

THE GOSPEL OF BELIEF - Studies in John's Gospel - Part twenty-six

Sunday, October 6th, 2013, 10 a.m. - Teaching #1677

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“ALL THAT THE FATHER GIVES ME WILL COME TO ME”

John 6:35-46 - “Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. [36] But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. [37] All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. [40] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” [41] So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” [42] They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” [43] Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. [44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [45] It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— [46] not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.”

When you preach through a whole book of the Bible you have to take what comes in the text. These are some of the more difficult and controversial verses in the whole New Testament. While theologians debate them they are almost never carefully analyzed in any church setting. The entire march of the history of the church has, sadly, squabbled over the theology of these words of Jesus. Most people who attend Cedarview regularly will know where I stand, hopefully quite humbly.

The issue revolves around two statements, one in **verse 36** and the other in **verse 40**. In the first Jesus tells His listeners that, even though they have **seen** Him, they haven't **believed** in Him. In the second He says it's the Father's will that the one who **looks** on the Son and **believes** in him should have eternal life and be raised up on the last day when Jesus comes again. I want to talk more about this because it's Jesus' reference to the resurrection that **defines** what He means about **not losing** any that the Father gives Him.

So there are people who look at the Son and **don't** believe and there are people who look at the Son and **do**. And the question of the ages is **how do we account for this difference?** And for virtually everyone, the answer is found in **verses 37-40** - “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. [40] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

I have no issue with those verses. I embrace them as God's final, revealed Word. To my mind there is absolutely no question but that the Father is the One who initiates all coming to the Son. By that I mean no one **would** and no one **could** come to the Son of his or her own initiative. That's a non-negotiable starting point for me.

But more still needs to be said. The questions we need to look into this morning are **who** are these people the Father gives. Are they just a **randomly selected** group? And **how** does the Father give this group of people to the Son? **When** does He give them and what is **involved** in this process of giving? And what does Jesus mean about not **losing** any of them? Are we just left to guess these answer? Are there any important clues in the Scriptures - and especially **in the context of our present text?** That's the theme of this important teaching.

1) **WE KNOW FROM OUR TEXT THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO KNOW ABOUT JESUS WITHOUT BELIEVING IN JESUS**

We know this from **verses 35-36** - “Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. [36] But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.”

We know from **verse 35** that **coming** to Jesus and **believing** in Jesus are the same thing. Both those terms are

used to describe a **thirst-quenching** relationship with Jesus that brings redemption and eternal life.

And we know from **verse 36** that some people **see**, or **hear**, or **read about**, or **know about** Jesus who don't **receive Jesus Christ as Lord in a saving sense**. They have **acquaintance** with Jesus superficially but their commitment to Jesus isn't **adequate or accepted from Jesus' perspective**.

This first point should receive careful attention from all of us. That our Lord Himself makes the distinction between those who **know about Him** and those who **put committed trust in Him** should be a call to deep, honest examination. We sense immediately our **accountability** for the devotion we give to Jesus Christ. While we don't **initiate** saving faith, our **lack of it** is treated as our responsibility.

2) WE NEED TO FIT THE DOCTRINES WE FORM FROM JOHN'S INDIVIDUAL VERSES INTO THE TEACHING OF THE REST OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

This is important because when John writes of this deficient kind of acquaintance with Jesus in other chapters he gives us additional information about the **cause** of it that he **doesn't** include in our text in **John chapter 6**. In other words, not all texts treat all subjects with the same amount of detail.

Consider **John 5:37-47** - "**And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, [38] and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. [39] You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, [40] yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. [41] I do not receive glory from people. [42] But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. [43] I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. [44] How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? [45] Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. [46] If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. [47] But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?**"

Quickly, here we have the same situation as our **John 6** text. Here are people who **know about** Jesus but don't **believe** in any saving way in Him. That much is the same as our John six text. But in this account Jesus expands more on the **reason** these people can't believe - "**How can you believe... (5:44)**. And the reason they can't believe, so says Jesus, is they choose to **"set their hope"** on Moses rather than Christ, the Messiah - "**There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope**"(45).

And then comes the most important point of all for our present discussion. Jesus immediately goes on to tell these **unbelievers** that they had another option. They **could** have known truly and deeply who Jesus was. Please notice carefully what Jesus says in the very next verse - **verse 46** - "**If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.**"

There is no escaping Jesus' logic. "You did **this**. But **if you had done that** it all would have been so different. In fact, you - who presently **don't** believe me - **would** believe me!"

Now we have to think. We have to put some things together. Clearly, in the terminology of our **John 6** text, these **unbelievers hadn't** been given to the Son by the Father. We know that because our **John 6** text (especially **verse 37**) is so clear in stating that if they **had** been given to the Son by the Father they **wouldn't be unbelievers**. They'd be **believers**.

But what if these people in **John chapter 5 had** truly listened to and believed Moses? Fortunately, we don't have to guess about the answer to that question because Jesus answers it for us. Jesus tells us that if these unbelievers had **chosen to really listen and believe** Moses - if they had responded to the lesser revelation God had given in Moses - then they **would** have placed their trust in Jesus too - **John 5:46** - "**If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.**"

Remember, Jesus holds it out as a genuine possibility that they **could have received Moses in a correct way and been drawn into belief in Jesus Christ**. If that isn't true then **John 5:46** is nonsense.

But take it a step farther. If they **had** listened to Moses and then believed in Jesus the Messiah would they or would

they not be a part of that group the Father gives to the Son in **John 6:37** - "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."?

And if we all say "**Yes, they would have been given by the Father to the Son,**" then we've moved closer to answering our opening questions: **who** are those given by the Father to the Son, and also **how** are they given. Those given are the ones who open up to the gracious drawing from the Father in earlier revelations of truth so they are led to the fulness of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ.

Or, in the teaching of John chapter 5, those given by the Father are those who **receive** rather than **twist** and **reject** God's revelation in His Word and through the prophets like **Moses** (who Jesus specifically mentions in **5:45-47**). And when they yield to God's first approaches of grace, through the truth of the Scriptures in prophets like Moses and others) God gives them **more** truth regarding His Son.

In other words, it is all God's initiative and all their response. It is all of God's grace and none of their works. Receiving divine light brings more light. **That's** how the Father gives these people to the Son.

3) **IN MUCH LESS DETAIL, OUR TEXT IN JOHN CHAPTER 6 LEADS IN THE SAME DIRECTION REGARDING HOW THE FATHER GIVES BELIEVERS TO THE SON**

John 6:40-45 - "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." [41] So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." [42] They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" [43] Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. [44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [45] It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me...."

There are so many important insights tied in with these verses:

- a) ***We learn people minimize the supernatural saving work of Jesus by seeing Him as only earthly in nature and ministry.*** Think about this. These people rejected Jesus' claim as Messiah - **even after seeing him multiply the loaves and heal the dying** - because they knew His earthly parents.

That meant, in their eyes, Jesus was a good man and a Jewish Rabbi, but nothing more. This is still the route to willful blindness regarding Jesus Christ, God the Son.

- b) ***We learn God uses unfolding layers of revealed truth to draw people to embrace the Son in saving belief.*** This is the most important point. I'm laboring to show that if the **whole text** in John six is taken together it yields a consistent message with John five.

In John five Jesus clearly states the people rejected Him because they hadn't given welcome to Moses, who was God's prophet, pointing to Christ. Then Jesus clearly states if only they had **believed** Moses they **would have** believed Him.

Now, after introducing the idea of the Father giving a group of people to the Son and these "given" people believing, Jesus **again** dials back in time to the message of the prophets. He points to the same reason in our chapter six text as He did in John 5. He points specifically to a group of people rejecting Him as Messiah and goes right to the source of their trouble:

John 6:44-45 - "**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [45] It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me....**"

Please notice the way Jesus links the **drawing work of the Father** with people **listening to the prophets**. That's the interpretive key. Yes, God initiates. Yes, God draws. And yes, those whom He draws come to the Son. All of that is true. But there's more detail given. The **way** the Father draws - at least according to Jesus, who ought to know - is by **revealing truth in unfolding, progressing layers**.

So just like those John 5 people needed to hear Moses, and these John 6 people needed to listen to the prophets, and you and I need to hear His Word, and pay attention to that lesson or sermon or witnessing friend, Jesus pleads for people to **respond to the Father's drawing**.

“O, but pastor Don, people **can't** respond to revealed truth. They're dead in trespasses and sin. And dead people can't receive truth.”

Listen, I **believe** that. I **know** people can't, **on their own** even respond to divine truth. But God hasn't left us **on our own** to respond to Him. Remember this as we come to the Lord's Table. Everything is different since Jesus came and died and rose from the grave. His redemptive work is a **game changer** for everyone who has ever drawn breath. He **knows** we are blind and dead to His redeeming work. But He's done something **in His own mighty, sovereign, initiative** when we couldn't help ourselves. And our present writer, John, has already given us insight into this:

John 1:8-9 - “He (John the Baptist) **was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. [9]** **The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.**”

John teaches exactly what Paul teaches in **Romans 5:12-21**. There is **universal, prevenient, resistible grace** through Jesus Christ to enable response to further revelations of grace. We can hear. We can understand. We can accept. We can refuse. When we **receive** it's all due to God's grace. When we refuse, we blameable.

The **who**, the **how** and the **when** of the Father's giving to the Son all need to be kept in view. And let's all follow God's initiating grace with humble, teachable hearts.

- c) ***None who have placed faith in Jesus Christ in this life will ever be lost to the power of death.*** This is a wonderful truth to take home from church.

John 6:39-40 - “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. [40] For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Jesus mentions His power to raise up those who trust in Him **three times** in our text. And He does so for a great reason. Jesus doesn't just save for **this earthly life**. He doesn't **lose** anyone to the forces of decay and death.

It looks like it. We only see people making commitments to Christ on **this** side of the grave. Then everything slips from our sight. But Jesus doesn't **lose** them just because we can't see them.

My father's decaying body will obey the command of Jesus to come out of the grave. Your departed, decaying loved ones who died in spite of all their faith in Christ will obey the command of Jesus and come out of the grave. Jesus doesn't **lose** a single one. We have a hope that is eternal in the most literal sense of the word.