

We will eventually be returning to John 6 this morning, but by way of introduction, let's begin by looking at 1 Cor. 2:14.

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God...”

The natural man is every person left to themselves, in their fallen condition, without the Spirit's influence. [[see Jude 18-19 for same word “natural”]]

And the Apostle Paul is very clear in this passage that this natural man is *volitionally prejudiced* against the truth. **does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.**

And there are two reasons Paul gives for why that is the case: Why is he biased against the truth? **“for they are foolishness to him.”**

The things of the Spirit go against his native thinking, his native reasoning. The truth is nonsense to the natural mind. Not incomprehensible, but foolishness in the sense of not compelling, not worthy to be believed.

The natural man prefers his own wisdom, his own thinking, his own life, his own morality, his own sin, his own truth, his own world, where he dictates reality.

That's why he is resistant to the message. Because it confronts everything that is natural to him, comfortable for him, and demands he abandon it all.

But there is a second reason Paul gives as to why the natural man doesn't accept the things of the Spirit of God.

Second half of verse 14, **“and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”**

Again, clearly not talking about an inability to comprehend, to intellectually understand.

No, he *does* intellectually understand the message. He does comprehend it. That's why he rejects it on account of foolishness.

That's why he gets angry and defensive when it confronts his sin. That's why he won't endure sound doctrine.

Paul isn't saying that he lacks the brain power, the mental acumen to construe the meaning or that he simply lacks sufficient information or evidence.

That verb for “understand” is more than intellectual apprehension, it means actual realization.

He's not able to grasp the significance of the things of the Spirit. He's not able to see the truth as it is. As truth.

The person without the Spirit of God lacks the innate capacity to appreciate and receive spiritual truths.

Where does the inability lie? Notice the end of verse 14, **“because they are spiritually appraised.”**

Now the way we use the word for “appraise” isn’t too far off the meaning here: to estimate the nature, the quality, the importance of something.

To examine or evaluate and make a value judgment about something. Therefore, the natural man has a moral inability to assign the right value to the truth. To appraise it rightly.

After all, to regard the truth as foolishness is to do what? To assess the truth, to assign a certain value, or lack thereof, to it.

Here, Paul says he’s unable to do that accurately because only the Spirit of God at work in a person will cause them to see the truth for what it is and appraise it appropriately.

The beloved Dr. Zemek put it this way: “Since his atheistic world and life view leaves him only in possession of an AM receiver and since the truth is broadcast on an FM band, he needs to be divinely rewired and given a new antenna in order to receive and understand spiritual things.”

Until that happens, “He is like a blind man in an art gallery, like a deaf man at a symphony.” As another put it.

So the picture of natural man, unconverted man in this passage is that he is both *deliberately* and *innately* blind to spiritual things. He is *hostile* and *helpless* when it comes to the truth. [[see also Romans 8:7]]

Why do we begin this way? Well, because in John 6 we have been looking at characteristics of the false convert. The person of religion who lacks regeneration, they lack spiritual life.

And the truth we just looked at is the next one we’re going to see in John 6.

Over the past several weeks, we have seen 5 characteristics of the religious person who lacks regeneration.

They associate with Christ for things of the earth
They assume their works will earn them eternal life
They attribute their unbelief to a lack of evidence
They argue doctrine from their own experience (edited)
They attempt to carnalize biblical essentials

That brings us now this morning to the 6th characteristic of the religion person who lacks regeneration.

They assess the message of the gospel erroneously. That is to say, they are unable to place an accurate assessment of the truth.

In this particular passage, they classify it as unreasonable, intolerable, too difficult to bear.

Beginning in verse 60, **“Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?”**

“Disciples” here in verse 60 is clearly not referring to the original 12. Because in verse 66 Jesus clearly makes a distinction between whoever this group is, and the original 12.

And so, these are “disciples” in the sense that they have an association with Jesus. They follow Him. They have, at least temporarily, accepted Him as their rabbi and a reliable teacher.

But the term “disciple” certainly does not mean a genuine believer, as this passage will go onto make clear.

And so, within this larger crowd, a *subgroup* of disciples heard these things, and they classified it, they assessed the message itself as problematic.

Specifically, they regard the message as “difficult.” That word for “difficult” is not talking about being difficult to understand, to comprehend. In fact, that’s never how this word is used.

For example, listen to how it is used in Matthew 25:24, **“Master, I knew you to be a hard (difficult) man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.”**

What is the servant saying about the master there when he refers to him as a “hard man”? Not that he can’t understand him, but that he is *harsh* and *unreasonable* and even *unmerciful*.

That’s the sense of this word for “difficult” here in John 6:60. They’re not saying it’s hard to *understand*, but that it’s hard to *accept*. It’s intolerable.

This is supported by the next statement they make there in verse 60: **“who can listen to it?”** “who is able to hear this?”

Again, they’re not saying, “who can stand here and audibly listen to this.” They’re not criticizing the decibel level Jesus is speaking with and saying “our ears can’t handle this noise!”

No, “who can listen to it?” in the sense of who can accept this? Who can listen favorably and receive this? [[same word in John 5:37]]

In fact, we’ve seen that word “heard” recently if we just back up to John 6:45, **“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has *heard* and learned from the Father, comes to Me.”**

Again, not referring to audibly hearing the Father's voice. But the one who has actually accepted and believed the Word of God. Those are the ones who come to me.

And so, it is this reality that these disciples are saying back in verse 60: **“who can receive this, who can actually believe a message like this?”**

This is intolerable. Feasting on you alone, believing that you alone came down from heaven and give life to the world. That's certainly not what we expected, that's pretty far-fetched. That's a tough message to buy into.

This is how the unconverted person of religion responds to the gospel message.

They will find fault not with themselves, the problem won't be diagnosed as within them, rather, in their eyes, the problem is with God and the message.

Instead of it judging them, they stand as a judge over it. And actually classify the gracious and merciful gospel message as some unreasonable and foolish, even unnecessarily narrow doctrine.

Here is Christ Jesus offering them eternal life. Offering them everything their souls lack and everything they need in order to have their sins forgiven and be right before God.

And they heard that message and assess it as unworthy to accept. And what happened here in Jesus' ministry is still happening today.

What happens at times when you proclaim the gospel to someone who needs Christ, and you insist that believing in Christ Jesus is the only way to have your sins forgiven and to be counted righteous before God.

And instead of what would be an appropriate response: “Thank you so much for telling me this. Isn't it so gracious and merciful of God to not only provide salvation for sinners, but also to send you as an instrument into my life to tell me the truth?”

Unless a person is being converted in that moment, that's not the typical response. What's more typical is a response that finds fault with God or the gospel message:

“I just find it hard to believe that all those sincere people in other religions are lost.”

“I think it's arrogant for Christians to insist that they alone know what the truth is.”

“I find it offensive that Jesus is the supposedly the only way of salvation.”

“How could God punish anyone forever in hell, that doesn't sound too loving to me.”

Those are all manifestations of this same principle. A heart left to itself, untouched by the grace of God, will stand above the message and judge it.

Always assuming the problem is with the message not their own heart.

As has become the pattern in this discourse, Jesus now addresses this tendency. Verse 61, “**But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this...**”

Notice that, Jesus *conscious* that His disciples were grumbling. Jesus, *knowing* that they were grumbling.

For John to add in that detail means what? They were pushing back on this, criticizing the message *to one another*.

And therefore, Jesus’ knowledge here of their grumbling isn’t so much by way of observation but rather because of His supernatural insight. [[see also verse 64]]

They were murmuring and grumbling amongst themselves, thinking they were hiding their true thoughts from Jesus.

It’s important once again to highlight this trend we see in this chapter. Throughout this discourse, any time the Jews or these disciples were struggling with His teaching, they did not directly come to Jesus.

It was all arguing and grumbling *amongst themselves*. [[41-43, 52]]

In this entire account, you don’t see the Jews or even these disciples coming to Jesus and saying,

“help me understand what you meant.”

“help me understand how this is possible in light of this other passage?”

“show me in the OT why this should have been our expectation.”

“We are confused because we’re taking your words literally, is it possible that these words have a deeper sense, that we should take them symbolically?”

But we don’t see any evidence of that. They were all too willing to converse and grumble and oppose the message to *one another*, but unwilling to actually come and interact with the teacher Himself.

And that lack of transparency and humility and teachability, is often the sign of insincerity and unbelief.

Let me show you a really good example of this, where the actual disciples did this with Jesus over in Mark 9:30:

“³⁰ From there they went out and *began* to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *about it*. ³¹ For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.”

Verse 32, “**But they did not understand *this* statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.**”

The fault isn't on the first half of the statement. They didn't understand and were in need of some clarification.

The fault is in the second half of the verse, “**they were afraid to ask Him.**” Why did they fear? Why are you afraid to approach Jesus and ask for some clarity?

Was He unwilling to teach them patiently? Was He unapproachable and responding in anger and condescension anytime He asked to clarify something?

No, as we keep reading we find out why they were afraid - Verse 33, “**They came to Capernaum; and when He ¹¹was in the house, He *began* to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?” ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them was the greatest.***

Why were they afraid to ask Him, why did they keep silent? Because they didn't want their idols exposed.

They have no problem interacting with each other and arguing with each other, but they're not going to come to Jesus when they have a guilty conscience.

When they know that what they were arguing about is in contradiction to what He just revealed.

Or when they suspect some follow up questions to them might be on the horizon, and they aren't comfortable with the kind of scrutiny that might occur.

Back to John 6, it's the same tendency in this crowd. We will grumble and argue amongst one another, but we're not going to go directly to Jesus, because our idols, our unbelief, our arguments, might get exposed for what they are.

This sadly occurs in church ministry. I've seen it several times over the years. One of the leaders here gets a text or an email from a member, “we're leaving the church because we changed our doctrinal convictions in this area.”

“Or we're not in agreement with the philosophy of ministry in this area. This Sunday was our last Sunday.”

And to be sure, any believer has that freedom to continue to study doctrine and come to conclusions for themselves.

Any believer has the freedom to change their doctrinal over time and go to a ministry that believes and teaches that.

But it's interesting when those conclusions are drawn in isolation, while never interacting with the leadership about it.

They'll talk to fellow supporters, friends, maybe even others in the body here, but in some cases they are unwilling to come and sit down with an open Bible and discuss with one of the leaders.

Even in some cases, interacting with others in the body about their different convictions.

And when I see a person doing that, and they have coming to different doctrinal conclusions in isolation, or just simply subtly undermining the doctrine to other people in the church, I do wonder, "what are you hiding?"

What's keeping you from coming to the leadership and having an honest discussion about where you land and why.

Often, what's behind it is not only a form of pride, but an insincere agenda. It demonstrates one is not really interested in the truth, they are not really seeking clarity.

Because if you were, you would want to fully understand. You would want to open yourself up to questions and scrutiny.

Furthermore, what if you're right? And the church here needs to change something in its doctrine.

Wouldn't the loving thing to be to come and share that with the leadership? Then it becomes a win win situation. Maybe it will force the church to revisit an issue and change our doctrine.

Or maybe it will demonstrate that you haven't thought through some things you need to think before coming to that conclusion.

But again, sometimes sadly, that's not how it goes. And that tendency to oppose and grumble about doctrine behind the scenes, in isolation, is a sign of a spiritual problem.

As only AW Pink could say, "like the miserable cowards they are, they will skulk in the background, seeking to sow the seeds of dissension by criticizing what they have heard."

Back in our passage here, all throughout this discourse they are not coming directly to Jesus with their confusion and offense.

And so, He brings it to them. Verse 61, "**Does this cause you to stumble?**"

Again, not stumbling, as in an inability to comprehend, but rather stumbling as in, being offended.

Does this offend you? We might say it in modern vernacular: Does this *trigger* you? Is this causing you such anger and shock that you're unwilling to accept it?

They would have gladly accepted a message that lined up with their human desires and native thinking.

Someone who can miraculously provide, and a king, a political ruler, we'll take it. The natural mind has no issue with taking Jesus as a provider and a political ruler.

But it was the message of salvation that offended them. The message that you must come through me to be saved. the message that I came down from heaven and I alone give life to the world.

That's the message that confronted the ideology of the flesh. And so, they are stumbling here, which means offended to the point of detaching from Jesus.

It's not an evidence problem. It's not a theology problem. It's not an intellectual problem. It's a moral problem.

They are unwilling and unable to assess the truth accurately. The natural man will stand as judge above the truth unless He has the Spirit of God.

And in light of that, Jesus issues a warning in verse 62, "**What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?**"

What if you see me in my authority, my perfections, my glory, rising to heaven, where I was before? Again, clearly affirming His preexistence.

Then, what's going to become of your offense? Then how will you think about this interaction we are having right now and how you are standing as judge above me and my words?

What will you do when then you see me in my glory and my authority?

The point isn't that these disciples would be around to see the ascension. Rather, the point is to warn them about their current state and the future implications.

I am in a state of humbling now, Jesus is saying. I will have a greater humbling later, in my death as I give myself for the life of the world. But I will not remain in that humble state.

I'll be exalted. What then, when I am Lord over all, in my glory, what will you do with your offense then?

And yet, even though naturally every single person would assess the truth this way, we are not left without hope.

Verse 63, "**It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing;**

"Spirit" is appropriately capitalized here because it is clearly a reference to the Holy Spirit.

And "flesh" is not defined here how the apostle Paul typically uses it – as in sinful human nature apart from divine influence.

Rather, here it is being used as that which is merely human, natural, of the earth.

And we know that this is not the first time Jesus has contrasted the Holy Spirit and the flesh when teaching someone who had religion but lacked regeneration.

In his discourse with Nicodemus, John 3:6, “**6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**”

This statement by Jesus is a response to Nicodemus’ prior language about being born again. And misunderstanding what Jesus was saying.

Am I supposed to crawl back into my mother’s womb and be born a second time?

And here in verse 6 He is saying, “Nicodemus, even if you could do that, even if you could be physically born again and start all over with a clean slate, you still have an insurmountable problem:”

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” The best you can do is to be human. Natural, earthly, mortal, frail, fallen.

Human parents produce offspring of their same kind, the flesh. That’s the best it can do. The best human religion has to offer is still merely human.

Back in 6:63, He’s the same thing. The flesh profits nothing. Literally, it’s a double negative. It reads this way: “**The flesh not profit nothing.**”

We might say today, it benefits or profits you in *no way whatsoever* in the things of God.

And so, it is the limitations of the human condition that is in mind. If you are devoid of the Spirit of God, if you are not born of the Spirit, the best you can do is the flesh.

Listen to verse 63 in the New Living Translation: “**The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing.**”

And so, the beginning of verse 63 is what must happen: “**it is the Spirit who gives life.**” This is what the flesh can’t do on a general level.

In context, it means that unless one has life by the Spirit, they don’t have the ability to hear and accept the truth.

Spiritual change and insight cannot be accomplished naturally, by the resources or abilities inherent in man.

The flesh cannot produce spiritual life or spiritual fruit.

Again, this is a theme we saw all the way in the prologue when John gave us a preview of themes that would keep coming out later in this book.

Look back at 1:12, **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.”**

It’s really the last two that are the most relevant for us this morning.

“nor of the will of the flesh.” No human determination. There’s nothing one can do to cause themselves to be born again.

No amount of personal effort, sincerity, religious activity can produce spiritual life. All the flesh can do is produce flesh.

“nor of the will of man.”

There’s no system or formula or technique man can come up with to manipulate the new birth. Man can’t cause new life to occur. He can’t regenerate hearts. He can’t say, I’ve found a way to cause people under my influence to be born again.

The new birth doesn’t happen as a result of human relationships, human determination, or human methods.

The act of the new birth is not caused in any way by human agency. Or human cooperation. So how does it happen? End of verse 13, **“but of God.”**

And back in verse 63, we get more specific insight. Not merely of God, but of the Spirit of God.

It is the Spirit who gives life. Again, demonstrating for these that God must do a supernatural work in your heart or you will continue to stumble over the message of the gospel.

RC Sproul details the account of Martin Luther and his debate with Desiderius Erasmus.

Erasmus had written a criticism against Luther and Luther’s doctrine of the total depravity and inability of man.

As Luther had highlighted the various passages we’ve even seen here in John 6. No one is able to come to me unless the Father draws him. the flesh is of no profit.

Erasmus was opposed to that doctrine and held on to the idea that there remains in the soul of fallen man *a little island of righteousness* by which we do have the ability to come to God and accept Christ.

At one point in Luther’s response to Erasmus, he quoted verse 63 here in John 6 and said, “the flesh profits nothing. That *nothing* is not a little *something*.” [[Sproul, 115]]

Let's also consider how this statement relates to what we covered at the end last week.

Maybe Jesus is saying this: the Spirit gives you life, but He does so as a result of literally, physically eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood. Like we saw last week in verse 54.

After all the Spirit uses means – so maybe the Lord's Supper is in view there. Maybe it does mean that the Spirit of God gives life *as we literally eat and drink Christ*.

But that is an impossible interpretation. Last week, I gave you 8 reasons why John 6 and all of the language here about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man is not literal and not referring to the Lord's Supper in any way.

Here's a 9th one if you want to add it to your list from last week: verse 63, "the flesh profits nothing, in no way whatsoever."

If the flesh profits nothing, in no way whatsoever. Meaning no amount of human determination or human effort or human doing, can bring about spiritual and eternal life.

If there is nothing mankind can do to manipulate the new birth. It is the work of the Spirit of God to give new life, that *has* to eliminate *literally eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus*.

Because that is something the flesh does. that's something we do with our bodies. That would certainly be an act that anyone could do. It doesn't take the Spirit of God or conversion to participate in the Lord's Supper.

Furthermore, we are clearly shown in verse 63 *how* the Spirit gives life? Not through literally eating and drinking, but rather through *words that are to be believed*.

Notice the clarification that is added in the middle of verse 63. "**the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.**"

Notice the same two words are repeated from the first half of verse 63: "**It is the *Spirit* who gives *life*.**"

Now, "**the words that I have spoken to you are *spirit* and are *life*.**"

And so this is speaking of *how* the Spirit gives life. The instrument He uses to give life.

What is that instrument? "The **words** that I have spoken to you."

And when He says these words are spirit, He is not saying the words are the Holy Spirit, rather they are **spiritual**. Meaning, they are not merely words.

They are the product of the Spirit of God. And cannot be discerned appropriately in the natural realm. You can't accept them until you are a spiritual person.

But not only are they spirit, spiritual, they are **life**. the author of Hebrews refers to the Word of God as **living and active**. Hebrews 4:12

That is to say, when rightly understood and believed, they give life and sustain life.

Even how Jesus responded to the temptation of the devil in Matthew 4:4 I think is worth noting here:

“4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”

Notice that: man *lives* on the Word of God. God’s Word is living. It sustains life.

The real, ultimate need of any person is not bread for the body but bread for their soul.

Back in John 6, it’s the same idea that this whole sermon started with in verse 27: We are to prioritize and consumed with food that doesn’t perish – Spiritual food, the Word of God, which endures to eternal life.

That’s the meaning back in verse 63 – it is necessary spiritual food, giving and sustaining spiritual life.

One commentator put it this way: when it comes to spiritual life, the Spirit is the Divine Agent; the Word is the Divine instrument.

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring about life and sustain life.

We could say it negatively: Without the Spirit of God using the Word of God, there is no spiritual life.

Now, here in this passage we are given both the *agent* and the *instrument*.

But in most cases that are speaking of this same reality, a passage will focus on one or the other. Let me show you what I mean by that:

Titus 3:5, “5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs [a]according to the hope of eternal life.

In this passage, the *divine agent* is highlighted. It is the ministry of the Spirit of God to produce, to grant new life to sinners.

But that passage says nothing about *what* the Spirit of God uses to do that, the instrument, namely the Word.

And so, turn over to 1 Peter 1:23, “**for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.**”

No mention of the Spirit of God here, but rather the *instrument* in the new birth is highlighted. The word of God.

Back in John 6:63, we are getting both the *agent* and the *instrument* in the same passage. The agent came first, “**it is the Spirit who gives life.**”

And now the instrument: “**the words that I have spoken to you are *spirit* and are *life*.**”

Now, before we keep going, I want to draw your attention to one implication of this.

The longer you’re in a ministry like ours, the higher the chances that you’re going to hear a criticism. And that criticism is going to sound something like this:

You are bibliolaters. You’re so preoccupied with the Word of God that it kind of seems like you worship the *Word* of God, rather than God. Your entire ministry revolves around all of these teaching times.

Why does there have to be so much teaching? Why can’t it just be more socializing and relational? Why can’t we just have one sermon per week on Sunday morning, and then just focus on “doing life” together?

Well, first of all, it’s flawed reasoning. It’s based on the assumption that you can separate a *person* from their *communication*.

We mentioned this in chapter 1. You cannot separate a person from who they are and what they say. Whether it’s a person or God.

Imagine saying this to a person: “I love you, I just can’t stand when you talk.” I really appreciate you, as long as you keep your mouth shut.”

That doesn’t work in any relationship because one’s self-expression is inherently linked to their identity. Our communication, our self-expression is part of our personhood.

And so, to love the Word of God, is to worship God, it is to love God.

Furthermore, the more you actually understand the Word of God, the more you’re going to recognize the absolute necessity of it dominating ministry life.

The salvation of sinners and the sanctification of saints both happen by the Spirit of God through the instrumentality of the Word of God.

The question for any ministry must be this: Do you believe in your wisdom or God’s?

Do you think you know better than God by building a ministry around anything other than His Word?

Do you love people enough to constantly give them what is most valuable for them and absolutely critical to the health of their souls?

“the words that I have spoken to you are *spirit* and are *life*.”

Why would we ever allow any other focus in ministry life to take precedence over that?

Now, back to our text. With these statements, we might conclude that the words of Christ are of such value and power that simply all who are exposed to them will experience these realities.

But that is not the case as Jesus clarifies this for us in verse 64, **“But there are some of you who do not believe.”**

Who’s He speaking to? The group of disciples. the large group who have identified themselves with him. Professing to follow Him, to learn from Him.

And yet He states very clearly: There are some of you, some of my disciples, who do not believe.

That is to say, despite the nature and power of my Words, despite the miraculous power and infinite value of my words, however great they are, there is no *automatic* benefit.

Just being around solid preaching, just merely reading or listening to the Word of God, doesn’t accomplish anything.

No, hearing must be accompanied by faith or there is no value whatsoever. [[Hebrews 4:2]]

Stated differently, these “words” that are spirit and are life, are given to be believed;

This is yet another example in John 6 where the sovereign, monergistic work of God in salvation is juxtaposed with human responsibility.

The responsibility of unbelief is placed on them, not God.

There is no one who will be able to say to God on the last day, I wanted to come, I wanted to believe and you prevented me.

No. the blame is never on the Lord for unbelief. When one believes, all credit and all glory goes to God. When one is unbelieving, all fault is on them. That’s the tension, that’s the mystery in this doctrine.

Next, John explains how Jesus knows the spiritual state of these disciples: Middle of verse 64, **“For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.”**

That phrase, “from the beginning” demonstrates that this was not simply a matter of observation, as He put 2 and 2 together right before Him.

No, *from the beginning* of their attachment to Him as disciples. In other words, He knew from the start that at best they had superficial faith.

We can certainly be deceived, we are certainly limited in our knowledge of the inner spiritual condition of all those who have attached themselves to Jesus in some way, but He always had infallible knowledge of the condition of each soul.

And remarkably, this knowledge did not prevent Christ from teaching those who knew would never believe.

It didn't prevent Christ from discipling one He knew would eventually betray Him, Judas.

The difference with us today is that we don't know. And therefore, this is a great encouragement and model for our ministry today.

He knew all along who was believing and would believe, and yet still taught them. He knew all along who would not only defect, but betray Him.

And yet, He still ministered the truth to all.

Yet another reminder in this passage that God's sovereignty in salvation is never an excuse to be passive or fatalistic, but rather to motivate faithful ministry, trusting the Lord will expose hypocrites and save and sanctify His people.

Verse 65, “**And He was saying**, (that is, repeatedly, by way of emphasis, he kept on saying) **“For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”**

Very similar to the statement in verse 44, but now the word “granted” has replaced the word for “drawing.”

That shift in language could simply to express that it is a gift of God's grace. It must be granted, given to the sinner.

And I think the statement here in verse 65 has several helpful applications.

First, that those in opposition, those who are defecting, those who are unbelieving, will not be deceived into thinking that their rejection of Christ somehow determines His ministry effectiveness or even His identity.

You can see this tendency in the natural man to actually think that his belief *determines* what is true.

A person might hear the gospel today, and be warned of the coming judgment, and they might comfort themselves by saying, “that doesn’t matter, I don’t believe any of that stuff.”

As if to say, my belief determines what is true. so as long as I don’t believe it, it somehow doesn’t apply to me.

Jesus is stating it plainly here that your unbelief is not indicative of what’s true about me, it’s rather the evidence that God hasn’t given you the gift of faith.

A second application – to point out to the unbelieving their helpless and hopeless predicament. To remove their sense of control.

You’re not in charge. Due to your sinful nature, you are unable to do that which you must do. And so, He stresses again God’s sovereign work in granting them faith so that they might turn to the Father in desperation and plead with the Father to give them the gift of faith.

And so these first two applications would be for the unbelieving. But verse 65 also speaks to those who are believing.

So a third application of verse 65 – to provide perspective and stability to believers in the face of rampant or even irrational unbelief.

To help believers put their hope and confidence in God in the face of unbelief. No matter how hardened, how rampant, how irrationally expressed, unbelief is to be expected apart from a divine work in the heart of man.

A fourth application of verse 65, another one for believers - that no one who does believe becomes spiritually proud because they believe while most others reject.

It should serve to prevent self-righteous condescension toward the unbelieving, as if we ourselves manufactured saving faith.

As if any faith we have could be traced back to something in us, and not the work of the Spirit of God.

Verse 65 should produce humility in those who believe. It should cause us to be patient and merciful when ministering to the unbelieving.

We just looked at the 6th characteristic of the religious person lacking regeneration. They assess the message erroneously.

That brings us finally to the 7th characteristic – they abandon Christ by failing to endure.

This one will be very quick, it’s just one verse, because it’s the final act of the false convert in relation to Jesus.

While some of the other characteristics may be harder to measure at times, this one is the most blatant and obvious.

Verse 66, “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.”

Now, John could have just said, they left. They departed. He could have just said, “they decided to not walk with Him anymore. They no longer wanted to be disciples.”

And that is true, but notice the additional verb he uses, **Many of His disciples *withdrew***.

That’s not just saying, “they went from the front of the crowd to the back.” It’s not a reference to something happening physically.

The idea is, they went back. They went away to that which they had previously left in order to follow the Lord.

They retreated back to the condition they were in before ever following the Lord. They went back to the way they had always lived and thought, because they were never actually transformed by the Spirit.

Commentator FF Bruce put it this way: **‘What they wanted, he would not give; what he offered, they would not receive.’**

The person of religion lacking regeneration will tolerate Jesus, as long as they can control what He stands for and what He supposedly teaches.

But the more they understand what He actually taught, the harder to the truth they become. Until it becomes so intolerable that they make a decisive and final break from Him.

This is the principle behind the phrase: “Time and truth go hand in hand.” It’s a very valuable premise for us to keep in mind.

Time and truth go hand in hand. In other words, give it enough time, and the true condition of one’s soul will be revealed.

They will either persevere in their faith and commitment to Christ, or they will be hardened against the truth and be revealed as an unbeliever.

To clarify, they are not losing their salvation. That is impossible. This is not denying the doctrine of eternal security.

Rather, they are proving they never really believed in the first place. Because saving faith is an *enduring* faith, a *persevering* faith.

Let’s take the last few minutes considering a few other passages that speak to this reality:

1 Corinthians 15:1-2, **“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast [a]the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.”**

Notice that again in verse 2: “you are presently being saved, if you are holding fast the word which I preached to you.”

In other words, you can have confidence you are presently being saved, if you are enduring in your faith and commitment to the gospel.

You are not saved *because* you are enduring by faith. Rather, you endure by faith because you are saved.

Colossians 1:21, **“And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.”**

It’s very similar to what we just saw in 1 Corinthians. These salvific realities are true of you, if indeed you continue in the faith. You persevere, you endure.

Hebrews 3:12, **“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,**

Same theme. We have been saved, we have become partakers of Christ? And what’s the evidence, the proof of that?

If we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

1 John 2:19, **“19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”**

I mentioned earlier that when a person abandons the faith, they are not losing their salvation. rather, they are demonstrating they never possessed it.

And this passage here in 1 John is one of the more helpful to illustrate that. they went out so that it would be revealed, not that they lost something, but rather that they were not really of us.

They were never truly the people of God. they were never truly believers. And their departure from the church is their unmasking.

Jeremiah 32:40, **“40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts *so that they will not turn away from Me.*”**

Every member of the new covenant has that reality. An inner transformation, whereby the Lord, by His Spirit, so works in an individual that they would never abandon Him.

And so, when a person does turn away from the Lord, that work was never accomplished in them.

So, the 7th characteristic of the religious person lacking regeneration is that they abandon Christ by failing to endure.

Next week, we will finish chapter 6. And we’re going to see a contrast between genuine faith and defecting faith in the person of Judas.

So, basically, the last few verses are going to be an illustration of these principles, both positively and negatively. In the believing disciples and in Judas, the ultimate defector.