

## *Wonderful Words of Christ*

### John 6:53-69

In John 6 we have some of the most widely misunderstood and misapplied verses in the whole Bible. We read in verses 53-56, “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”

Christ did not mean that this should be understood literally, for it was never done, and it is absurd to suppose that it was intended to be so understood.

The plain meaning of the passage is, that by Christ’s death--his body and his blood offered in sacrifice for sin--he would procure pardon and life for man. They who partook, or trusted in that atoning work, should obtain eternal life.

He uses the figure of eating and drinking because the Jews prided themselves on the fact that their fathers had eaten manna in the wilderness, and because, as he had said that he was the “Bread of Life,” it was natural and easy, especially in the language which he used, to carry out the figure, and say that bread must be eaten in order to be of any benefit in supporting and saving men. Therefore, Christ declares himself to be the Bread of Life.

To eat and to drink, among the Jews, was also expressive of sharing in or partaking of the privileges of friendship. The happiness of heaven and all spiritual blessings are often represented under this image.

Later on in the chapter we learn that many people were offended by these words of Christ. We read in verse 60, “**Many** therefore of his **disciples**, when they had heard this, said, This is an **hard** saying; who can hear it?”

The word **disciple** means learner. It was applied to the followers of Christ because they were taught by him.

It does not imply that those called disciples were real Christians, but simply that they were under his teaching, and were professed learners in his school. Later on the term disciple became synonymous with a true follower of Jesus Christ.

The response from many disciples regarding the words of Christ was rejection, and repudiation. “This is an hard saying,” they reasoned. The word **hard** here means offensive, disagreeable --that which they could not bear.

The doctrine which Christ delivered was opposed to their prejudices. It seemed to be absurd, and they therefore rejected it.

They added, “Who can hear it?” That is, who can hear it patiently--who can stay and listen to such doctrine or believe it. The effect of this is stated in John 6:66, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”

Albert Barnes writes, “The doctrines which Jesus taught that were so offensive appear to have been,

1st. That he was superior to Moses. Remember how Moses appeared to Christ at the transfiguration. Who was superior there, Moses or Christ? Peter in his haste and impulsiveness suggested, “...let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

Christ was superior to Moses because He was God come in the flesh and therefore had divine authority to teach men the truth. But many of his “disciples” did not believe Christ had this divine authority and therefore departed from him.

2nd. That God would save all that he had chosen, and those only. Salvation is on God’s terms and not on man’s choice. Again, this was offensive to the self-righteous Jew who was working his way to heaven by good works.

3rd. He said he was the bread that came down from heaven. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Heaven to feed the souls of men. The Scribes and Pharisees were feeding the people religious traditions that led to legalism and bondage.

4th. It was necessary that a blood atonement should be made, and that they should be saved by that. These doctrines have always been among the most offensive that men have been called on to believe, and many, rather than trust in Jesus Christ, have chosen to draw back to perdition.”

Although there were many who were offended by the words of Christ and walked away, there were others, however, who were edified and brought nearer to Him.

We read in verse 68, *“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”*

Simon Peter answered with his usual zeal and readiness, speaking in behalf of the whole, *“To whom shall we go? Where shall we find a more gracious master, a more powerful Redeemer, a more suitable Saviour? You alone have the words of eternal life.*

None can teach the doctrine of salvation but yourself, and none can confer the gift of eternal life but you alone.

Peter acknowledged that poor, lost, sinful men have nowhere else to go but to Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and if the sinner entrusts himself to any other way he will wander and die.

Peter shows us that the true followers of Christ love hearing the words of Christ. Although we are to expect that some of the doctrines of the Bible will be mysterious, and difficult to understand, yet we should not therefore reject them. There is a degree of comfort knowing that we can not and will not understand everything about God.

The words of Christ should inspire us to follow and love Him with all our hearts. The title of my message is, *Wonderful Words of Christ*. What makes them wonderful? There are three points I would like to consider today.

## **1. The words of Christ are wonderful because they are gracious.**

The crowds found grace in them, as they listened in breathless silence to Christ's first sermon at home in Nazareth in Luke 4:22, "*And all bare him witness, and wondered at **the gracious words** which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?*"

The tender grace has not passed away from the words of Christ. As the fragrance exhales from flowers after they have long been gathered. They distil as dew on tender grass, and drop as rain on mown lawns.

Disciplined as Christ was in the school of sorrow, He perfectly acquired the art of speaking words in season to them that are weary, words that heal the broken-hearted, and comfort the mourner, and bid the accused go to sin no more.

Jesus Christ is fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into his lips. Therefore God has blessed Him for ever. Christ certainly fulfilled the gracious words of Proverbs 25:11, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Look at how Paul calls God's people to live their lives in Titus 2:11-12, "*For **the grace** of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*"

Contrast this with how many times you have heard people telling you to just say 'no' to immorality and ungodly behavior. Often the reasons are: "It is against the Bible" or "it's against our Christian principles" or "your sins will find you out or you'll reap what you sow." Often all of those things are true, but they are inadequate and secondary motives.

Only the grace of God will work in changing our hearts, our thinking, and our behavior. Titus says grace "teaches" us to say no. Grace argues with us. The gospel tells you that the sin beneath your sins is that you have made something besides Christ the center of your life.

You have concocted a self-salvation strategy based on something that you have decided is more important than Christ and more of a savior than he. The gospel tells you that your sin is always the

result of unbelief and that you are accepted in Christ alone. The gospel tells you the remedy for your sins is in Jesus Christ.

A commentator writes, “The gospel creates the only kind of grief over sin which is clean and which does not crush. It says: “Look at Jesus dying for you! He won’t leave you or abandon you...it is not because he will abandon you that you should be holy, but because this is one who at inestimable cost to himself has said he won’t ever abandon you!...See the GRACE of God? It is the only argument which cannot be answered. This creates the only motivation that leads you to hate the sin without hating yourself. It is the only motivation that will bring sin to lose its attractive power over you.”

Sinclair Ferguson observes, “The great gospel imperatives to holiness are ever rooted in indicatives of grace that are able to sustain the weight of Scripture's imperatives. The Apostles do not make the mistake that’s often made by Christians. For the Apostles, the indicatives are more powerful than the imperatives in gospel preaching. So often in our personal study of Scripture our grasp of Scripture's indicatives are not strong enough, great enough, holy enough, or gracious enough to sustain the power of

the imperatives. And so our attempt to apply Scripture's imperatives becomes a whip or a rod to beat our own backs because we've looked at the New Testament and that's all we have seen. We've seen our own failure, and we've seen the imperatives to holiness, and we've lost sight of the great indicatives of the gospel that sustain those imperatives"

When the thief cried out to Christ on the cross, "Remember me when you enter into your kingdom," the Lord did not respond to him bitterly, "You just cursed me a few hours ago and you want me to remember you in heaven?" Neither did he respond sarcastically, "*Sure* I'll remember you."

Christ responded graciously to a depraved, corrupt, hardened criminal, in Luke 23:43, "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Now that's grace! That's Undeserved favor!

Jesus told the thief on the cross that his prayer would be answered that very day, implying, that it would be immediately at death that he would enter heaven. This is the more remarkable, as those who were crucified commonly lingered in agony for several days on the cross before they died. But Jesus foresaw, that measures would be taken to hasten their death, and assured him that that day he should receive an answer to his prayer and be with him in his kingdom.

So the words of Christ are wonderful because they are words of grace to sinners.

## **2. The words of Christ are wonderful because they are authoritative, and trustworthy.**

We read in Matthew 7:28-29, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

The scribes were the learned men and teachers of the Jewish nation, and were principally Pharisees. They taught chiefly the traditions which had been delivered to them, and they consumed much of their time in useless disputes, "vain jangling." Jesus was open, plain, grave, useful, delivering truth as became the

oracles of God, not spending his time in trifling disputes, and debating questions of no importance, but confirming his doctrine by miracles and argument. Teaching as having power, and not in the vain and foolish manner of the Jewish doctors. He showed that he had authority to explain, enforce, and even change the ceremonial laws of the Jews. He came with authority such as no man could have, and it is not remarkable that his explanations astonished everyone.

The people felt a commanding power and authority in his word, i.e. his doctrine. His statements were clear, his exhortations persuasive, his doctrine sound and rational, and his arguments irresistible.

These they never felt in the trifling teachings of their most celebrated doctors, who consumed their own time, and that of their disciples and hearers, with frivolous cases of conscience, ridiculous distinctions, and tiniest splittings of controversial hairs-questions not calculated to minister grace to the hearers.

He taught them as one having authority, like the most eminent and distinguished teacher, and not as the scribes and Pharisees, who had no part of that unction which he in its plenitude possessed.

Thus Christ's sermons were the most strict, pure, holy, profound, and sublime, ever delivered to man, and yet so amazingly simple that a child may understand it!

Christ's words had authority over nature. The winds and the waves obeyed him, over diseases and devils, and over all creatures in heaven, earth, and hell.

The disciples were left spellbound by the words of Christ in Mark 4 and asked, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Such was Christ's character, dominion, and work, that even in his deepest humiliation it was the duty, not only of men but of angels, to worship him.

The words of Christ were not like the opinions of men. Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He didn't present his teaching and ministry as one of many options that men can pick and choose from. Christ spoke in exclusive terms. And therefore, His word is binding upon our consciences.

The words of Christ are wonderful because they are authoritative, and trustworthy.

### **3. The words of Christ are wonderful because they are life giving.**

Simon Peter answers Christ in verse 68, “To whom shall we go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life.”

The words of Christ gave life as they were spoken in the ears of dead sinners. Those who were in the graves of sensual and sinful indulgence heard Him and came forth. Just as those who are in the literal graves under the earth shall do one day. The words of Christ unshackled men from their sins.

All through Christ’s ministry, the common people heard Him gladly. The publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him. The officers of the Sanhedrin beneath the power of his words were unable to arrest Him. Thousands would gather in the desert or on the hills, forgetful of all beside, and willing to stand the live-long day to listen to lips which dropped with honey.

A commentator writes, “As the tiny torch of life burns in every seed, so does the life of God Himself tremble in each word of Jesus. Cast forth thy word, into the ever-living, ever-moving universe. It is a

seed-germ that can never die; unnoticed to-day, it will be found flourishing, perhaps as a banyan grove, perhaps as an oak-forest, after a thousand years." How true this is of the words of Jesus! Sow them in the scantiest, poorest soil, and leave them. You will be surprised to see the result in the multiform manifestations of holy and useful life."

Those who most ponder Christ's words are most conscious of the life that is in them. They are the best witnesses to verify the repeated references of this chapter to the living bread, given for the life of the world, of which, if a man eats, he shall live for ever. Oh that we would acquire the precious habit of feeding on these words, till they become an actual enjoyment for us in both spirit and life!

Martin Lloyd Jones writes, "what is our greatest need? Our greatest need is life. Most people today are but existing; they have no life. When their pleasures are shut off, when the cinemas and theatres and public houses and dance halls have to be closed they have nothing. They are but existing, and dependent upon things outside themselves. They need life. But where can life be found?"

It is Christ who has said, ‘I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly’ (John 10:10). Life means spiritual life. Life means a relationship to God and an enjoyment of His fellowship. Real life means living on God’s terms.

Christ says, “He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). ‘The water that I shall give you’, He says to the woman of Samaria, ‘shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’”

This is why Peter and the rest of the Apostles (save Judas Iscariot) didn’t depart from Christ because they knew the words of Christ led to everlasting life to those who believe.

So too we love the words of Christ because they give life (eternal life) to all those who trust in Him.

In closing, the words of Christ are wonderful because they are gracious, authoritative, and life giving. The words of Christ produce faith and obedience in the life of His people. May the Lord inspire our zeal to love and obey the wonderful words of Christ. Amen