

**INSTRUCTION IN THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE
BY THE BREAD OF LIFE
(John 6:35-59)**

³⁵ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. ³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up the last day.

John 6:35-39

The great theological issue of the last 500 years has been the issue of God's sovereignty over the salvation of souls. Does the Bible teach that God saves whom he will or does it teach that God leaves salvation to the will of man? Is Man totally helpless in a fallen state of depravity, or is man capable of rising above his sinful inclinations and finding his own way to a universally merciful God? Does the salvation of man depend upon the sovereign work of God alone or does it depend on the cooperation of man himself? Did God elect some to salvation and then do all that was necessary to bring the salvation of the elect to pass, or did he simply clear the way for all and then leave the door open for any who would believe? Does it require a strong work of God to save a sinner, or does God take a hands-off approach and leave a man to come on his own?

We have come to a passage of Scripture which addresses some of these issues. And it is a passage of Scripture which records a discourse of Jesus himself with some unbelieving Jews. Jesus is in the midst of his "I am the bread of life" discourse.

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John 6:35

The Jews had just asked him to show them a sign that they might believe. (John 6:30) And specifically they referred him to that old miracle when manna came down out of heaven and the people had their physical hunger quenched. And they said, "Moses gave us bread from heaven, now show us what you can do, Jesus, and we will believe." You can easily see that these people are unbelievers. They will not believe unless they see a sign.

And Jesus said, "You want a sign? Here is a sign. I am the true bread from heaven. You want to see bread from heaven? You are looking at the true bread from heaven. And if you eat this bread, you will never hunger or thirst again. I am the bread of life. If you eat this bread you will live."

And yet, you will notice that they did not believe.

But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

John 6:36

Here is the great question. These Jews were standing eyeball to eyeball with the bread of life. Jesus says, "You have seen me." That is, you have laid eyes on me. (v.36) You have seen my works. You have eaten the food which I made from five loaves and two small fishes. You have seen me heal the sick. But here is the strange thing. You don't believe. Jesus says, I am the bread of life, but you will not eat. Here I am. I have come down from heaven to satisfy your greatest hunger once for all and you will not come to the dinner table. What is the explanation? Why will the Jews not believe? And that is one of the questions that our text addresses this morning.

You remember that when Jesus first went to Jerusalem to open up his public ministry he found gross abuse in the temple. And when he performed many miracles, the people in Jerusalem only responded to him as a miracle worker. They did not believe on Him as the Christ or as the Savior of the world. And there was very little true faith in Israel.

But when he left Jewish territory and went into Samaria, he found fields white unto harvest. There is no record of any miracle performed in Samaria. Yet, the woman at the well believed in Him and she ran back into the city and many there believed based on her testimony. And many others ran out to the well to meet Jesus and they also believed because of the words of Jesus. And so there was a great reception in Samaria; so much so that Jesus told his disciples the fields were white unto harvest.

But then, when Jesus left Samaria and travelled into Galilee, back into Jewish territory, he told his disciples, “A prophet hath no honor in his own country.” And once again, the people followed him because of his miracles and because he fed them bread and fishes. But they would not eat the True Bread. They would not believe that Jesus was the Christ and the Savior. And in our text Jesus will tell them why it is that they will not believe.

Actually, Christ tells them in a positive way. He tells them who will believe and by implication it serves as an explanation as to why others will not believe. Let’s read the words of Jesus and see who it is that will believe.

All of the elect shall come.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.

John 6:37

Now in this verse it is clear that some will come to Christ. And who are they? Why it is those whom the Father has given. It is not those who are more disposed to come. It is not those who are less sinful. It is not those who are more spiritually inclined. It is those whom the Father has given. If a man believes, it is not first and foremost because he was born into better circumstances. It is not because he had a fine Christian family. It is not because he had better opportunity. It is not because he had a heart prone to believe. It is because the Father has given him.

Not to discount all of those other good blessings that may have contributed. God is free to use whatever secondary causes he sees fit. He may use better circumstances. He may use a fine Christian family. He may give a man better opportunity. But the primary cause of a man’s salvation is that the Father gives him. It all starts with a sovereign act of the Father. A man’s salvation is not rooted in circumstances nor in a man’s will, but in the Father’s will. Let’s take a few verses that indicate that salvation is by the will of God.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Ephesians 1:4, 5

And again,

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he had purposed in himself.

Ephesians 1:6-9

And again,

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Ephesians 1:11

Jesus told these unbelieving Jews,

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.

As Jesus went from city to city in the land of Israel performing miracles and doing mighty works, it was apparent that the fields were not white unto harvest among the Jews. It was a healthy harvest in Samaria, but it was slim pickings in Israel. And if you evaluated the ministry of Jesus overall in Israel, you might have thought in some measure it was a failure. People were not flocking to be saved. They were flocking to be healed and to be fed. And so the fruit from Jesus' ministry in Israel was far less than might be expected. You would have thought the nation would have welcomed their Messiah. You would have thought they would have bowed the knee to Christ, but instead they bowed their backs against Him.

But I want you to note that this did not discourage Jesus. His confidence did not rest in the potential response of the people. He wasn't discouraged when relatively few in Israel were saved. Rather, his confidence was solely in the Father to bring about the Father's redemptive purposes. In fact, Jesus was confident that he would have a 100% success rate!

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.

This was the great confidence of Christ. And this is the great confidence of a sovereign grace church! We know that all of God's elect will come. They will come one by one to Christ. Every one that the Father has given to Christ will come to Him. The masses may not come. The masses may go somewhere for the social value or the entertainment, but the elect will come to Christ.

Now I want you to notice that nothing is left to chance with regard to the salvation of the elect. Every single one of those whom the Father has given will come to Christ. There is no circumstance on the earth that will prevent it. There is no missed opportunity that causes one of God's elect to perish. If one of God's elect is born into a family of atheists he will nevertheless come. If one of God's elect is born in a heathen country where you would suppose he had no chance of salvation, he will yet come. It says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me."

Now we have seen in our text that God gives some men to Christ. And those whom he gives to Christ, certainly come to Christ. But there is another certainty about those whom the Father gives to Christ.

Christ will preserve those who are given.

And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

John 6:37

Now this truth is here cast in the negative. Jesus says, "If you come to me, I will not cast you out." But what he teaches here is the positive, that he will keep you in. If you come in to Him, He will keep you in.

When we first come to Jesus our faith is the barest of faiths. It is weak and feeble and we suspect that we will not be able to sustain our faith. But Jesus says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." He says, "I will keep you. Don't worry little lamb, your faith is small, but my power is great. You are weak but I am strong. And the Father has given you to me and I will keep you.

This doctrine is called the preservation of the saints. This is God's responsibility toward the elect. This is the work of God. This is what God does for you; He keeps you.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

John 6:39

The responsibility for keeping the elect falls on Jesus Christ. It is his duty not to lose them. We are the Father's gift to Jesus and Jesus must not lose any of that select group.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

John 10:28

The clear picture is that Christ holds the sheep in his strong hand and no man is able to pluck them out.

Did you know that it is not only the power of God that brings you to salvation, but also the power of God that keeps you there? Jude 24 says that Christ our Savior is able to keep you from falling. It is God that saves us from beginning to end. You were helpless in the beginning to come to Christ, but God brought you there somehow. And during the course of your Christian life, it has been God that has kept you there. You would have fallen back into sin and unbelief except for His power. And he will carry you to that last destination. Look once again at the responsibility of Jesus as it relates to the elect.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

John 6:39

Jesus is charged with the responsibility of preserving his sheep until the very last eschatological act of this world. He will keep you until your dead body is finally raised. And when will the body be raised? It will be raised at the last day. This will be the culmination of Christ's keeping power. This will be the crowning moment for the elect of God. It will be when Christ descends from heaven with a shout and he will command his elect to come forth out of the graves into everlasting life.

This was the Father's will when he gave the elect to Christ. His will was that they would come to Christ. His will was that Christ would keep them and not lose one of them. And his will was that Christ would ultimately raise them up to everlasting life on that last day. What a wonderful destiny we have when we are given by the Father to Christ!

But when Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," the Jews murmured at him. (John 6:41) And they said, "You didn't come down from heaven. We know your father and your mother. (John 6:44) So we learn that the elect will certainly come to Christ but,

Those who are not elect will not come.

Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." But remember, Jesus is speaking to unbelieving Jews. And just as he is pointing out who will come, he is also pointing out who will not come. And he is pointing out why it is that they will not come. And the answer is; they were not among those who were given to Christ.

Now when a man is not chosen by God before the foundation of the world unto salvation, and when he is not given to Christ as an inheritance, and when the power of God does not bring him to Christ, then a man is left to his own nature and his own sinful inclinations and he cannot muster up saving faith in Christ. Look what Jesus said about a man without God's saving power.

No man can come to me.

John 6:44

This statement by Jesus Christ is denied by human beings everywhere. People will never believe it. They think there is yet something they can do. They think there is yet something in man that is commendable before God. They think there is some will power that they can drum up that will bring them to Christ. But Jesus said, "No man can come to me."

This is part of the doctrine of depravity. This is total inability. And Jesus could not have stated it more succinctly. "No man can come to me." Paul stated it in different terms.

We were dead in trespasses and sins.

Ephesians 2:5

This is the foundation stone of the doctrines of grace. This is the foundation upon which grace is laid. If you think that you qualify for heaven on your own merits or that you can get there by some merit in you, then there is no need for grace. If you lay the foundation of self-righteousness then you must build upon it with works. But if you lay the foundation of utter human inability, then there is nothing left with which to build but grace. The self-righteous sinner will never come unless he is humbled by the power of God. The arrogant sinner will not come until his arrogance is dashed to pieces. The man who loves his religious works will not come until he sees his works as worthless.

The only man who comes to Christ is the desperate man, the man who has been made desperate by the power of God. The only man who receives grace is the helpless man, the man whose helplessness has been revealed by the power of God.. This is why Jesus said, "No man can come to me."

I want you to think about this. If what Jesus said is true, "No man can come to me," then we are absolutely dependent on God to bring us to Christ. If we accept what Jesus said, that we cannot come to him ourselves, then someone else must bring us there.

Example: It is impossible for an infant to bring himself to the doctor for a checkup. Someone else must bring him there.

And it is impossible for a helpless sinner to bring himself to Christ. The heart is so dark. The sinful inclination is so great. The depravity is so deep. The spiritual death is so utterly pervasive, that the sinner cannot come.

But look at the rest of the verse and marvel at the grace and power of God.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

John 6:44

Here is the great exception for the sinner. No man can come, but there is one exception and one only, "except the Father draw him."

God draws the elect to Christ

We have already seen that the Father gave the elect to Christ. But here we see a more graphic term of how He actually brings them to Christ. It says he "draws them." This is a powerful word in the Greek. It has the sense of grabbing something and bringing it by compulsion.

Example: In Acts 16:16-19, there was a woman who was possessed with an evil spirit. And this spirit allowed her to be a soothsayer or a fortune teller. And the passage says that she had certain masters who were making money off of her talent. (We might call them her pimps. They were selling her services and making money.) But when Paul and Silas came to town, it so happened that Paul cast the evil spirit out of her and she could not tell fortunes any longer. So when the pimps saw that their money-making opportunity was

gone, it says they caught Paul and Silas and “drew” them into the marketplace. The idea is that they caught them by the collar and dragged them by force where they didn’t necessarily intend to go.

And in the same way, God comes to a sinner and grabs him and brings him to Christ. It is a compelling drawing. It is a powerful drawing. And it is a sovereign drawing. And the sinner who previously would not come and could not come, is brought to Christ by the mysterious power of God. All the credit here can be given to the dragging power of God.

But how does He do it? How is it that God draws a sinner to Christ but at the same time it can be said that a man comes to Christ? And you see both God’s drawing and man’s coming in verse 44.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

Obviously, the drawing work of God is just that. It is a work of God. And if it is a work of God, it is wondrous and mysterious. And we should not be discouraged if we cannot understand it. But this drawing work of God must include all of his work that causes a man to come to Christ.

One of the things that God does to draw a man to Christ is to enlighten the mind of that man. And this is found in the next verse of our text.

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

John 6:45

This is a quote from Isaiah 54:13 where it was prophesied that God would enlighten their minds. And certainly, in order to bring a man to Christ, God does a work of enlightenment on the sinner. A spark of light is engendered in a dark mind and the sinner begins to see his helpless condition and the advisability of seeking Christ.

But not only does God draw the sinner by enlightening him, but he also draws him by inclining his will. Now a person will never come to Christ unless he wants to come. So if God is to drag the sinner to Christ, he must do a work in the sinner’s will.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.

Psalm 110:3

And God does many wonderful works in the heart of the sinner which causes the sinner to come to Christ. God moves in the soul of the sinner to affect his emotions and his affections and his motives. And somehow, by his awesome power over the heart of man, God gives a man a right view of his law. God shows the sinner his awful condition. God, as it were, holds the sinner over the precipice of hell and shows him the awful consequences of condemnation, and convinces him of his need for a Savior. All of this and much more God graciously does for his elect. And when God has done his work of drawing, the sinner complies by coming. God draws us to Christ and by his drawing we come to Christ. If there is no drawing, there is no coming. And if there is no coming, it shows there was no drawing.

But of one thing I am certain. It is God that brings us to Christ. All the glory goes to him. And in the end all we can say is that we are saved by grace and grace alone.