

John 6:60

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

Analysis

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? The phrase 'many...of his disciples' indicates not just the Twelve but a broader following. The adjective 'sklēros' (hard/harsh) means difficult, offensive, intolerable—not intellectually incomprehensible but morally repugnant. They understand what Jesus means (eating His flesh, drinking His blood, total dependence on Him) and find it unacceptable. The question 'who can hear it?' (tis dunatai autou akouein) expresses not inability but unwillingness. Reformed theology distinguishes between natural inability (the unregenerate cannot spiritually understand) and moral inability (the sinner will not submit to God's truth). These disciples possess natural understanding but lack spiritual illumination and willing submission. Their offense demonstrates that the gospel naturally offends human pride—salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone contradicts all human religious instincts.

Historical Context

This marks a crisis point in Jesus's ministry. The 'hard saying' encompasses the entire bread discourse: Christ's claim to be from heaven (verse 38), the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (verses 53-56), and exclusive dependence on Him for eternal life (verse 53). First-century Jewish expectations for Messiah included political deliverance, national restoration, and Torah validation—not a crucified God-man who demands total dependence on His substitutionary death. The offense parallels Paul's later description: 'Christ

crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness' (1 Corinthians 1:23). John's community, expelled from synagogues decades later, would recognize that the gospel's offense continues—believing in Jesus still costs discipleship its cultural acceptability.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What aspects of Jesus's teaching do you find 'hard' or offensive to natural human thinking?
2. Why does the gospel necessarily offend before it saves?
3. How do you distinguish between intellectual questions and moral unwillingness when people reject Christ's claims?

Interlinear Text

Πολλοὶ οὖν ἀκούειν ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ εἶπον,
Many **therefore** **hear** **of** ^{G3588} **disciples** **his** **this said**
G4183 G3767 G191 G1537 G3101 G846 G2036

Σκληρὸς ἐστὶν οὗτος· ὁ λόγος τίς δύναται αὐτοῦ
an hard **is** **This** ^{G3588} **saying** **who** **can** **his**
G4642 G2076 G3778 G3056 G5101 G1410 G846

ἀκούειν
hear
G191

Additional Cross-References

John 6:66 (Parallel theme): From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

John 8:43 (Parallel theme): Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

John 8:31 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

Matthew 11:6 (Parallel theme): And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

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