

John 6:60

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[0 : 01] It's in the ESV on page 1227. 1 John chapter 2 and we're reading at verse 7. 1 John chapter 2 verse 7.

Behold, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

[1 : 20] I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves this world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes, and pride in possessions, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

And the world is passing away, along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard, that Antichrist is coming.

So now many Antichrists have come, therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

[2 : 31] But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar, but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.

This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has a Father. Whoever confesses the Son has a Father also.

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us, eternal life.

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you have received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you.

[3 : 37] But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is through and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him so that when he appears, we may have confidence, and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. Amen, and may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word.

I'm going to sing now from Sing Psalm, Psalm number 1A. It's in page 1. Psalm 1A, Junus Creator. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths, or sit with those who mock.

Instead, he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight. He makes the precepts of the Lord, his study day and night. He prospers ever like a tree that's planted by a stream.

And in due season yields its fruit, its leaves are always green. Not so the wicked. They are like the chaff that's blown away. They will not stand when judgment comes, or with a righteousness.

[4 : 51] The whole psalm, the Junus Creator. Blessed is the one who turns away. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths, or sit with those who mock.

Instead, he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight.
He makes the precepts of the Lord, his study day and night.
He prospers ever like a tree that's planted by a stream.
And in due season yields its fruit, its leaves are always green.

[6 : 17] Not so the wicked. They are like the chaff that's blown away.

They will not stand when judgment comes, or with a righteous day.
It is the Lord who sees and knows the way the righteous go.

But those who live an evil life, the Lord will overthrow.

Let's turn now to John's Gospel. John chapter 6. I'm reading at verse 60.

[7 : 20] That's on page 1076. John chapter 6 at verse 60.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, Do you take offense at this?

Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is of no avail.

The words that I have spoken to your spirit and life. 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.

And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

[8 : 30] So Jesus said to the twelve, Do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. Jesus answered them, Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.

He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. For he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him. I'm sure we all know that you can never really gauge how anything is going to turn out by its beginning.

Sometimes things which appear solitary or little things, they turn out, as time goes on, to be massive.

It is, some people say that the First World War started with one bullet. When the first computers were made, apparently they were massive things. And the idea of a PC, of where it is today, where so many, I suppose, many, many homes have a computer or a laptop or an iPad.

[9 : 46] Right throughout this world, when the first computers were made, that kind of idea would just have been laughed at. And people would say, not a chance.

So we often don't know how something is going to turn out by how it appears at the beginning. And that is certainly true here, because sometimes what can start very slowly grows to something great. And vice versa, something which appears to be starting really well just fades away. And here we have, sadly, what started out, which appeared so promising, and which appeared from every angle to be just something like a great national movement.

And it just trickles out until it seems to be only a handful of people left with Jesus. You remember how we've taken quite a while going through this particular chapter, because it's a very central part of the whole gospel, because there's so much teaching, so much in it.

But you remember how, initially, how Jesus fed the thousands, and the reaction from the people was they wanted to make him king. And Jesus withdrew from them, and then how he walked on the water to the disciples.

[11 : 02] And then of how the crowds again found him on the other side, and he started to teach them. And as he began to teach them and explain things to them, they began to realize that he was teaching them things that, to begin with, they found very hard to understand.

And then as he went on, they began to realize that it wasn't just things that were hard to understand. They were things that they didn't want to hear. And that's why it says in verse 60, when

many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? Because Jesus was telling them that just as the manna came down, and it wasn't Moses who gave the manna, it was the Father who sent them the manna from heaven, that he is a true manna, and that they have to eat of him.

We were looking at that last week, and we saw how it is the Father who works within people and draws people to himself in and through Jesus Christ. And the people, they were saying, these are hard sayings.

Now, there are two ways a person can say it's a hard saying. What we read there in verse 60, this is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? Sometimes people will hear gospel truths, and they'll say, oh, that's hard.

[12 : 24] And what they mean there is, that's really hard to understand. And I'm sure all of us have been in that situation and say, you know, that's actually really hard to understand.

Sometimes there are truths in the Word of God, and you say, wow, that's mind-blowing. I can only go so far. My mind cannot stretch that far.

I'm struggling to try and make. And we're all like that, because the Word of God is explaining to us things about God and about who he is and what he's doing.

And because we are so finite and so limited in our human understanding that, yes, faith lays hold upon it, but there are things that we say, oh, I can only go so far.

And then it kind of goes beyond our understanding. So at one level, everybody in here can say that some of the things in the Bible are hard to understand.

[13 : 24] We believe them. We accept them. We live by them. But they're still sometimes hard for us to understand. That's not what has been spoken about here. It is a different kind of hardness.

This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? These, what they're really saying is, we don't like this. This is hard. This is hard to take on board. It's not that it's hard to understand.

It's hard for us to accept this. Because Jesus had stripped away from them all their own abilities to save themselves.

He was showing them that everything was by grace. Everything was by God. And they didn't like that. And so there was this reaction against it.

This is a hard thing. Who can listen to it? And you know, that's still the reaction today by so many people. It's the reason why so many people have closed their Bible.

[14 : 27] A lot of young people who grew up coming to church have one day come to a place and a point where they've closed the Bible. And they walked away and they made a decision. I'm finished with church.

I'm finished with the Bible. Because they don't like it. And an awful lot of people make that decision. You cannot make a worse decision. That's the worst decision that a person can make.

And yet loads and loads and loads of people make that decision constantly. There are so many people. And I'm sure there are many people within this town who have walked away out of this church.

And have said, that's me finished with church. Sometimes, praise the Lord, the Lord has said, well, I'm not finished with you. And some have come back.

Some have come to find faith in Jesus Christ. And that's one of the wonderful things. I'm sure even here today there are people like that. There came a point when you walked away. But you're back.

[15 : 29] And you're back because the Lord was saying, you might be finished. You think you're finished with me. But I'm not finished with you. But you know, there are so many people up and down our land.

And even as we say in our town. And they will never open the Bible. They don't want to hear what God says. God doesn't come into their thinking.

They have made a deliberate choice. And let us not close our eyes to that fact. Every Lord's Day, people are making their way to church. And every person who is walking into church or driving to church or coming to church is a living witness and testimony that God is.

And people have closed their minds and closed their eyes. And they're saying, no, not for me. Not for me. Because it's a hard saying. There's this inbuilt thing. We will not listen to this.

And so we find that this is the situation that Jesus is confronting. And of course, Jesus, he says that.

[16 : 33] Jesus, knowing all this, he said to them, it is the spirit who gives life. The flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you, there's spirit and life. And so Jesus is telling them, look,

there's only one way that you can come to faith in Jesus Christ.

And that is through my words. And that is why it's so important that people will come unto the word. That has got to be your aim and my aim to get people, if they don't come to church, get a Bible into their hand.

That's why the work, say, for instance, of the Gideons is such a wonderful work. Because so many people have been brought to the Lord in a hotel.

I'm sure so many have come to find faith in Jesus Christ through picking up a Bible.

Maybe from a loose end or because things are their life, there's difficulties, problems, issues. And they pick up a Bible and they start reading. And that's what Jesus is saying. That's the very thing that he's saying.

[17 : 39] The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. There's always hope for a person who has an open Bible. To be reading the Bible because this is where God communicates himself to us.

This is where the Holy Spirit will reveal Christ. So it's to get people, even if they won't come to church, get them reading the word of God.

Get people to open their Bibles. Faith comes by hearing or by reading. And hearing or reading the word of God. It is so important. But of course there's this vast movement away from Jesus.

And Jesus of course, although I believe he would be hurt by it, he wasn't surprised by it. Because it tells us that. That Jesus knew. For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe.

And even who it was who would betray him. So Jesus knew that there was going to be this reaction from the people. So many just turned away from him.

[18 : 47] And it's interesting that it puts in there at verse 65. And he said, this is why I told you that no, sorry, verse 64 there. For Jesus himself knew who it is who would betray him.

You see, the disciples of Jesus Christ fall into two categories. There's those who believe and there's those who don't believe.

And you might say to yourself, that's a funny thing to call a disciple somebody who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ. Well, what we're doing, we're looking at what we term the visible church. And the visible church is what we can see, what is made up of all the people who are in any way tied to the church.

Who are involved with the church. Not just those who may come week by week. But those who would be affiliated. Who would say, well, I belong to the church. They would be turned part of the visible church.

The invisible church are those who are true believers. Those who are really following the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, within the visible church, there are people who, and even within the visible church, who can be very regular churchgoers.

[20 : 00] But while they may accept the truth, the teachings of Jesus, and believe many of these things, They themselves do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.

They've never come to know Him as their Lord and Savior. They believe with their mind, but not with their heart. Jesus has not become King and Lord of their life.

He is not there on the throne of their heart. They have never bowed down and said, Lord, please take over my life. Lord, become King of my life.

They're still holding Jesus at arm's length. Although outwardly, every appearance is good. Fine, lovely people, believing this to be true.

Believing that what is taught here is the right way. And yet, still holding Jesus back. So, within this category, as it says here about the disciples, it is those who are within, what we would say, the visible church, but have not come to faith in Jesus Christ.

[21 : 12] But the real disciple of Jesus will follow Jesus for whatever purposes. Back then, there were, as we've looked, I'm not going to go back over it, but a lot of people were following Jesus for what they could get out of Him.

They were looking at Him as a deliverer from the tyranny of Rome. He had fed them. They had got a good meal out of Him. They saw that Jesus could serve their purposes and their interests.

And as long as Jesus could serve, fulfill their agendas, they were happy to follow Him. But when Jesus began to explain what He was about, their dreams about Him were smashed.

That's not the kind of saviour they wanted. This is not the kind of passion they wanted. And so they began to turn away from Him. And that's still true.

The fact the real disciple will follow Jesus, not just for what they can get out of Him, but for who He is in Himself. And you can know quite just how it is.

[22 : 25] Is that why you're following Jesus today? It's because who He is. It's because you love Him. That's the bottom line. You want Jesus as Lord of your life.

And you're happy with that. You might be saying to yourself, you might be looking around the church here and saying, Well, I'll tell you one thing. I'm not the best Christian in this church by any stretch of the imagination.

My faith is weak. My walk isn't that good. I fumble and I stumble. My knowledge isn't that great. And I look at other Christians and I say to myself, I wish I was like him or like her.

But this one thing I know is that I don't want anybody else as Lord of my life but Jesus. And that's the real disciple.

Even although there might be lots of faults and failings, the real disciple just wants Jesus. And you go through the Bible and you'll find that a lot of the great men and the great women, they had their faults and their failings.

[23 : 31] And they continued to follow the Lord. Noah had his drunkenness. Abraham, we find him, and Sarah, both of them lying. We find Jacob as such a deceiver.

And we find David as an adulterer. And we find Jonah as somebody running away from the Lord. And Peter denying Jesus. And yet all these people loved the Lord.

And although they had their faults and their failings and their sins, they never stopped loving the Lord. And so it is with their shells. Isn't that true?

Is that where you are today? You follow Jesus. Because you love him. And you love him. Because he has loved you.

We were looking at that last week. If that's just the great work of God's love reaching down into our heart and drawing us to himself. But Jesus knew.

[24 : 28] He knew what everybody was like. And he actually said quite an amazing thing. I often wonder what the disciples thought when Jesus said to them. He knew all about Judas. Peter, you know, made that great statement.

Jesus said, Did I not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil? Well, I don't know. Sometimes I would imagine that the words of Jesus may have just floated by.

Or they didn't take them aboard. Because that was a really, quite an extraordinary statement. Can you imagine if there's the twelve of you there and Jesus is? And one of you is a devil.

Wow. What a statement. I tend to think that that statement that Jesus made at that particular point. Like a lot of the statements that Jesus made kind of was lost on the disciples.

It just kind of blew over. It would have been one of these things they would have remembered later on. Because a lot of the things Jesus said, it was later on that they remembered. But a lot of the things would have, as it were, blown by.

[25 : 29] They hadn't really taken note of it. But Jesus is showing us here that following him is total commitment. We cannot, we can't, for we're reading this in John's letter, that the world and Christ are going in two separate directions.

Now, we live in the world, but we're not off. There's a great distinction between being in the world and off the world. We're in the world. We live in this world. We work in this world.

We have all our relationships in this world. We interact with one another in this world. We have our leisure times in this world. Everything that we do is in this world.

But the term, the world as such, is that whole movement that is opposed to Christ. The world's philosophies and the world's aims, which is purely selfish, of where everything is tied up with me, with me and myself.

The world has no desire for the glory of God. The world never doesn't want, not only does the world not want the glory of God, the world doesn't want God. And so that's why there's this huge distinction.

[26 : 49] And the Christian cannot walk both ways at the same time. We cannot be living to and for the world, living for its aims and its ambitions and its selfishness and its lovelessness and its philosophies, which are opposed to the Christian way.

You cannot live both ways at the same time, any more than a person can walk in two opposite directions at the same time. You cannot walk east and west or north and south.

You can't walk that way and that way at the same time. It's utterly impossible. And so it is in a Christian life. You cannot do it. People try to do it, but you cannot.

And that's what we read about in John's letter. John is making that very point. We're either walking one way or the other. Now as I say, don't get all bogged down and say, Ah, I'm in the world.

Yes, you're in the world. We're all in the world. And we all enjoy. And that doesn't mean we've got to stop enjoying the blessings God gave us in this world. God has given us many blessings in this world and given them to us to enjoy in this world.

[27 : 56] But we must never lose sight of who we belong to and where we're going as we journey through this world. That's what's so vital and so important.

But for this huge number of people, they turned back because their hearts weren't one with Jesus Christ.

And you know, it's one of the saddest things when you see somebody walk away. It hurts. Now, backsliding, it comes in various forms.

I hope I'm not doing you a disservice. But I would imagine that every believer in here has at some stage or another has had a form of backsliding.

It can be for a week. It can be for a short period where you've lost your focus. And you're not living with the Lord in the way that you used to.

[28 : 55] The Bible has become dead to you. Church doesn't have the same attraction. The energy, the vitality, everything has become very flat.

And sometimes that happens. And I'm sure all of us at different times have experienced things like that. And so there is a level of backsliding that I suppose is that all believers will go through.

There are other believers who go through quite serious backsliding where they fall quite far away. I believe David was in quite a backslidden condition for quite a long time.

It wasn't until Nathan challenged him and said, Hey, you're the man. That that knife went right into his heart and he realized, Oh, what he had done.

And in that period, you see, if we are living in a wrong way before the Lord, then we'd, and particularly if we are living in a sinful way, David was living in a completely wrong relationship in a wrong way.

[30 : 04] And it would be impossible for him to enjoy the previous communion and fellowship that he used to enjoy with the Lord. And you know, we can grieve God's spirit to such an extent that our hearts become hard.

And we're not aware of how far away we've gone. But the Lord will never leave us there. He'll come back and touch us and do something. And then bring us back, bring us back to himself.

That's the way he works. That's his love towards us. But there are others who maybe for a while have begun. They've experienced something.

And they have, as it were, joined themselves. They've become part of the visible church. And there is nothing about them that you can see or identify that distinguishes them from any other believer.

But deep down, they have never actually come into personal union with Jesus. They maybe had some emotional experience. And something has taken them along on the crest of the wave for a while.

[31 : 09] But you cannot live out all your time on emotional experience. It's not enough. If you only have an emotional experience, it will eventually give out.

And I think it's one of the sad things that I'm sure we all know people who were once, as we read in John's Gospel, they were once in John's letter, once with us, but went out from us.

And it's always painful. It always hurts when somebody no longer is walking with the Lord. And that's what we find here, that there are people.

Jesus asks that question. And many of his disciples turn back and no longer walked with him. I find that one of the saddest verses in the Bible.

No longer walking with Jesus. When you walk with someone, you don't go walking with a stranger. It's somebody that you know. Somebody that you feel comfortable with. That you're happy to walk along with them.

[32 : 13] Well, here are these people. They no longer walked with Jesus. They started walking in another way. And I cannot think of anything worse.

And that's why God's people can ultimately no longer stop. Well, it cannot happen to them. If you have been united to Jesus, you cannot stop walking with him.

Even although you might be lagging way behind. Peter, who made this wonderful confession. I'm seeing the time is going and I'll have to move. Peter, who made this wonderful confession.

He knew all about this. Because it tells us before his denial, Peter followed afar off. He was still walking. Walking in the right direction. But he had lagged so far behind.

He had stopped keeping up with Jesus. And he was in a dangerous place. And we're always in a dangerous place when we lag far behind. And that's how we find that so many people there, they had stopped walking with Jesus.

[33 : 25] But then we find that Jesus, he turns to the twelve. And he says, do you want to go away as well? And may I say one last thing here before.

I'm going to look at this just for a moment. Maybe there's, and it's so often the case. Maybe you're here today as a kind of a timid believer. And you're saying to yourself, ah, that's me.

I'm in that emotional experience category. I fear that that's all that it works. I fear. And you know, it's always the Lord's people that are in that, that are fearing.

The person who is not truly united to Jesus Christ thinks quite well of themselves. And they say, ah, it's all right. Things are okay.

It's often the believer who is sort of shaking and saying, what if that's me? Well, if you today are saying, oh, what if that's me?

[34 : 23] And you're saying at the same time, oh, there's nobody I want. Lord, you know, it's you I want. But what if I haven't really come? I would say, you're speaking the language of faith, the language of grace.

But anyway, Jesus turns to the disciples. He said, are you also going to walk away? Do you want to go away as well? Hey, that was the big search. Jesus was the master of getting people to dig deep. Come on, what's in there? Here's the moment. Here's the defining moment. Look at the crowds going away. Says to the disciples, what about you? Are you going as well? And Peter, as usual, the spokesman for the lot.

Well, he thought it was for the lot. But it wasn't. It was for 11 of them. And Peter makes that great statement. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. It's like Peter saying, where can we go? I've been elsewhere before. And it's rubbish. I've walked another road before.

[35 : 22] Lord, since I've started walking with you, there is nowhere else I want to go. And that's true for every believer.

If you today get the chance and the opportunity and say, look, hey, walk away from Jesus. You can't. As I say, you might be saying to yourself, I'm not the best Christian here.

And I struggle at times. Oh, I have my battles and days. I'm not walking the way I should. But the bottom line is, I would never, ever, ever want to walk away from Jesus.

I love him too much. And that's really what Peter is saying. Somewhere else. Been down the other roads, Lord. Now that I've found you. I don't want to be with anybody else.

Because you have the words of eternal life. Can't get them anywhere else in the world. Only from you. You're the only one who can give because you are eternal life.

[36 : 23] And Peter makes that great statement. And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. In the Old Testament, God the Father was often termed the Holy One of Israel.

And Peter here is saying, as he's looking at Jesus in all his humanity, we know who you are. You're the divine being. Yes, you're in human flesh. But you're divine.

You're the Holy One of God. The Holy One of Israel. The God-Man. What a statement. You know, Peter made some of the most glorious statements.

And yet Peter, as we know, there's a bit of Peter in us all. That's one of the beautiful things about the Bible. It shows us that even the best of people, they have their flaws and their faults.

But Peter made this absolutely wonderful statement. And the great and wonderful thing that the Bible tells us is this. That if we are in Jesus, we will never be lost.

[37 : 24] My sheep, Jesus says that, shall never perish. No one can pluck them out of my hand or out of the Father's hand. Jesus also, the Word of God says to us, The steps of a good person are ordered by the Lord.

Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, because the Lord holds him by the hand. What an encouragement that is.

So the great question we have to ask ourselves today is this. As we're challenged by this. Are you walking today with Jesus?

Or are you still walking on your own? Because there's only two ways you can be. Either walking with Jesus or walking by yourself. Well, if you're walking by yourself, I hope you very soon come to discover that it's a lonely, dark place, walking on your own.

Because however attractive this world may appear to be, this world has nothing for your soul. Not one thing can this world give for your soul and for your eternal good.

[38 : 41] Only Jesus. The disciples had come to discover that. Jesus is eternal life. I hope you take Jesus and walk with him.

Let us pray. Lord our God, we pray that we might have the heart of Peter. Peter, who walked well and spoke well, confessed well.

And yet Peter who stumbled as well. We give thanks, Lord, for these great lives and these great confessions. These great statements that are held out to us in God's word.

But above all, we give thanks for our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. Lord, may we all walk with Jesus.

Jesus, by embracing him as he has offered to us in the gospel. He's walking with us today. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by in the gospel. May we not allow him to walk away, but may we walk with him.

[39 : 46] Clinging to him, laying hold upon him. Our hand in his hand. Come into our hearts, we pray, O Lord. Lead us as we go throughout this world.

Take us all home safely, we pray. Forgiving us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen.