

Divine Illumination
John 6:45-47

We looked at the beginning of this paragraph last time that is in a larger section where Jesus is teaching the crowd that has followed him from the wilderness. He has said that salvation is found in him and in him alone, and that God sovereignly controls who will ultimately come to Christ. We see the Jews object and grumble in verse 41. Isn't this Joseph's son? What is all this talk about him being bread from heaven? They had gotten the message, but they didn't like it. And when it says the "Jews" here he is not talking about the crowds but this is the religious leaders that are standing against all that Jesus has said. Here we see a stubborn and unbelieving heart.

Jesus tells them to stop grumbling, and then look at what he says in verse 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."** The religious leaders thought they had the power of eternal life, but it is not in their power but God. And he speaks of their rejection and the reason for their rejection. None can come to Christ on their own. Their wills are subject to their sinful nature that freely rejects Christ. But the Father will draw some to Christ, and the ones he draws will come, and delight in coming. And the promise here is that he will raise them up on the last day. It is an incredible truth and promise. With all the debate about the bondage or the ability of humanity, we should see what is said so clearly by the words of Christ in this passage of Scripture. No one means no one. Salvation is all of grace.

One of the things that happens when we deny or downplay or water down the significance of what is written in Scripture about God's sovereign and effective grace in the heart of the believer is that it has a domino effect in other areas of our life. If his grace is only partially effective in salvation then I need to count on self rather than God. God becomes someone I do things for, but not rely on. I heard one person say recently, that "God has a plan for your life, but the devil also has a plan for your life. You have to decide what plan you have to follow." And we are all culpable for the decisions that we make. But we are weak and feeble, and it is only seeing and savouring all that God is for us in Jesus Christ that we can make any advances in our Christian life. If you think that it is all up to you, then in all the challenges, struggles with sin and in other areas of our life - God is for us - will not be that glorious a truth, and will not be the fuel to trust him that change is possible in our lives.

So I want to continue through this passage and see that Jesus explains how God the Father draws individuals to himself, and as we see the greatness of that work, we begin not only to praise him and boast in him, but we begin to trust in Him no matter what what we are going through. There are times where you will feel helpless and weak and you need to see the wonderful work of God already in your life. There are times where you will feel strong, and that you can overcome whatever comes your way. And in those times you need to see the delusion of your own strength. You need to see without the Lord's work - there go as I lost in sin and lost to the ways of the world. The truths of the sovereign work of God change us. A church that preaches on the severity of sin and the utter inability of man, and the sovereignty of God have members that have a greater love for God, a greater devotion and confidence in him. God is so much greater and more necessary in our lives. And I want to expand our

minds and our hearts with how great that work, and how effective that work is so that we will trust in him even further. So let us look at the explanation that Jesus gives and then the challenge at the end. And let us seek to expand not only our delight and worship of our great and sovereign God but our trust in Him.

1. We need to see Jesus' explanation of his drawing. Vv. 45-46.

Part of the problem from our side in seeing the effectiveness of the drawing of God is that it seems so natural to believe on God. When the gospel is preached it struck a cord with us and we want to come to him. No one is forcing us but we want to come willingly. He works on our hearts so much that we see the reality of what our sin and the cost and that the only answer is Christ. And we really do believe on Christ. We really do trust him, and there really is a love and reliance on him. Without the revelation of God we would come to the conclusion that we really were not that bad or as the Scriptures says dead in trespasses and sins, and we would not see how extraordinary the work of God is, and without that work of his sovereign grace, none would ever come to him. And without realizing that, we wouldn't realize that all the glory goes to him in our salvation. Salvation by grace means glory to God in the highest!

So look at what Jesus says here in verse 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."** This is a quote that is taken from Isaiah 54:13 and is talking about God giving the true knowledge that is lacking in order that they might have his salvation. And what is needed is for individuals to be taught by God, in other words, make that teaching absolutely effective in the hearts of individuals. It is an internal illumination, and we use that term so often to speak of what God does internally. It is just as if a light comes on. Henry Thiessen explains, **"The one who inspired men in the writing of Scripture, illumines the minds of those who read it. Because sin and the darkened understanding brought about because of sin, no one can understand Scripture properly . . . But the Spirit can enlighten the mind of the believer to understand the Scriptures."**

And this is so clearly taught in both Testaments. You see it in what is known as the New Covenant in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 31:33-34 says, **"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."** And it sounds like what God has done for us in Christ. And of course every time we celebrate the Lord's Table we hear those words from 1Cor. 11:25, **"In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"** When Peter makes his profession of faith that Jesus is the Christ - the Son of God, Jesus says in Matt. 16:17, **"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."**

And look at the outcome of this teaching from the Father, **“Everyone who has learned from the Father comes to me.”** Here God puts this teaching in the heart of individuals and the outcome is belief in Jesus Christ. If you have been taught by the Father then you will come to Christ. So this should encourage your heart. God used one of his servants or many of his servants to preach the gospel to you, but it was God the Father through the Holy Spirit who took that truth and made it real, living and active. Sometimes people will talk about how they heard the preaching of the gospel all of their lives. They could tell you the Romans road gospel. But it was just like an inner light went on. It is not that they had new knowledge but they saw the significance that this gospel was for them. And Jesus was the only way. The message came with such authority. There is new life. As Jesus says one is born again. And evidence that this work has gone on is that we believe on Jesus Christ. So encourage your heart that the reason why you are here, and listening and believing and following is because of God’s effective work in your heart to cause you to believe on the Son.

There is something else that needs to be said before we go, and that is the work of God the Father, his imprinting the truth into our lives is also seen by believing on him. And the reason why I point that out is a couple of years ago, I read an article in a popular Christian magazine where the chief theologian wrote that we should not discount that many Muslim people have come to God, and are under the blood of Christ even though they have not believed in him. They have faith in God. Right here, the work of God is seen in one way and one way only and that is believing on the Son. They have come to the Son. That is the whole point of Jewish unbelief in this section is they do not have God the Father because if they did they would have believed and followed the Son. That is what it means to come to the Son. They are not taught by God. Listen again what Jesus says in John 5:37-38, **“And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.”** His word is not living and active and abiding in them because they have not believed Christ. John Calvin said, **“From this it follows that none of God’s elect shall be outside the faith of Christ . . . The only wisdom that all the elect learn in the school of God is to come to Christ.”** What confidence this should give us in the entirety of our Christian lives, and in our trust in God.

Now look at verse 46 because it seems in many ways a statement out of place, **“not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.”** Now why does he say these words, because he has just taught the need of being taught by the Father in order to see the truth about Christ and to believe on Christ. Without this work of drawing no one comes to Christ. There are two thoughts that really belong together here. One is that this statement protects us from misapplying verse 45 to mean that what I need is some mystical or direct or personal word from the Father. No human teacher is needed. It is amazing how throughout Christianity today so many claim either to have direct communication from God or have seen God. Right here, it should be obvious that no one has. So we have no knowledge apart from God’s revelation that he gives in his word. That is why the Spirit illumines the Scripture. They are the voice of God. Believers know and love the Scriptures. We never doubt the Word of God is the Word of God.

The other thing that this statement teaches is the religious leaders claim that they are taught by God, but if Jesus is the only one who has seen God and has access to God then to reject him, is to reject the Father and being taught by the Father. We are only truly taught by the Father when we hear Christ. And when we hear Christ we are taught by the Father.

And I don't think we marvel enough at this truth. You look at all the hatred and hostility in the world today that is directed at Jesus Christ or historic Christianity. You can see it in the political realm, the entertainment sector or the education system, and there are those who are so hostile to the message. There are others that mock Christians and their love for Christ. And there is some who could care less as long as you do not shove Jesus down their throats. Yet we could not imagine life without him. Are we brighter, or smarter or just more logical? And the answer is no. It is the work of God where he can take weak, and foolish and nothings like you and me, and cause us to believe, cause us to revel in Christ. It is as Paul says in 1Cor. 1:22-24, "**For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**" Why is he wisdom and not a stumbling block or foolishness? "To those who are called." Seeing this work of God in your life will not only cause you to revel and celebrate and worship and adore him, but cause you to trust in him and his grace that he can do so much more with our lives. Yes, we are weak, but he is strong! His grace has changed us and will change us.

2. The principle stated. V. 47.

This is an interesting verse because the main message is not an invitation to come to Christ and you will have everlasting life. This is the way it is used by many. And the principle is taught in other portions of Scripture. If you believe you will be saved. If you place your faith in Jesus Christ you will have everlasting life. In fact, we call that the general call of the gospel. And it is a legitimate call to all with a legitimate promise. The problem is that no person who has ever come on their own. He does not and will not come until God in his grace gives that individual a new heart.

And you have to read this verse in context. The context is that no one can come to Christ unless they have been drawn by the Father. And he has defined drawing as having heard and learned from the Father. And certainly we need eyes that will see these truths, and ears that will hear them, and a heart that will respond. So look at what Jesus says here, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.**" This is one of these critical teachings of Jesus here. Christ wants us to pay attention to what he is saying, and what he is saying is not that the sinner believing is the cause of divine life or everlasting life, rather the believing is the effect or the outcome. The fact that a person believes is evidence that he has divine life. Notice Jesus says he already has eternal life. It is clear from this text that new life precedes faith. Both are instantaneous. A new born baby cries the instant he or she is born. But the crying comes as a result of the birth. Our faith in Christ is the new heart's first cry.

God granting new life and faith in Christ are instantaneous. But one precedes the other. And maybe you have a problem with thinking how can both be instantaneous

and yet one come before the other. John Piper has an excellent illustration of fire and heat. You cannot have fire without heat, they are both instantaneous. **“If you have a hard time thinking of one thing causing another thing if they are simultaneous, think of fire and light. The instant there is fire, there is heat. The instant there is fire, there is light. But we would not say that the heat caused the fire, or the light caused the fire. We say that the fire caused the heat and the light.”** God’s action is underneath our action. He commands us to believe, but the reason why we are able to exercise saving faith is that he regenerates us. Our faith is crucial in that no one is saved without exercising or placing their trust in Jesus Christ alone, but it is not ultimate. It is not the cause - God is.

So let me bring out four conclusions from this text and teaching of Jesus about salvation. One is in order to be saved you have to see your sin and place your trust in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ. He is light and life. Look at verse 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.”** Life, eternal life is found in Jesus Christ - you must believe on him. The second conclusion that we can reach about salvation in this section is that if left to ourselves none will come to Jesus Christ. There is no hope for dead sinners. Look at verse 44 again, **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”** No one again means no one. Left to ourselves, none of us would ever choose Christ. We would choose our own way and our sin over the glorious and big promises of Christ. Dead people cannot respond to a living Saviour. The third conclusion that we can reach is that God is the decisive reason why any of us come to him. Without his grace and mercy, and effective work in our hearts to give life none come to him. He is the decisive cause of us coming to Christ. Look at verse 37, **“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”** There are those who are given by the Father, and therefore because of the Father effectively drawing them to Christ they do come. Without this work of God there is no salvation. There is no other way that you can interpret this passage of Scripture. And the fourth conclusion that we can reach in this passage is that when God gives us a new heart and we believe on Christ nothing remains untouched in our lives. There is this radical change in direction. Verse 37 says again, we will “come” to Christ. There is this change that effects every aspect of our lives.

So there are two challenges that I leave you with. If you have never believed then it is now time to repent. God has made a way to be righteous in his sight through Jesus Christ. See your sin, and then come and believe on Christ. After coming to him, he will never cast you out. And for those who are believers, humble yourselves under these great truths. Recognize what God has done in your life. It is so easy to forget who we are and what God has done, and realize that his grace, not my circumstances is sovereign, and he really is the lover of my soul. Grow in seeing his work, his loving and saving work, and grow in trust him.