

Drawn by the Father

John 6:35-46

January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026

1. We must \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus, the bread of life. (6:35-36)
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ that the Father \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus will come to Him and will not be cast out. (6:37-40)
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ can come to Jesus unless the Father \_\_\_\_\_ him. (6:41-44)
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ who has \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ from the Father comes to Jesus. (6:45-46)
  
5. Common questions about the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 6:35-46

1. Prior to this week's sermon have you wrestled with the doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation (election, predestination, etc.) and man's responsibility? Was this new to you? What has been your experience with this teaching? What questions/objections do you still have?
  
2. What circumstance in vv. 35-36 leads to the teaching in this section? How does that explain why Jesus covers the topics that He does?
  
3. Read the following passages that describe people as "given" by the Father to the Son: John 6:37, 39; 17:2-6
  - a. How are those people described? What is true of them?
  - b. How should it affect you to know that you are a gift from the Father to the Son?
  
4. Why is the phrase "on the last day" repeated four times in John 6 (vv. 39, 40, 44, 54)? How does it fit with the point that Jesus is making in this section?
  
5. What was the objection of the Jews in vv. 41-42? Putting yourself in their shoes, why did that objection make sense? What were they missing?
  
6. How does the person who responds to the gospel experience the drawing of the Father? As you consider your own conversion, in what way were you "drawn" to Jesus? What means did God use?
  - a. How does v. 45 at least partially explain how God draws us?
  
7. If time, consider the following key passages on God's sovereignty in salvation:
  - a. Ephesians 1:1-14

- i. What is the tone of this passage? How should it affect the believer? How is God's role described? How is our response described?
- b. Romans 8:29-30
  - i. What loaded theological terms are used to describe God's work? Discuss any terms you don't understand. Is there anyone who is foreknown and predestined who will not be glorified?

Big idea: God sovereignly elects and draws people who will believe.

Intro

The Bible teaches two truths side by side that people struggle to see how they can both be true:

God is completely sovereign and in control of His universe, including the people within it, such that His will is always and fully accomplished.

Man is responsible for His actions and decisions and will be held accountable by God.

God:

Chose us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4)

Predestined us for adoption (Eph. 1:5)

Work all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11)

And yet man is told:

Rom 10:13 – for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

John 3:16 whoever believes in Him shall not perish,

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

If God is truly sovereign, how can man be responsible for his decisions? Are they actually free or real decisions?

If man is responsible, how can God be truly sovereign?

J.I. Packer in his classic book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, from 1961 describes this as an antinomy.

An antinomy is *an appearance of contradiction* between conclusions which seem equally logical, reasonable, or necessary.

Two truths that sit side by side, seemingly irreconcilable and yet both undeniable.

The Trinity is another antinomy – The Bible teaches there is one God. The Bible teaches that the Father, Son, and Spirit are God and yet distinct persons. How can God be three and yet one? One God and yet Father, Son, and Spirit?

Antinomy between divine sovereignty and human responsibility – God is in control and man is responsible - or between what God does as King and what he does as Judge.

As King, He orders and controls all things, human actions among them, in accordance with his own eternal purpose.

As judge, he holds every man responsible for the choices he makes and course of action he pursues.

Thus, hearers of the gospel are responsible for their reaction; if they reject the good news, they are guilty of unbelief.

Even in the same text at times:

**Luke 22:22** "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"

**Acts 2:23** this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

Man is a responsible moral agent, though he is also divinely controlled; man is divinely controlled, though he is also a responsible moral agent. God's sovereignty is a reality, and man's responsibility is a reality too.

The Creator is incomprehensible to His creatures. A God whom we could understand exhaustively, and whose revelation of Himself confronted us with no mysteries whatsoever, would be a God in man's image, and therefore an imaginary God, not the God of the Bible at all.

**Isaiah 55:8-9** "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Our temptation when we have an antinomy is to soften or deny one part of it to help it make sense in our human minds rather than to accept what scripture teaches.

Some do this by removing God's sovereignty.

Maybe He looks through time and sees who will believe and chooses them? (classic Arminianism)

Maybe God doesn't really know who will believe? (Open theism)

The responsibility in evangelism lies heavily and solely upon us – I need to learn the right words to say, the right persuasive arguments, if they don't come to Christ it's on me.

Others do it by removing man's responsibility.

We truly are just robots.

There is no need to even share the gospel or believe the gospel (hyper-Calvinism)

Perhaps familiar story of William Carey desiring to establish a missionary society to reach the unreached people of India was told, "Sit down, young man. When God is pleased to convert the heathen, he will do it without your help or mine."

Perhaps nowhere in scripture do we see these two truths more happily living side by side than in John 6.

The crowd is invited to come and believe in Him, the bread of life (v. 35) and yet many are not coming and believing.

But we learn in John 6 that those who are given by the Father to the Son will come.

But they cannot come unless the Father draws them.

1. We must come to Jesus, the bread of life. (6:35-36)

- a. This was the ending of our study last week.
- b. To come to Jesus is to believe in Jesus, the two are placed side by side as roughly synonymous thoughts.
- c. In v. 40 this is described as beholding and believing in Him and we are told that everyone who does this will have eternal life.
- d. In v. 47 we are told that he who believes has eternal life.
- e. The invitation to believe is truly extended to all people.
  - i. Come, believe, eat, respond and you can be forgiven for your sins and have eternal life.

- ii. He is THE bread of life, singular – the only source of life
- f. **Romans 10:13** for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."
- g. **Matthew 11:28** "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
- h. And yet, they have seen Him and do not believe (v. 36)
  - i. The opportunity for belief is in v. 35. The responsibility for unbelief is in v. 36.
  - ii. Starts with a strong sense of man's responsibility to come to Christ, to believe in Christ and therefore to be satisfied by Christ.

2. **All** that the Father **gives** Jesus will come to Him and will not be cast out. (6:37-40)

- a. There is a group of people identified as "all that the Father gives Me."
  - i. **John 17:2b** that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.
  - ii. Other passages describe these as "the elect" or "those who are chosen"
    - 1. **Romans 8:33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;
    - 2. **2 Timothy 2:10** For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and with it* eternal glory.
    - 3. **1 Peter 1:1-2** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those ...who are chosen <sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.
- b. Those people *will* come to Jesus (i.e. believe in Jesus)
  - i. Divine choice and human response – given by the Father, they will come
- c. They will not be "cast out"
  - i. Using a negative wording to teach the opposite – like when we say a dinner is "not bad" we mean "it is very good." (called a litotes)
  - ii. They will certainly not be cast out means they will certainly be kept, they will never be driven away, they will be secure.
- d. How can we know this is certain?
  - i. Because Jesus came down from heaven to do the Father's will. (v. 38)
  - ii. And the Father's will is that of all that He has been given, He lose nothing (v. 39)
    - 1. Of those in the group that are given to the Son, none will be lost
  - iii. They will be kept until the very day of their resurrection (vv. 39, 40, 44, 54)
    - 1. Why the repeated emphasis that He will raise them on the last day?
    - 2. Emphasis on preservation until the end, save until the end, not get lost along the way
    - 3. Of those in the group that are given to the Son, none will be lost
    - 4. Through your early days as a new Christian, during struggles with doubt, in old age when your body fades, on your death bed, when you're with the Lord in the intermediate heaven awaiting a new earth and a new body, until the last day when

He raises you up and you stand with new feet on the new earth and every trace of the curse is gone...Jesus will hold you fast and you will not be lost.

5. Carson – the obedience of the Son v. 38 stands behind the assurance that those whom the father has given to the son will be preserved to the end, and will be resurrected on the last day. In other words, if any of them failed to achieve this goal, it would be the son's everlasting shame – it would mean either he was incapable or disobedient – both are unthinkable.
6. I performed a wedding once where the ring was lost by the ring bearer before he made it down the aisle (it was later found). That was a dramatic moment. You won't fall through Jesus' fingers. There isn't a hole in His pocket. You can't sin your way out or doubt your way out.
7. Your salvation is secure if you are saved because you are kept by Jesus.

3. **No one** can come to Jesus unless the Father **draws** him. (6:41-44)

- a. Some of the Jews were grumbling because they said, "He's just a guy, just a man."
  - i. This is taking place near the Sea of Galilee, near where He is from in Nazareth
  - ii. Jesus warns them about such grumbling.
- b. The negative counterpoint to v. 37a – all the Father gives will come, but no one can come unless drawn.
  - i. No one ever believes in Jesus without the Father's intervention.
  - ii. Used of the disciples drawing a net back into the boat in John 21 or of the people dragging Paul out of the temple in Acts 21
  - iii. Proves this cannot be a universal drawing (prevenient grace) in which all people are equally drawn, or else the two verses together would be meaningless.
- c. Why must the Father draw people if they are to come?
  - i. Total depravity – pervasive depravity – sin has invaded and affected every part of us, such that we cannot and will not come to God on our own.
  - ii. **1 Corinthians 2:14** But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.
  - iii. **Romans 3:11** THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

4. **Everyone** who has **heard** and **learned** from the Father comes to Jesus. (6:45-46)

- a. This explains more about the Father's work of drawing.
  - i. It's not a mere mechanical switch that is flipped on.
  - ii. He uses the Word of God, He uses the gospel message, He opens eyes to the truth of it.
  - iii. **Romans 10:13-14** for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." <sup>14</sup> How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?
  - iv. Josiah Grauman, The way He draws is not by opposing our will but by the tender illumination of the Spirit.
  - v. They are taught by God – the Spirit of God uses the word of God.

- vi. The person who comes to God comes because they want to. Why do they want to? Because He has drawn them, taught them. We begin to hunger for what only He can satisfy.
- vii. That's why from a human perspective it feels like it's my choice – I come to Christ because I want to come to Christ. I believe in Christ because I'm persuaded that He is real and true and good and sufficient and satisfies my spiritual hunger.
  - 1. Jesus tells us that we come because we're drawn. We desire because we're drawn. We don't feel forced or coerced. We're making the decision with our own will.
- b. V. 46 is not just an unrelated disclaimer that no one has seen the Father.
  - i. V. 45 can't mean it is a personal revelation of God apart from Jesus.
  - ii. Jesus is the mediator of our knowledge about God.

5. Common questions about the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility

- a. Doesn't this make people into robots without real choice?
  - i. No, that would be to stretch the antinomy.
  - ii. We are described as real people making real choices with real consequences.
  - iii. But we do make genuine decisions consistent with our desires. No one makes completely "free" decisions. They always choose consistent with their desires. God so works within us, our circumstances, and our hearts that we voluntarily choose Him.
  - iv. No one will be in the position of wanting to be saved but being denied because they were not chosen.
- b. Won't this take away the need to share the gospel or at least the urgency of evangelism?
  - i. God has given us a responsibility to share the gospel, it's a matter of faithfulness.
  - ii. God has given us the privilege of sharing the gospel, it's a matter of participation. He uses the means of our conversations, interactions, invitations, questions, even as there is an inner work of "drawing" that we cannot do.
  - iii. We can't say, "this person isn't elect so it will do no good to share the gospel with them." We don't know that! There isn't a big "E" on their forehead. Only in the hindsight of eternity can we know. God knows, but that isn't something He has told us.
  - iv. **Luke 13:3** "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.
    - 1. We can say this with urgency.
  - v. Alister Begg: It is only an implicit belief in the sovereignty of God that gives us any hope in evangelism. You see, because evangelism is a hopeless task, engaged in on a purely human level. If evangelism is "Go out and convert the world by your own ability to rationalize," if evangelism is "Go out and, by your psychological, persuasive powers, bring in the redeemed," then it's futility.
    - 1. **2 Timothy 2:10** For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and* with *it* eternal glory.
- c. Why doesn't God just choose to save everyone?
  - i. Partly this falls within Deut. 29:29 – the secret things belong to God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children. We don't know. We're not God. His ways are not our ways.
  - ii. Partly it's explained in Romans 9:22-23

1. **Romans 9:22-23** What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup> And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,
2. Somehow it shows His glory, His nature, His patience, His justice, His kindness

- iii. We must be careful in assuming we are more compassionate than God, more just than God, more loving than God, more knowledgeable about what is best and right. We trust the character of God.

6. Conclusion
  - a. I remember exactly where I was when someone brought up this idea of God choosing. I was on the side of a river in Alaska and I was 18 years old. I had been a Christian for two years. It was summer so the sun was still up and we were fishing at like 1:00 AM. My fishing line was tangled and as I worked on it, another college student said, “Do you think our salvation starts with God choosing us or us choosing God?” I said, “absolutely it starts with us.” His response was gentle and not argumentative but he asked, “so what do you do with all the passages that talk about God choosing/electing?”
  - b. I didn’t do anything with those passages! I didn’t have a category for them. But after he pointed it out, I couldn’t help but notice them throughout scripture.
    - i. Like when you never notice a certain type of car, and then you buy one, and you see them everywhere. They were already there; you just didn’t notice them.
    - ii. Launched me on a journey of trying to figure out how this works together. How can God choose? Is that fair? What does that mean?
    - iii. I went from not believing it.
    - iv. To believing it but not liking it.
    - v. To believing it and finding great comfort in it.
      1. Everything God does is good and wise and loving. If I see this so clearly taught in the Bible, I must conclude it is true. And if true, it must be good.
      2. The promises in John 6 are good – If you have trusted in Christ, God had already set His adopting love on you before you were even made. He drew you by the Spirit. He opened blind eyes and softened a hard heart.

# Drawn by the Father

## John 6:35-46

HUNGRY NO MORE

John 6:1-35

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Man is responsible

J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

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