

VI. Thy Word is Truth in Biblical Perspective
The Supremacy and Sufficiency of God's Word
“What Does the Son of God Say About the Word of God? – ‘It is Spirit and Life’”
John 6:63
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Let's start by looking at John 6:63 for I want this one verse to be in your heart and mind as we go into this study. John 6:63 says [63] *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

At Briarwood we focus on a theme from the Word of God that would be applicable throughout the life of our congregation and this year we're at a foundational one which is Thy Word is Truth – the supremacy and sufficiency of God's Word. To remind ourselves from God's Word that is inspired, inerrant, infallible and it is supreme for it is the final Word we are to believe and live in life in faith and practice. It is also sufficient for our life in faith and practice.

We started this theme by focusing on what the Son of God says about the Word of God and there are seven things that Jesus says about the Word of God in the Gospels that we are currently going through. We have already noted four of them. Number one is that Jesus says in in John 17:17, [17] *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* God's Word doesn't contain truth or become truth for it is the truth revealed from God by the Holy Spirit through the Prophets in the Old Testament and the Apostles in the New Testament. Number two is that God's Word is unbreakable. It cannot be broken. Thankfully it breaks us but it cannot be broken. For all who put their life on Christ according to His Word, have a sure foundation. Number three is God's Word is readable. Time and time again Jesus says 'Have you not read?' It was designed to be preached but given to be read, studied, memorized and meditated upon. Number four is that the Word of God bears witness of Christ. All of the 39 books in the Old Testament and the 27 in the New Testament, the very theme is Christ. The Old Testament points to Him and the New Testament expounds Him. The Scriptures teach us that the glory of our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is through the preeminence of Christ who is our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

In this study we look at the fifth statement that Jesus gives us from the Word and that is the Word is Spirit and Life. In this text He is saying put no confidence in the flesh. Don't rely upon yourself. Where do you put your confidence? You put your confidence in Christ. How do you know Christ? You know Christ by the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit teach you of Christ? He does this through the Word of God. Put no confidence in the flesh for it is the Spirit who gives life, My words are Spirit and Life. That very text of John 6:63 is set in a context which you need to see for it is absolutely rich.

Here Jesus is going into His last year of public ministry. The signal event has occurred and that was the feeding of the five thousand which is only counting the men so the multitude that is surrounding Jesus in John 6 is probably numbering somewhere around 8,000 to 14,000 people. It is divided up into three groups. There are the

multitudes that the miracles and teaching of Jesus has drawn them to this spectacle. Then there is a smaller group that has identified themselves as disciples – followers, learners of Christ. Then there is even smaller group chosen by Christ called the twelve. All of them are present in this context. Jesus is engaging in ministry to them after this feeding of the five thousand.

As He does this ministry and as we walk through this context it begs a question to be answered. When we get through this text of Scripture ask yourself, if Jesus was a pastor of church in today's contemporary church, would He keep His job or would He be fired? Would He be able to keep His job as a pastor in how we measure ministry today? We are about to get to some 'hard sayings' and I want to walk through this with you in three steps – around the multitude, then the disciples, then the twelve. We're going back to the text and we'll start in John 6:47.

John 6:47-60 says [47] *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. [48] I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*”

[52] *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” [53] So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. [54] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. [55] For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. [56] Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. [58] This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” [59] Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.*

[60] *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”*

This is step number one. The feeding of the five thousand has taken place and they have eaten of the bread that He had multiplied. He is also aware that they are fully aware of the moment in the wilderness when God from heaven blessed His people with manna from heaven for which they could eat, but what happened to them? They died. What happens to anyone who eats the bread of this world even if miraculously delivered to you? You die. Now Jesus says “I give eternal life because I am the Bread of Life.” Here is one of those ‘I Am’s’ that He puts in the Gospel of John. He says ‘I am the living water, I am the door, I am the Great Shepherd, I am the Way, I am the Truth, I am the Life’ and here ‘I am the Bread of Life.’ To have life you have to have Me and to have Me you have to ingest Me – My flesh and My blood.

So they begin to dispute among themselves saying ‘What is He teaching? Is this some kind of cannibalistic doctrine that is being declared?’ As they have this dispute the crowd is beginning to filter away. What will Jesus do? He doubles down. He doesn't say “Don't leave. Come back. You're misunderstanding Me.” No, He says “Unless you eat of My flesh and drink of My blood you have no part of Me and if you have no part of Me you have no life.” He drills it down further as the crowd is dissipating. He doesn't

go back. He doesn't compromise the message to keep the crowd the size that it was. He just drills it down one more step.

He uses that famous word 'unless' which is what He used with Nicodemus when He told him 'Unless you are born again you cannot see or enter the Kingdom of God.' Here Jesus says "Unless you eat of My flesh and drink of My blood..." What is He saying here? There are a number of commentaries and this could be a series of sermons but I'm going to just tell you what I think it is and the two possibilities. If you take everything that is said about this text there are two possibilities that are put forward. One is that the 'sacramentalist' will say that Jesus is teaching the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. They say when the Eucharist or Lord's Supper is given there is the Doctrine of Transubstantiation where the bread and wine turn into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus so that you are eating and drinking of the blood and body of Jesus in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The churches that believe that also would say that you can't be saved without that sacrament because it turns into the body and blood of Christ. You must eat it to be saved and if you don't eat it you can't be saved. That is why in their churches you won't find the pulpit in the middle elevated but you'll find the sacrament table in the middle elevated, as they architecturally tell you what they believe theologically.

Is that what the text is saying? The answer is 'no.' The text is not to be interpreted physically that you must eat physically of His body and blood but that you must eat spiritually of His body and blood. When He talks about His body, His flesh being that which brings eternal life to the world and His blood, He is speaking of the cross, where He goes to the cross and in His body He bears our sins to take them away. With the shedding of His blood He pays a penalty for our sins so that we can be forgiven. Now, because He has done that in Him you can have eternal life but to come to Him you must come by faith. By faith means you turn from your sin in repentance and you ingest all of Him. You don't just take Him in certain areas of your life or certain days of your life. When you come to Him you ingest Him. You can't digest Him until you ingest Him. It's not that you ingest Him physically but you ingest Him spiritually.

Why would I come out on the spiritual side of the eating of Christ, the benefits of His work on the cross with His body and blood and not come out on the physical side of text? I will give you five reasons. Number one, if this is to be interpreted physically we have just left salvation by grace and we've just walked into salvation by works. Now you have a work that you do and must do to be saved. One might think even if you keep it spiritually it says by faith you must ingest Him and isn't that salvation by works? No, for when you receive eternal life you are receiving it through an instrument called faith and the faith didn't come from your work but God's work in you. Ephesians 2:8-9 says *[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* So there is no room for works in salvation. Saved people work but their works don't save them and they are not that which Christ depends upon to save us. So it would be in opposition to salvation by grace if this doctrine stands.

The second reason is that it would be incongruent to what we know in the Bible. His body was raised from the dead. His body was glorified, transformed. After His ministry post resurrection He ascended into heaven in that body and in that body He is at the right hand of the Father. He says "I will come again at the end of the age" and the

second coming of Christ will be a personal bodily second coming of Christ. He doesn't have multiple comings in-between where He'll come to all of our communion tables. He doesn't have multiple re-incarnations again at our communion tables. No, that body is raised and at the right hand of the Father. Therefore when we partake of Him we partake of Him by faith through the benefits that He secured in that body when He bore our sins and shed His blood for us as His people. So it is incongruent with the ascension and second coming of Christ for there are not multiple re-incarnations or multiple comings in-between His ascension and His second coming.

Thirdly, if this is true then that means we are putting Christ to death every time we do the Lord's Supper. The Bible is clear. When Christ came He gave the sacrifice for sins once and for all. There can be no more sacrifices for sins because He gave the sacrifice once and for all. Any doctrine that teaches Christ must be sacrificed again and again, our Savior Himself in Matthew 24 calls that an abomination. The sacrifice is once and for all.

Fourthly, it is inconsistent with all that the Bible teaches about the Lord's Supper itself.

Fifthly, it is inconsistent with the other 'I Am's'. Here He says 'I am the Bread of Life.' There is 'I Am the Living Water – drink of Me, I Am the Vine – abide in Me, I Am the Door – go through Me, I Am the Way – walk with Me.' So in all the rest of the 'I Am's' we interpret spiritually. Why wouldn't we do this one the same way? Jesus isn't a physical vine for we abide in Him by faith as the branches so that we bear fruit. Jesus isn't a physical door but we walk through Him by faith in Christ. Jesus is not a physical road as the way but we follow Him who is our Way fixing our eyes on Jesus. Jesus doesn't become water but He is the water that we drink by faith even as He taught the woman at the well. So this passage would be no different than the other passages. It is a physical picture getting across to us the spiritual benefits of the Gospel where in Me you have life but the call of the Gospel when you come to Me you don't put confidence in your works you rest completely upon Me. When you come to Me you ingest all of Me for I don't offer Myself on an installment basis. I offer Myself and you must come to Me by faith and you come to all of Me as Lord and Savior.

When the Bible says this is a hard saying there is not one much harder than this one. Hard sayings in the Bible are hard sayings for one of three reasons. They are either hard to understand or hard to accept or both hard to understand and accept. I think this hard saying is both hard to understand and accept. It is hard to understand and you have to work your way through it but once you work your way through it just makes sense in context with everything else. Secondly it is hard to accept. We would love to have a tame Jesus to add into the profile of our life. This Jesus calls for your life. He gives life to those who come to Him and He becomes their life for they ingest Him by faith. They digest Him in life and therefore their life is hid in Christ and Christ is in them. That's what He is saying here.

So what happens? The congregation shrinks. As they are about to go He doesn't back off or compromise He just drills it down that much further because He knows if you love people you have to tell them the truth. You tell them lovingly but you have to tell them the truth but the multitudes exit stage left. So let's go back to John 6 and see what happens with the next group. This second group is professed followers and learners of Christ.

John 6:60-65 says [60] *When many of his disciples (the second group) heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" [61] But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? [62] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? [63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. [64] 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 was who would betray him.) [65] *And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."*

These disciples are probably thinking 'Jesus the church is shrinking big time after what You've just said' and they start grumbling about it. Jesus turns to them and doubles down again and says to them, "Do you take offense too?" The word offense here comes from the Greek word *skandalizei* which is where we get the word scandal. Did what I say become a scandal to you? Is that scandalous to you? If it is then it is because you take offense, not because I gave offense for I gave you Good News, the Gospel blessing and the Gospel call. I did not give you an offense. In Me you have eternal life. I am the Bread of Life. You must come by faith and ingest Me.

Do you know why they walked away? It wasn't because it was offensive but because they took offense. Anyone who does not believe in Me will take offense. So you just found out those who did not believe in Me. That is what this revealed. They took offense at what was not offensive but was the grace of God found in Christ that He would go to the cross and in His flesh bear their sins, shed His blood and then give them the ability to put their trust in Him and embrace Him – all of Him. But they did not so they were scandalized by it. If you walk away, it reveals not an inadequacy of the message but that you do not believe. It is the Spirit who gives life. The only way you will come to Me, receive Me by and believe in Me is if the Spirit of God sets you free.

Can you hear the echo of Nicodemus? Nicodemus you cannot see or enter the Kingdom unless you're born again. It requires the work of the Spirit of God to come into your life so that you are set free. Jesus said 'No man can come to the Father but through Me.' Did you get the same second grade teacher I had? I said "Teacher, can I use the bathroom?" "Yes you can" so I got up to go and the teacher said "Sit down Ike." "I just asked you if I could use the bathroom" and she takes that occasion to teach me the difference between 'can' and 'may.' "You said can I use the bathroom and I think you're perfectly capable of using the bathroom but you don't leave this room until you ask permission with 'may.'"

The Bible says 'whosoever will, may come' which gives permission but no one can come to Me unless the Father draws them. It is the same word for bringing water up out of the well. I go to a well and say 'water you may come to me and give me something to drink.' The water will do nothing for it's under the law of gravity but if I drop the bucket to set the water free then I can draw it up to myself. So here is this glorious work of Christ in which all have permission to come but instead of coming and believing men and women are scandalized by the Gospel of grace, unless the Spirit of God reaches down and sets them free.

What does the Spirit of God always use to set you free? You are born again by the Spirit and you're born again by the Word. My words are Spirit and life. You can't send the Holy Spirit to your friend. You can pray for them but you can also send the

Word and that's where the Holy Spirit works. That is why Jesus isn't going to back off the Word, the truth because the Holy Spirit uses the Word of truth to set men and women free so that they will believe. So Jesus makes it clear. Are you going to leave Me also?

Now He turns to the third group, the twelve. John 6:66-71 says [66] *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.* (The multitudes exited stage left. The disciples, those following Him, exited stage right. You would think that Jesus at this point would need to go to a conference on seeker sensitive ministry but then He turns to His twelve.) [67] *So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"* [68] *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,* [69] *and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."* [70] *Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil."* [71] *He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.*

So we have this marvelous moment where Jesus tells the truth and the multitudes have left and Jesus drills down and tells these followers the truth and He reveals that their leaving means they don't believe. You won't believe unless I stay with the truth because it's the truth that the Holy Spirit uses to bring you to set you free to come to Me to eat of Me and I am the Bread of Life who pays for your sins with My body and blood. Then He turns to the twelve and says 'do you want to go also?' and He drills down again.

Don't you just love Peter? He shows up 221 times in the Gospels. Peter says "To whom shall we go?" Stop and think about that question for a minute because at first that is not real encouraging. Put it this way. You and your wife are in the car talking and you've just found out that five couples have just divorced. So you turn to your wife and say "Do you want to leave me also?" and she says "Well, who am I going to go to? You're about my only choice here." That's just not real encouraging at that moment, until you read what else he says.

Why doesn't Peter have any other options? It is because of what he says next, "You alone have the words of eternal life." Then he says "We have come to believe and know..." It is not know and believe but it's believe and know. We have come to Divine revelation found in Christ, discovered from His Word by the power of the Holy Spirit and we have believed and now we know. My reason informed from Your Word has assured me that You alone are the Giver of life, because You alone have brought to me the Words of life.

Some are reading this and you haven't come to Christ. If you don't come to Christ it's because you say you don't trust this Bible that has told you the truth that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. He alone can save sinners and you don't want to believe that. You've decided to believe the philosophies of this age that warp and change everyone about every five years. Peter says "I believe You and therefore I know."

So now go back to the car. "Honey would you leave me?" "Where am I going to go? There is not another man out there like you." Now light and warmth just came into the car. "To whom shall we go Jesus? Buddha? Atheists? Pagan gods? Material things? We have come to believe You. You have the words of life. You are the Holy One of Israel."

Peter will drill it down not many months later. They will be at Caesarea Philippi and Jesus will say "Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am?" Peter will say "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" Jesus will say "Blessed are you

Simon Bar Jona for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father has revealed this to you.” My Father has drawn you to Me by the Spirit with the Word and that’s why you make that confession. It wasn’t your flesh or your mental ability or your resolution or the religion you invented but it was what I did by My Spirit to bring you to Me because of the love of the Father that has reached out to you.

Here is a little closer look at what has happened here. You have exit stage left the multitudes, exit stage right the disciples and then He turns to the twelve and thankfully it’s not an exit stage rear at least not this year for a year later one of the twelve will leave. In fact, they are all ready to leave a year later at the cross but the Holy Spirit and the Word will bring them back even Peter, yet Judas will walk away not simply in treason and traitorship but in unbelief. He has been with Jesus for three years and yet this whole thing has been a scandal to him. So what have we learned?

Here are three takeaways from this. One is God’s Word in general and the Gospel in particular is both a dividing line and a lifeline. When you preach and teach the whole council of God, the Word of God it’s a dividing line. Those who believe will grab it and hold onto it because it’s their lifeline. Those who don’t believe will walk away and say “I can’t believe you believe that – the origin of God, creation, what a family is supposed to be, etc. It’s a scandal.” It becomes a scandal to the unbeliever. For the believer, the whole council of God is absolutely crucial to any, all and everything in their life. To the unbeliever it’s a dividing line. That’s why the Bible is living, active and sharper than any two edged sword. A two edged sword cuts both ways.

You preach the Word, share the Word, you evangelize with the Word, all in love but it’s a dividing line. When you proclaim that Word, there is an aroma of death unto death and an aroma of life unto life. That’s why Paul told Timothy, “I’m leaving, preach the Word for there is coming a time they will not endure sound doctrine and they will go after the doctrine of demons, myths and men but you stay the course. These people can’t come to Christ without the Holy Spirit and they can’t be brought by the Holy Spirit without the Word of God.” You can’t send the Spirit but you can preach the Word. You can share the Word with your neighbor. You can bring the truth of the Gospel to them but realize the majority report will say “That’s a scandal.”

I want to give you three reasons why it’s a scandal. Number one is that man does not want to surrender his reason to God’s revelation. We want God’s revelation to be wrapped around by our pea brains instead of God’s revelation revealing to us what we can know accurately and intimately but never know exhaustively. He is beyond finding out. The doctrine of God revealing Himself in the Word is a scandal. We will be more than happy to have a god or religion that is a product of our reason but the scandal of submission to God’s Word as truth – for the believer it’s a lifeline, to the unbeliever it’s a dividing line and a scandal.

The second reason it’s a scandal is because in the Gospel we don’t want to be told that we need a Savior and secondly we don’t want to be told we’re helpless and hopeless. Do I really need a Savior who comes by grace because my flesh profits nothing? They don’t like that. The greatest news in the world is offensive, not because it’s offensive but because we take offense at some message that says you need a Savior.

The third reason it’s a scandal is because you can’t save yourself, your religion can’t save you, your baptism can’t save you, taking the Lord’s Supper won’t save you, being a church member won’t save you, our works won’t save us. God takes great

delight in the works of His people for He rejoices in the works of His people but our works never merit anything. Our works do not profit for what comes out of us profits nothing, yet it can reflect the grace of God but it doesn't earn points for us. All those points were earned by Jesus. Then you come to Him fully to ingest Him by the power of the Spirit of God who set you free, having been directed by the Word of God which is life.

The second takeaway is an unmistakable ministry principle of Christ. If you love people you can't back off the truth. Now you can think about how to present it in the best possible way without compromising but we're in an age where we're told and taught if you love people you compromise the message. If you love people you can't compromise the message. You have to speak the truth in love. You have to lovingly speak the truth. Jesus does not compromise the message to keep His job. He doesn't pull the sword out but when they grumbled He just pushed it in further, knowing that the truth is a lifeline to the believer and it's a dividing line for the unbeliever. Don't back off the truth but bring the truth.

The third takeaway is Christ alone is our Savior. You can't come to Christ except for the Spirit of Christ alone and the Spirit of Christ works with the Words of Christ alone. The natural response for the unbeliever is to be scandalized at the need for revelation, scandalized at the Gospel message that says you need a Savior and you can't save yourself, your religion can't save you and your works can't save you but the Gospel says unless you come to Him, unless you are born again then you will not come to Him. You are born again by the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God uses the Word of God. James 1:18 says *[18] Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.* You are born again by the Spirit of the Word that we might be the firstfruits.

I Peter 1:23 says *[23] since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.* You can't send the Spirit of God but the Spirit of God always works with the Word of God so we will send the Word of God because it's the Word of God that the Spirit of God uses and only the Spirit of God with the Word of God can bring people to Christ who alone can save them. So we will bring the Word of God.

Brothers and sisters, if you are reading this today and you're a believer, you know Christ then praise Him because the very Gospel message would have been a scandal to you if the Holy Spirit hadn't used the Word as a lifeline to set you free and bring you to Christ. Do you know the difference between Peter and Judas? It is the Father, the work of the Spirit and the grace of God. Peter is not smarter or more intentional. My goodness he denied Him three times. It is the grace of God where you are in Christ today by the Spirit of God through the Word of God where somebody told you the Truth. The Spirit of God gave you eyes to see and ears to hear. So praise His Holy Name. If you begin with the Spirit and the Word, stay surrendered to the Spirit and the Word to ingest Christ everyday with His Word. Hunger for it preached. Hunger to read it and memorize it. God, give me the fullness of Christ yet keep me hungry for Him through His word by His Spirit.

If today you came seeking, do you know why you came seeking? The Lord is working. If the Spirit of God is working in you then you heard the truth of His Word that Jesus went to the cross for your sins and now invites you to Himself so come to Him

today, now, this day. Come with no reservations to feast on Him by faith. Take offense? Oh no, don't take offense. Come to Christ who took your offenses at the cross and now gives you life and then will take your life and let it be, holy consecrated unto Thee. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the One who took our offenses. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit that we would not take offense at the Gospel call or the Gospel blessings or the exclusivity that it is only in Christ that we can be saved. Thank You for setting us free from the arrogance of our lives and our works. Thank You for setting us free from the arrogance of thinking our religious works will gain heaven. Father, thank You for setting us free that we may work for the Savior resting and ingesting fully His glorious work on the cross so by His flesh that bore our sins, His blood that paid for it, having been informed from Your Word and given eyes to see by Your Spirit we come to Christ alone. If you want to do that today please contact me here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 so that I can pray with you. There are others here you can pray and talk with but come to Christ for in Him is eternal life. He is the Bread of Life. By faith ingest Him, digest Him and He is in you and you are in Him and glory of salvation is yours. I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.