

The Difficulties With The Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you very much for the opportunity of coming to share God's word with you and as Phil was praying we pray that it is God's voice that we will hear as we seek to look at his word and I want us to focus there in chapter 6 from verse 60 when many of his disciples heard it they said this is a hard saying who can listen to it and then in verse 66 it says after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Now we know that the

Christian life is a life really that's like no other and it is a life that is full of so many blessings so many privileges because as a Christian we know what it is to have joy and peace and what it is to experience God's love to have a sense of identity a sense of purpose and there are so many rich blessings in this life being a Christian that we would automatically think well the moment you become a Christian then surely it's all going to be plain sailing but you and I know that that is not the case and that so often in the Christian life we discover that it's a struggle it's hard going and it's often in the tough times that we do discover the joy and the peace and the grace and God's love in wonderful ways so this particular section here speaks to us about people who have begun to follow Jesus and then turned back and you know when that sort of thing happens whenever we see people who have begun to follow Jesus turned back it affects us it always affects a church family when any person who was part of their number goes back who no longer keeps following and because again as Phil mentioned in the prayer there the church is it is a family it's a home and just in the normal natural family unit if somebody becomes estranged within the family then that hurts and likewise it hurts in our family in

God's family as well if anybody as it were becomes estranged and it can it can affect us because I think one of the things that so often happened particularly and we've all we've all seen over the course of our lives that there are people and particularly some who seem to be very bright now again they may come back and if the true work of grace has begun in their heart they will come back but sometimes people have maybe it's like Jesus shows us in the parable of the sower that some remember how some of the seed fell down and stony ground and the seed sprung up right away but it didn't last because when the heat came out it withered away and Jesus is showing how some people when the trials and troubles come because they haven't been really rooted in Jesus although they appear to be they fall away and they go back but we know that those who that there is a real work of grace has taken place in their heart some may drift for a time and some may drift quite far away but they'll come back but when when when it happens and whether we know they'll come back or we don't know whether they'll come back it always affects us we're always sorry to see someone go some apart someone of our family and it challenges us particularly that person may have appeared very bright in his or her life and this must have been quite a remarkable moment for the disciples as well when they saw crowds who had been very recently following Jesus with full intent we're going away in their droves so we have to ask ourselves what what on earth happened here well so we know this this is quite a remarkable chapter because we're told that it's the only one of Jesus's miracles that all the gospel writers record so it must have there must have been a great impact in it and when Jesus fed the thousands we find that the response of the people was such that they wanted there and then to make him king and there was this great sense of euphoria and hey this is him this is a messiah this is the one we've waited for but then later on when Jesus begins to teach them and he begins to talk about atonement and personal faith and their inability to save themselves and all these sort of things they didn't like it and there was a reaction against what Jesus was saying and so we find that in response to what Jesus is saying they actually say in verse 60 when many of his disciples heard that they said this is a hard saying who can listen to it it isn't that quite extraordinary this is a hard saying who can listen to it and you know that's the reason why many people today won't listen to God's word many people today won't open God's word because to them it's a hard saying and you and I know that God's word often is a hard saying yes there are the most beautiful invitations and the most wonderful welcomes and the most glorious promises but there are also hard sayings because God deals with the truth and we know the old saying truth hurts and sometimes that's exactly what happens when people come under the word they find it a challenge to their life and it goes bang right in where it hurts people say I don't like this and lots of people close the Bible never to open it again

in a sense I suppose that's why there is even such a reaction throughout society today there's a move to keep religion they say you can have it private but don't mingle it don't bring Christianity into the workplace don't bring it into into society why because who can listen to it because it's a challenge it gets right under their skin and it affects so the easy option is close the book get rid of Bibles don't have anything to do with it and so we might look at society today and say this is terrible nothing new this is exactly what was happening back then I say we're there in the presence of Jesus who can listen to this it's like closing the Bible I'm out so what is it that Jesus said that so affected them well I think there are there's many things that you can think of but there are two basic things that really do affect people when they maybe come to church and come under the Gospel and one of the things is that the Bible tells us that we can't save ourselves that we are totally and altogether unable to save ourselves now that goes against the grain the Bible tells us that our verses in the Bible that says there is none good no not one now the version of the Bible says all our righteousness is all the good good about our own life all our righteousness is our filthy rags and people can take umbrage and offence at that how dare how dare a preacher how dare the Bible tell me that that's the kind of person I am I'm a decent person and we do fully accept that the vast majority of people are decent people decent work colleagues decent neighbors decent family the decent decent see us as opposed written large over most people's lives but it isn't decent in the sense of the way that we see people that God judges things

God is looking at his perfect law and as he looks out on each one of us he sees us falling far short of that perfect law and that's why he sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to do for us but we can't do ourselves and Jesus has done all the work all we have to do is to trust and to believe but this goes against the grain there's within us something natural that wants to do we want our part we want to have some part in our salvation we want to have some part in being right with God and you know that sticks with us even when we become Christians it's very hard it might sound strange in us and very hard living just by grace and grace alone because there is this almost there's almost a legalistic side within us that's attached there and it's running parallel with grace where we somehow think that on certain occasions God owes us this or God owes us that because I've done this or because I've done that but we have to learn that it's all of grace it's the most wonderful place the more we come to it the more the freer we become in life the more liberated we become in life the more we seek to live by God's grace so it's a hard saying and maybe there are people who have left this church maybe there are people throughout the history of this very congregation who came to church and they founded a hard saying they found that that it went right in and they didn't like it in being told that they're sinners and that they're not right with God but you know rather than take umbrage we should actually be thankful that we're told that that's how it is and I would say the the the the other great obstacle in a sense that is that are of why people were they were saying many of the disciples this is a hard saying who can listen to it you see the other great problem was that they they were unable to believe they couldn't see what was in front of them because they were saying they had said to Jesus they they were saying to Jesus at before to to to show them and he had showed them they asked him to help them to see and the thing is Jesus was there with them but they couldn't see and you know we've been there as well because I'm sure as you look back over your life unless you came to faith as a very maybe as a very young child but there were periods along the way before you came to faith and you saw other people come to faith but you couldn't get it you just didn't get it you knew the gospel if somebody had said to you you know I don't want to be a Christian how would you become a Christian you could have actually told them you could say well it says in the bible believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved it tells us in the bible that God so loved the world that he gave us only begotten son that whosoever believes you will not perish but have everlasting life so you could tell them that but though you knew it and you could tell someone do yourself I was there I myself I could do that but I still didn't believe because my eyes were not open I just couldn't get it I couldn't get from where I was to there there was this like a just this huge gap and somehow I couldn't get from where I was to there I couldn't believe I

[13 : 31] couldn't see even although I knew what was involved and we've got to remember that the god of this world that's what the bible tells us that the god of this world at satan the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe so we've got to remember that there's a satanic power at work along with our own natural deadness and blindness that enables us to see spiritually what is there in front of us and that is why again we find it a hard saying and that is where Jesus of course says in verse 62 63 my eyes it is bad it is the spirit who gives life the flesh is no help at all and you and I know that that is true is that anybody here tonight who who hasn't who still hasn't come to see or anybody who's watching tonight online who still you're you're you're nearly there but you're not there you need god's spirit tonight to open your eyes spiritually in order to see you can't do it yourself tells us that the flesh is of no help your actual passion yourself no matter how wide you might try and open your eyes no matter how hard you might try to believe you and I can't do it and it's difficult to come to this place of acceptance but what we have to do this is what we can do this is our part it's where we go to the

Lord and we say to the Lord Lord please open my eyes that I might see you please tonight Lord take the scales off Lord I know in my head but I don't I've never seen you in my heart Lord by your spirit bring life into me and you know if we really pray that if we pray that with all our heart if we pray that sincerely and genuinely the Lord will hear he says it God says seek and you will find knock and you will open ask and you will receive you know sometimes people won't go to that point I said to somebody recently I said right I want you tonight to ask the Lord Jesus Christ somebody who said he wanted to be a Christian I said ask the Lord Jesus Christ tonight to come into your heart into your life will you do that he's bow hold on I'll do it sometime I'm not ready to do that tonight and you know people are like that they want to be Christians but at their time in their way and so on but it's imperative it is important time is short and so we need to ask the Lord because it is a Lord alone and it's a spirit that gives life so this is a hard saying but Jesus knowing in himself that the disciples were grumbling about them said to you do you take offense at this that's what he's saying and so he says it's a spirit who gives life the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life and you know that's a wonderful thing Jesus's words are spirit and life that's why we must come under the word because Jesus is the word you know a lot of people say I have a real problem in seeing Jesus I want I want to be able to I want to be able to because

I'm so care I don't know just can't get hold of it well remember that Jesus Christ is a word he's a word made flesh and it's in the word that we see Jesus and his word he is he is spirit and his truth in life Jesus and in fact he said I am the way the truth and the life and isn't that wonderful when you think of the the world that we're living in that here he is and he's saying not only I know the way but I am the way and yet so many people choose not to go the way that leads to everlasting life I'm the truth we live in a world where we're always told there's fake news in fact a lot of things you just you don't know nowadays when you read them or hear them and you say I don't even know if this is true you think it will be true but you're not a hundred percent sure when you come to God's word always 100% always true Jesus is the way he is the truth and he is the life and so we find this that as Jesus is speaking to them and it tells us that our Jesus said 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 is who was going to betray him and Jesus knows all about us he knows he knows why we're here he knows our motives he knows why we serve him what we do he knows every single thing about us and it's absolutely imperative that we are focused entirely upon him because we find then in response to what Jesus has said that and in respect the actions after what they said this is a hard saying who can listen to it it tells us in verse 66 and after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him you know I think that's one of the saddest moments in scripture where you have this huge crowd who not so long before were wanting to make

Jesus king it shows the absolute fickleness of human nature of just how quickly we can change Jesus rode into Jerusalem to the shouts of Hosanna same crowd a little a little later were shouting crucify and crucify that's human nature so fickle changes almost like the wind and I think this must have been one of the saddest moments in Jesus's ministry here on earth yes Jesus knew what was in their hearts nothing was actually going to take Jesus by surprise but I believe when people reject Jesus and turn away from Jesus that it hurts sometimes we have this idea of Jesus as the great the god man that because of the fact he is god man that he's kind of above all these things no what is Jesus's reaction to rejection in Jerusalem we find him weeping weeping over Jerusalem why because they were rejecting him and here we have at this moment crowds rejecting him Jesus wasn't aloof standing aloof and saying oh well you're making the wrong choice so this would have gone right like a knife into the Savior's heart when his response is tears over rejection of Jerusalem it must have been heartbreaking to see the crowds going away even although he knew this is what was going to happen and then he turns to the 12 and he asks the question and you know this I sometimes almost think there's a he can almost maybe catch a little hint of maybe brokenness I don't know in the voice of the Savior where he says will you also go away and you know we have that wonderful moment with Peter and impetuous Peter and Peter who was off in the spokesman Peter sometimes got it wrong but more often he got it right and Peter comes up with these wonderful words and he says it's almost like Jesus you're asking really just now an absurd question to him else can we go we've been elsewhere before and you know it's got nothing where else can we go you know the words of eternal life is that your response tonight of Jesus as we that's what we do when we come under the word we dig deep into our own life into our own hearts we ask ourselves a question and if you you may have seen friends turn back you may have seen people within your own family turn back you're still here Jesus is asking you again asking me will you also go is your response the same as that of Peter or to whom else can we go because you have the words of eternal life because you know you and I we've been in the other place and it's got nothing or sometimes in life in the in the sort of all the flurry of activities and the frenzy of life and sometimes the frothiness of life there can be a buzz and can be an element of satisfaction and sometimes a full satisfaction but it doesn't last these things have nothing when life begins to crumble and they've got absolutely zero for death absolutely nothing but Jesus has to him else can we go because you have the words of eternal life this is this is the only way this

is the only truth that there is and so we would put our amen exactly to what to what Peter is saying do you want to go out away as well Simon Peter Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life and we have believed and I've come to know that you are the Holy One of God you see when we come to believe we come to know you know that's one of the things that happens when you become a Christian you become to know you you begin to know the Lord more and more and you know the more you begin to know the more you want to know and the more you the more you get to know of the more wonderfully becomes you're never satisfied you know I often think that it's never a great sign when somebody is satisfied with where they are as a Christian because we're always wanting the the the Christian should always be wanting to know more and more and it's important that we that we give our all into following the Lord you know I mentioned Peter and we see Peter here and

[24 : 50] Peter is a great man a wonderful man but he has to say he didn't always get it right and we know that of course the great the great fall in Peter's life was when he denied the Lord Jesus and you know there's a verse not long before the denial of Jesus by Peter when it tells us that Peter was following Jesus from a distance or following from from afar following far off it's where the time at the the arrest of Jesus and Peter was thrown didn't know what to do and he's but he's still following but he's following at a distance you know that's not a say two things one it's good you're still following but it's never a safe place to be following at a distance because there's always a possibility of things going wrong I believe that that's what happened with David it was at the time so time when kings went out to battle it's the time when David should have been out leading his troops but he was at home he was taking it easy he was lunging and again you could you could argue and say well he deserved some some quiet time but it tells us it was the time when kings went to battle and of course that's when he he obviously was maybe in a time where he was physically and mentally sort of taking it easy but he was also taking it easy spiritually as well and that's of course where he fell his great fall and his adultery and then above all his murder and so we have to be careful if we're following yes it's good we're following we're still following but be kept guard against following from a distance of allowing other things to get in and to sidetrack us and take us off from following Jesus and as we say the mode because we have believed we have come to know and you know that's one of the wonderful things when you become a Christian you come to know and knowledge give this knowledge gives a real depth to the relationship that we have with our

Lord we know that's for the what the apostle said I know in whom I have believed it's as if it's so clear to me it's as if Jesus was here in my presence and I could actually see him although it's by with the eye of faith I'm seeing it is so real I have come to know him through all the different experiences all these deep experiences by the the word of God and by prayer I've come to know him more and more and that's my prayer for myself and my prayer for you is that as you have also you're here tonight as if you're watching online you're making this declaration also and you kind of by being here saying well where else where else is there to go? The vast majority of people aren't coming to church but you are because you're saying well where else is it? I want to be in the presence of the Lord he is the one he is the only one I hope tonight that all of us will say emphatically with Peter Lord to whom else can we go because you have the words of eternal life let us pray

Lord our God we give thanks for a wee while who were able to reflect in your word and we give thanks Lord for your goodness and mercy towards us we so often confess of how much we fail you and let you down and yet you know deep down in our hearts that we sorrow when we let you down because we want to be good followers of you and we pray that you'll bless this congregation bless every home and every family pray to be with Thomas and Una at this time Lord grant them healing restoration we pray that you will be with Phil and Helen we give thanks Lord for their ministry here we pray Lord that you will bless that you will bless every passion of this congregation bless this community we ask Lord that you will do a great work open the windows of heaven pour down your blessing upon carloy watch over us in and grant us your grace take us all to our home safely we pray in Jesus name we ask God amen our final singing is Psalm 103 verses 8 to 14 Psalm 103 verses 8 to 14 we are the Lord is merciful and kind to anger slow and full of grace portion

On Miller's chain, zectus reward, And with his love as high as him, To order all to fear the Lord.

To order all those who fear the Lord. As he instills from the west, So far his love and born away, Are any sins and trespasses, And all the guilt that don't sleep.

[31 : 05] Just as a father loves his child, So God loves those who fear his name, For he remembered we are doth, And well he knows our feeble frame.

And well he knows our feeble frame. Now may the grace, mercy and peace Of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Rest in abide upon each one of you now Forevermore. Amen.