

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Bread of Life (Part II)

John 6:45-51

May 29, 2005

Verses 43 – 44

- Jesus, knowing their hearts, states, “Do not grumble among yourselves.”
- Jesus, then, states, “No one **can** come to Me...”
 - The word, here, for “can” is the Greek word *dunatai* [dunatai], meaning “power” or “ability”
 - In other words, this passage could be translated, “Do one **has the ability** to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.”
 - It is the same distinction in the English words “can” and “may”
 - A child may ask, “Can I have a cookie” and a mother responds, “I don’t know, **can** you?”
 - The mother, in this case, is asking a question which implies an obvious positive response [“I don’t know, do you have the ability to eat a cookie?”]
 - Whereas, what she is implying is that the proper question is not “*Can* I have a cookie, but rather, ‘**May** I have a cookie?’”
- Some Christians believe that this passage is referring to a “prevenient grace”, a general drawing, compelling, or luring, by the Father [through the assumed means of the Holy Spirit] of all or some of mankind.
 - However, this passage does not allow such an interpretation.
- Actually, John 6:44 lays the foundation for the doctrine known as *Irresistible Grace*

- “The combination of Verse 37 and Verse 44 prove that this ‘drawing’ activity of the Father cannot be reduced to what theologians sometimes call ‘prevenient grace’ dispensed to every individual [or at least to many], for **this ‘drawing’ is selective**, or else the negative note in Verse 44 is meaningless.” D.A. Carson
- The word for “draw” here is the Greek word *helkusa* [el kush] which is translated, most accurately, **drag**.
 - This word occurs eight (8) times in the New Testament: John 6:44; 12:32; 18:10; 21:6; 21:11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; and James 2:6.
 - John 21:6 states, “And He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch.’ They cast therefore, and then they were not able to **haul** it in because of the great number of fish.”
 - John 21:11 states, “Simon Peter went up, and **drew** the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.”
 - Acts 16:19 states, “But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and **dragged** them into the market place before the authorities,”
 - James 2:6 states, “But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not he rich who oppress you and personally **drag** you into court?”
- Theologian David P. Henreckson states:

In the Greek, the verb for “draw” is much stronger than most translations put it. Literally, it means “drags.” Unregenerate man does not want, and in fact hates the things of God. But when God decides to claim someone for His own, that regenerate person all of a sudden wants, and in fact loves the things of God (John 3:5-6).

- The late Baptist theologian and author Arthur Pink writes:

Well, you say, what do you mean by [“draw”]? I mean this, that God had to overcome the resistance of your will, God had to overcome the reluctance of your heart, God had to overcome you loving of pleasure more than [your] loving of God, your love of things of this world more than Christ. I mean that God had to put forth His power and draw you; and if any of you know anything of the Greek...look up that Greek verb for “draw” in John 6:44...It means “use violence.” It means to drag by force. There is not a Greek scholar on earth that can challenge that statement...It is the same Greek word that is used in John 21 when they drew the net to the land full of fishes. They had to pull with all their might, for it was full of fishes. They had to DRAG it. Yes, my friend, and that is how you were brought to Christ. You may not have been conscious of it, you may not have known inside yourself what was taking place, but

every last one of us was a rebel against God, fighting against Christ...and God had to put forth almighty power and overcome that resistance and bring us to our knees; and if any of you object to that strong language, then I am here to tell you, you do not believe in the teaching of this Book on the absolute depravity of man.

Verse 45

- How does the Father “draw” men to Jesus Christ?
- Jesus now answers this question [raised by verse 44].
- “AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.”
 - This is a promise, a [paraphrased] quote from the Old Testament:
 - “All your sons will be taught of the LORD;
And the well-being of your sons will be great.” Isaiah 54:13
 - **What Jesus is stating here is that the prophecy declaring the return of God’s people, Judah, from Babylonian exile in the Old Testament finds its perfect fulfillment in the dawning of the messianic age, when God’s Covenant people SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD through the saving work of Jesus Christ.**
 - “When he [the Father] compels belief, it is not by savage constraint...but by the wonderful wooing of a lover...Otherwise put, it is by an insight, a teaching, an illumination implanted within the individual, in fulfillment of the Old Testament promise, *They will all be taught of God.*” Carson
 - The NATURE of the effectual “drawing” of each individual by the Father to Jesus Christ [through the work of the Holy Spirit] is directly related to the NATURE of WHO GOD is.
 - In other words, God is Spirit, and the “drawing” of the Father is SPIRITUAL (i.e. internal), NOT physical (i.e. external).
 - When many, if not most, Christians read John 6:44, they think in terms of God coercing or luring potential believers to Himself through external factors (i.e. signs and wonders); yet, this is NOT the nature of God, or the nature of the “drawing.”
 - Further, many, if not most, Christians also believe that the doctrine of Irresistible Grace (i.e., the effectual drawing of all believers) is one that offends the free will of man by stating that God drags some believers against their will to Himself [“which He would never do...”].
 - Yet, this too, reveals a great misunderstanding as to the NATURE of the “drawing”

- The NATURE of the Father’s “drawing” is foreshadowed in Ezekiel and Jeremiah:
 - “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”
Ezekiel 36:25-27
 - “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’”
Jeremiah 31:33-34
- The “drawing” of the Father, by the Holy Spirit, begins by the quickening of the dead sinner – by making him or her ALIVE WITH CHRIST - raising him or her to spiritual LIFE from spiritual death (Ephesians 2:5-6).
- Simultaneously, God replaces their “heart of stone” with a “heart of flesh” and puts His “Spirit within” them, writing His law on their hearts (Ezekiel 36:26; Jeremiah 31:33-34).
- It is no coincidence that one of the Holy Spirits primary functions, as stated in Scripture, is **teaching** (See John 14:26; 16:12-15)
- He even gives us the GIFT of FAITH (Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 12:2).
- **Therefore, it becomes even more clear when Peter states, “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23)**
- Regeneration is the “drawing” of the sinner by the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God based on the atoning work of Jesus Christ.
- This is what it truly means to be TAUGHT OF GOD!
- This is what God did for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, “for it is by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

- Notice the SCOPE of Jesus' words here: THEY SHALL **ALL** BE TAUGHT OF GOD
 - Jesus is speaking to Galilean Jews at this time, yet, as will be apparent shortly, ALL here refers to Jews AND Gentiles
- Notice, also, the focus on **HEARING** – faith comes by HEARING, and hearing from the Word of Christ (Romans 10:7).

Verse 46

- This verse is a re-iteration of John 1:18, “No one has seen God [the Father] at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [literally, *exegeted*] Him.”
- Andreas Kostenberger rightly observes, “John 6:44-46 points to the cooperative effort between the Father and the Son in bringing a person to salvation. While salvation is the result of the Father’s drawing work, it is brought about by an individual’s believing reception of God’s revelation in Jesus.”
- Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Father, the mediator of the New Covenant, and by “hearing” Him [Jesus Christ], we are “taught” by the Father.

Verses 47

- Jesus His assertion that he who believes [specifically, in **Jesus Christ**] has eternal life.

Verses 48-50

- Jesus now highlights the imperfection of the manna:
 - “***Your*** fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, ***and they died.***”
 - First of all, Jesus distances himself from the Jews He is speaking with, calling the Jewish fathers, ***your*** fathers.
 - Secondly, the imperfection becomes quite obvious: all of the fathers, even though they ate the manna, died.
 - The manna could sustain *physical* life temporarily, but it could not give eternal life.
 - This further underscores the insufficiency of the Law, the Old Testament sacrificial system, etc. for salvation – these, as well as the manna in the wilderness, were all merely imperfect foreshadows of the perfect which was to come – God’s perfect revelation in His Son Jesus Christ.
- Jesus states that “one may eat of it [the bread from heaven]

Verses 50 – 51

- “This” bread, Jesus states, unlike the bread *your* fathers ate, will give **eternal** life
- Jesus then states that “this” bread is He – *ego eimi*, “I AM the living bread [that came down out of heaven]”
- Jesus concludes: “the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”
- Many see this as a direct reference to the Lord’s Supper.
- This is possibly the case, but it is, likely, not the primary reference.
 - First of all, Jesus speaks of the bread also “which I will give [for the life of the world]”
 - This is a clear reference to Jesus giving up His life voluntarily [and vicariously] so that we might live
 - This also echoes the words of John the Baptist when he stated, in John 1:29, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”
 - “world” here CANNOT mean every individual without exception [else the entire world (without exception) would be saved]
 - Jesus is speaking to Galilean Jews, and the word “world” must mean the entire world, without exception of race (i.e. Jews and Gentiles)
 - Jesus uses the word “flesh” [*sarx, SARX*] as opposed to “body” [*soma, SOMA*]
 - This reminds the astute reader of John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us...”
 - As the incarnate, Logos, the perfect God-man, Jesus has the ability to give life to the world [because He was fully GOD and fully MAN]
 - Jesus can give life to the world because He has **life in Himself** (John 5:26)