

**“Unless The Father Draws Him”**  
**John 6:41-48**

**March 15, 2015**

**INTRO:** I know a minister, a man my age, who, when he was in his 30s, was called as the pastor of a large, historic, prestigious Presbyterian church in a certain Southern city.

He was a young man following an older pastor who had been there for decades.

That’s usually a very tough gig.

But he was a very talented young man.

A gifted preacher with a sharp mind and impressive academic credentials.

Furthermore, he had a strong personality just like the previous pastor.

And that pleased the Session.

Because, as is typical of older, wealthy, socially-well connected churches, many of the elders were strong Type A personalities themselves.

They respected a man who could hold his own.

They were successful men who expected success.

He was like them, so they were all behind him and believed he was going to carry the church into a new chapter of growth.

Their optimism set the tone for the church.

Everyone was pulling for this talented, forceful young preacher.

And then, after he had been there for only a short time, he announced one Sunday morning a new sermon series.

We are going to examine, he said, and bring God’s Word to bear on the shameful racist history of this congregation.

It was a bombshell. His support evaporated overnight.

And by the end of his first year, he was gone.

Now, I tell that story not to debate the wisdom of what he did— but simply to give you a feeling for what it must have been when Jesus preached this sermon that is recorded for us in John chapter six.

This message scholars call the Bread of Life Discourse.

Just before this message, everybody loved Jesus.

He had performed a great miracle, the feeding of the 5,000.

That excited the crowds so much, they wanted to make him king.

The reason specifically told 5,000 men in that crowd, women and children not

counted, is to make the point that this was the equivalent of a Roman Legion. In other words, these people were so optimistic and positive about Jesus, that they were ready to follow him into battle to regain Israel's independence. But then Jesus started preaching, and he began to explain the miracle. He didn't tell them at all what they expected to hear. He didn't talk about Israel's independence or political matters. He didn't even say he was a teacher with a new message from God.

He said:

I am the bread of life that has come down from heaven.  
If you come to me, you will never be hungry. If you believe in me, you will never be thirsty. Just like you ate the bread I gave you, you must take me into your life completely. Later on in the sermon, he stated it even more graphically—  
Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. In other words, I require you to accept me completely, trust me fully, follow me unconditionally as the Son of God sent from heaven—and only then, will you have life. There is no other way.

It was a bombshell. John tells us in the middle of the sermon, the Jews interrupted. They began to grumble. How can he say this? Who does he think he is? It wasn't that they didn't get it. They got it, but they didn't like it. Not one bit. And then, in answer to their grumbling, Jesus dropped another bombshell. He said:  
Stop grumbling among yourselves.  
No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

You're never going to believe in me, you can't, you're incapable of belief, unless the Father draws you to me, so stop grumbling, not going to help. In John 15:16, Jesus says it again. "You did not choose me, but I chose you."  
You would not seek me or choose me unless God first chose you and opened your mind and heart to the beauty and truth you are repressing and resisting. You aren't chosen because you believe, you believe because you are chosen.

The first bombshell—Jesus is the only way to God.

The second—you can't even come to Jesus, unless God draws you to him. That's what we're going to look at this morning, this teaching of Jesus that you aren't chosen because believe, believe because chosen.

Three points: 1. It's hardness, 2. It's sweetness, 3. It's practicality.

Credit to Dr. Tim Keller for a sermon on this passage.

## **MP#1 The hardness of this teaching**

I want you to think of this teaching of Jesus as a piece of candy.

The outside is hard, but the inside is incredibly sweet.

That's the way most people experience it.

When they first come upon it, they find it very hard. Might not even like it. But if you are willing to stick with it, and get through the hard shell, there is wonderful sweetness in the center.

There are two reasons most people find this teaching of Christ hard.

The first reason is that if this is true, if this is what Jesus really says, then it must mean we don't have any free will. And I believe in free will. But Jesus is not saying we don't have free will.

The Bible clearly teaches that people are free to do what they want to do.

And that's the problem. What do all human beings naturally want to do? We want to stay as far away from God and Jesus as possible.

Imagine that for the next 100 meals, you are presented with two choices.

Two dishes, one on the right and one on the left.

The dish on the right is steak and a piece of cake.

The dish on the left is raw, bloody monkey brains, covered with flies.

How many times will you choose the dish on the left? Never. You never will.

And if somebody asked you why, you would say, I can't!

Let's get a little philosophical. What do you mean by, I can't.

You're not saying that you lack free will.

No. You are free to choose which ever dish you want.

Nobody is holding a gun to your head.

What you mean by "I can't" is that you can't want it.

It's not that you can't actually eat it, but you can't want it, you're disgusted by it. Is it a lack of free will that you will never, never, never ever choose the left dish?

No. It's a lack of desire.

Jesus and rest of Bible says this is the condition of every human heart.

When unregenerate people encounter the real God, not a made up god of their imaginations, but the real God, the holy God, the majestic God of Scripture, and when they encounter his Son, the God Man Jesus Christ—repulsed by him. Because they sense rightly that the real God demands absolute control,

absolute trust and submission and obedience and that threatens them—  
It threatens their control and autonomy and happiness.  
When they look at Jesus, they don't see the bread of life, they see something vile.  
They are repulsed by the thought of God taking over their life,  
and by Jesus being the only way to God and eternal life.  
The only way that desire is changed is divine intervention.

So that's one perplexing question about this teaching.

But another one, maybe a bigger one is that it seems unfair.  
If God chooses people, and if he doesn't choose you because you believe,  
but you believe because you are chosen—  
then it's clear God doesn't choose everyone, because not everyone believes.  
And that doesn't seem fair.

This is hard. And for some people it's an insurmountable obstacle.

They never get through it to the sweetness on the inside.  
There are a number of ways to get at this, none of them airtight,  
but one that is helpful to me is to humbly recognize that I know so little about  
how God does his choosing, that I am in no position to judge him.

At the end of the Gospel of John, Jesus is on the shore of Galilee with his disciples.

And he pulls Peter aside and he tells him God's plan for the end of Peter's life.  
He tells him what God has predestined for him to experience.  
Right about then John walks by, and Peter says to Jesus, What about him?  
What about him, Lord, what does God have in store for him.  
And Jesus looks at Peter and says: What is that to you? You follow me.  
Don't worry about what God has planned for other people.  
I've told you something very rare, God's plan for your life.  
Don't spoil that by worrying and being bothered by his plans for other people.  
Are you going to judge God for the plans he has for his creatures?

That's why lots of people never get to the sweetness of this teaching.

Because instead of being amazed that God has chosen me,  
and softened my heart to Jesus, and given me the gift of faith—  
I get bothered by what I think are the implications of this for other people.  
“What is that to you?”

The Lord Jesus has revealed to you something mysterious and amazing about

the very origins of the spiritual life within you.  
That you were not chosen because you believed in him,  
but that you believed in Jesus because God the Father chose you.  
That brings us to the second point . . .

## **MP#2 The sweetness of this teaching**

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

This shows us that God is a God of grace and beauty.

Grace—No one can come.

There is nothing in you that gets you to him. It's purely his grace.

Charles Spurgeon, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist preacher,  
described how this grace dawned on him. It's a famous passage in autobiography.

Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant...  
When I was coming to Christ, (he became a Christian at age 16), I thought I was doing it all  
myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not  
think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I  
received those truths into my soul—when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart  
as with a hot iron . . .

One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the  
preacher's sermon . . . The thought struck me, '*How did you come to be a Christian?*' I sought  
the Lord. '*But how did you come to seek the Lord?*' The truth flashed across my mind in a  
moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my  
mind to *make me* seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, *How came I to pray?*  
I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. *How came I to read the Scriptures?* I did read  
them, but what led me to do so?

Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my  
faith, and so the whole doctrine opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to  
this day, and I desire to make it my constant confession, 'I ascribe my change wholly to God.'

Do you understand the essence of the question Spurgeon asked himself?

Why did I become a Christian? Lots of people don't. So why did I?

Because I believed and repented? Why did you believe and repent?

Because I prayed to the Lord? Why did you pray to him?

Because I read the Bible? Why did you read the Bible?

He kept pushing question back till came to answer: Because God sought me.

This is not the only place the Bible says this.

Romans 10:20

I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.

John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit.

Not, I saw the fruit you would one day bear and chose you for that reason.

Acts 16:14 The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message.

Not, because Lydia responded to Paul's message, the Lord opened her heart.

Acts 13:48 Gentiles heard Paul's message and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Not, those who believed were appointed for eternal life.

If I'm chosen because I believe, then there must be something special in me that brought the grace of God to me. And if I lose that thing, then I lose grace.

But if I believe because I've been chosen, that means the love of Christ came into my life because of God's prior decision—so it can't be lost. I'm absolutely secure.

And if I'm chosen because I believe, that means I'm a little better, a little wiser, a little humbler than those who hear the Gospel and don't believe.

But if I believe because I've been chosen, then there is absolutely nothing about me that makes me better than anyone else—not even unbelievers. So there is no place for boasting.

Jesus says the order is always pure grace.

God acts first. He chooses. He appoints to eternal life.

He causes people who are not seeking to seek him.

He opens hearts of men and women to respond to the Gospel.

So there is absolutely no place for boasting.

And there is no way you can lose it.

Our God is a God of grace—he's also a God of beauty.

Notice that Jesus says we come to him because the Father draws us.

That's the way this choosing happens.

In fact, this is how you know you are chosen.

You feel drawn to God and to Jesus, drawn by his love.

Listen to the way this drawing by God is described in Hosea 11.

I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love;

I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them.

When you want to get an animal to move somewhere you force it to move.

You use a yoke on its back or a bit in its mouth.

But how does the Lord get us where he wants us to go?

The reins he uses are the cords of kindness and love.

You know he has chosen you when that is the way he moves you toward himself.

When you are compelled by a sense of his great love.

Brings us to the last point . . .

### **MP#3 The practicality of this teaching**

How do you relate to people if you believe this teaching?

Well, first of all, you have to realize that the world doesn't understand God's grace.

The unregenerate mind has one default religious mode—works righteousness.

I do good, I'm sincere, and God owes me.

If that is the way you think, then any time you hear Christians talk about grace it sounds like they are bragging they are better than other people.

It sounds to you like they are condemning you.

So you grumble against it, just like the people did during Jesus' sermon.

For example:

When Christians say that Jesus Christ is the only way to God,  
and that you have to believe in Jesus only to be saved,  
how does the world respond to that?

You Christians think you're better than everybody else.

You think you're the only ones good enough for God.

We try to explain: No, we don't think we're better.

But Jesus is the Son of God and the only perfect man.

And all we do is have faith in him.

It's the same with this teaching about the Father drawing us to Christ.

The response of the mind that doesn't understand grace is—

Oh, you think you're chosen.

You must think you're pretty special.

You must think you're better than other people. No.

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things . . .

He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not.

We know we're not better.

All that is to say, we can expect the world to grumble at grace,

and to accuse us of being prideful haters.  
But when you believe in God's choosing, drawing grace,  
it enables you to respond to all people in a gracious way.

It first of all gives you hope for anyone.

I can't look at anyone, no matter how low they've sunk, how hard their heart  
and say to myself—that person will never believe.  
There's no hope for him. No way. He's too far gone.  
I can't think that because I'm a miracle of God's grace.  
I was a hopeless case. In my natural condition I would never have chosen Jesus.  
I was repulsed by the Bread of Life.  
But I came to Christ because the Father drew me to him.  
And if he drew me, he can draw anybody.

Second, this doctrine should make my try to coerce no one.

We must share the Gospel freely, we must speak of the hope we have in Christ,  
we must tell people God loves them and urge them to believe and be saved.  
But at the same time, we recognize that until the Father draws them to Christ,  
they will not respond in faith.

That frees us from thinking that we have to use certain evangelistic techniques—  
and if we don't people aren't going to be saved and we aren't being faithful.  
And we don't try to provoke a response from people using guilt or shame or  
threats or emotionalism.

Instead, we are free to warmly and winsomely share our faith  
and trust that all those appointed to eternal life will believe. Acts 13:48

Third, this doctrine should make us respectful of everyone.

My first boss after seminary, Bruce Fiol, pastor of Marco Presbyterian Church,  
grew up in India and was a missionary there for many years.  
He told me that the most perplexing issue he struggled with when he lived there  
was that many Hindus he met were better people than many Christians he knew—  
more generous, more kind, more content, more sincere.  
That was hard for him to reconcile. Because aren't Christians better?  
How can unbelievers and pagans sometimes be better people?

He said that he came to realize that the only answer is God's electing grace.  
Ultimately, our salvation does not rest on what God sees in us,  
but on his sovereign, gracious choice.

That means that he will often choose people who aren't better than others.

The result of this revelation was that Bruce was then free to respect these unbelievers, and recognize God's common grace in them, and not feel his Christianity threatened—and that made him a more gracious, tolerant man. Hopeful for anyone, coercive of no one, and respectful of everyone.

That's what God's electing grace does, when it sinks down deep. But furthermore, the little we do know about God's choosing is more than fair. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Let's allow that bombshell, hard on outside, sweet in middle, to change us.