other side of the Sea of Galilee who had experienced, first-hand, the grace and mercy of Christ as He miraculously fed them with fish and bread.

It is these disciples who now turn back and no longer follow our Lord. And it is at this point that our Lord Jesus turns to His 12 disciples whom He first called out and asks them a very poignant question.

JOH 6:67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

Jesus has spent a couple of years with these 12 men, and now He gives them the opportunity to show their faith and their allegiance to Him. But what is different about these 12 is that they are to play a very important role in the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

These 12 have been touched by the Spirit in a very special way, even the one who would betray Jesus as we'll see in a moment. But first, notice the response of Peter who seemed to take the role of spokesman for the others.

JOH 6:68-69 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."

What an amazing response. This is similar to the response Peter gave on another occasion when Jesus asked His disciples who do the people say the Son of Man is? They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

MAT 16:16-17 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

The Spirit of God had opened Peter's eyes to this truth, these words of spirit and life. And now in our text we see that Peter continues to proclaim that the Spirit of God is doing a work in his life to enable Him to see Jesus for who He is.

And yet, this same Peter will deny Jesus three times on the day He will be crucified. And though it will be a momentary denial, we see that the Lord has not let go of Peter after that incident as Peter and

the other disciples continue to follow our Lord and ultimately give their lives for the sake of the gospel and Christ.

Peter knew that the Father had sent the Messiah into their midst. And while the rest of the crowds were leaving the Lord Peter had only one response.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

When you know the truth, and yet everyone else around is leaving that truth, the temptation is to follow the crowds like sheep. And yet, Peter's heart can't do that because he is convinced that the Messiah they have longed for is standing right in front of them.

How do you leave that? In fact, that has always been my response to people who ask me how I can stay with a ministry which to some might appear to be less than vibrant. And by that they mean it isn't growing in the types of numbers they expect, as fast as they expect.

And my response has always been, if God has called you to a work, how do you leave that? How do you say no to God when you know He has commissioned you to a work? The reason the 11 true believers of the 12 didn't leave was because they knew that Jesus was the Messiah.

In other words, by faith they believed that the One on whom they trusted was the real thing. And you don't walk away from that, any more than you walk away from a task the Lord personally gives you.

You look at the life of Paul and you've got to believe that there were a number of times in which he thought, "I'm tired of getting beat up every time I try and serve Christ. I'm tired of putting myself on the line and these Jews still want to kill me. I'm tired of giving my all to Christ's church only to have the church dump on me and even question that I'm an apostle personally commissioned by Christ."

But Paul didn't look at his service to Christ in this way. He didn't dwell on the awful situations he often found himself in because he was too busy looking into the face of a Savior who graciously and mercifully arrested him from himself on the road to Damascus and brought him from death to life.

Yes, he suffered as a Christian, but he counted it a privilege to share in Christ's sufferings as he went forth with the truth in love,

knowing that the goal was to be with the Lord and share in the Kingdom of Christ. That's what he told the Romans.

ROM 8:17-18 Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

This is why Paul continued on the hard path that Jesus put him on. But it wasn't as though Paul was without comfort and hope in his present situations which were sometimes difficult.

2CO 1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

Paul knew that our Lord's grace was more than sufficient and so he pressed on toward the goal and the finish line without wavering and that's what all of us have been called to do as well. And this is what we see in Peter's response in our text. Why? Because he believed on Christ.

JOH 6:69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.

Notice that Peter doesn't speak in the first person here but includes the rest of the disciples. **We** believe. Evidently Peter was convinced from what the others had said, and what they showed to be true with their actions, that they too understood and believed that Jesus was in fact the promised Messiah. And because of this they could not leave Him.

But instead of Jesus commending Peter for such faith our Lord makes a rather odd statement in the midst of this apparent solidarity from His 12.

JOH 6:70-71 Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" 71 (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Often times we get the impression that God only blesses the believer, or that God is only concerned with the believer and that the unbeliever receives no attention from God.

The truth of the matter is that God is involved with every person He has ever created. Now, this doesn't mean that the whole world shares in the same relationship with the Father, but it does mean

that the Father, like His Son, is willing to provide for all human beings as the rain falls on all.

Matthew 5:44-45 ⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

There are only two types of positional relationships a person can have with God: a relationship which is identified as an enemy of God to receive His wrath forever, or a relationship which is identified as being at peace with God through faith in His Son's atoning sacrifice on our behalf which results in eternal life with God.

It's black or white. There is no gray area with God as it translates to our relational status with Him; you're either dead in your trespasses or sins, or you are alive in the life Christ gives as you place your faith in Him alone.

And yet, God can still use those who are His enemies as He blesses them, or extends grace to them. Now, granted, given the choice of being blessed in this world, even gaining the whole world, and yet losing your soul is not the best trade. But many people choose this path while denying that God has anything to do with their lives.

The fact that anybody is still breathing, or that anybody has access to food and water and shelter is testimony that God is personally involved in the lives of human beings, be they unbelievers or believers.

PSA 145:9 The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

In fact, it is this goodness of the Lord, who is the great provider for all men, which is designed to be a testimony to men that there is a God in heaven who takes care of mankind and therefore must be sought as the good and loving God that He is.

This is exactly what Paul and Barnabas told the Gentiles in Lystra when they wanted to make these two apostles into gods after they witnessed the healing of a lame man by Paul.

ACT 14:11-12 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to

us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.

But Paul rebuked them for doing this.

ACT 14:15-17 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things [idols] to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

Does this sound like a God who isn't concerned with all mankind? Absolutely not. And yet, God knows that much of mankind still rejects His goodness and kindness and grace, but He still loves His people so much that He would send His only begotten Son into this world to redeem us.

Even Judas was chosen by Jesus, and yet we know that Judas never really believed in the Lord Jesus or loved Him.

JOH 6:70-71 "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" 71 (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Judas enjoyed the blessings of the Lord. He enjoyed the fellowship of the saints. He partook in the miracles. Here was a man who had all of the advantages of personally seeing the Messiah in his midst and yet he still rejected Christ.

But our Lord chose him and allowed him to be part of that inner fellowship for a reason. And that reason was to allow Judas to hand Jesus over to the authorities so that Christ might pay our debt with His life.

In fact, it is Judas we mention on occasion when we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

1CO 11:23-24 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, *on the night he was betrayed*, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.

Judas was a man who was prophesied about many years before to be an integral part of our salvation to the extent that his betrayal was allowed by the Lord to accomplish His will.

In fact, it was David who was inspired by the Spirit of God to write about Judas, though he probably had no idea at the time who he was writing about.

PSA 41:9 Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

It was Jesus who quoted this verse and tells us that it was this passage which Judas fulfilled. Regarding the betrayal by Judas Jesus tells us this in John 13.

JOH 13:18-21 "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' 19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. 20 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." 21 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me."

What an amazing thing. Jesus would choose a rebel, a turncoat to be a part of His ministry. And yet, it's really not amazing at all. If His ministry was to draw all men to Himself by being lifted up on the cross then it would stand to reason that He would choose the instrument which would put His will into motion.

Judas had no one but himself to blame. He was given every opportunity to accept Christ by faith. He sat at the Master's feet with the rest of the disciples and listened to our Lord explain the Scriptures even as He just did in revealing that one of His 12 would betray Him.

But Judas' heart was never really one with the Lord. How sad, and yet what a testimony to the grace of God being extended to the world. This is what we need to share with the world. Let our words be words of spirit and life and may our lives demonstrate that the Spirit of God is the one who leads and guides us in love.

2JO 1:6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Jesus has the words of eternal life. Where else would we go? Who else would we follow?