

## **The Bread That Satisfies, Part 2 (John 6:35-47)**

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Have you ever done all the planning, bought all the supplies, gathered all the equipment, and for some reason, the home improvement or car repair project still didn't work? It's maddening, isn't it. It seemed so easy on YouTube. Why isn't it working in real life?

You read all the required books, attended all the class lectures, studied all the review materials, and still failed the final exam. You have all the pieces in place to make a big sale at work and the contract still falls through the morning it was supposed to be signed. You spend thousands of hours practicing, but on the day of the tournament, you can't hit a ball to save your life.

Why isn't it happening? Why isn't this coming together? Everything seems primed for success, yet success remains as elusive as ever. It happens in the physical realm all the time. We have less control over our life than we think we do. A similar principle holds true spiritually.

In John 6, Jesus has just finished explaining that pursuing the satisfaction of our souls is our most important work. Satisfaction of soul is only obtained through faith in Jesus. And Jesus satisfies our deepest longings through the gift of himself. What does all of that require? Make trusting Jesus the supreme ambition of your life for he alone can satisfy your soul. In 6:35, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

It seems so clear. It seems so obvious. Given Jesus alone can satisfy our souls, why would anyone not choose to make trusting him the supreme ambition of their life? V. 36, "But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe." That's one of the most terrifying verses in the Bible. You can have all this exposure to Jesus, all this experience of Jesus, all this knowledge of Jesus, and still refuse to lean the weight of your life on him. You have seen me and yet do not believe. Why not?

Two reasons. First, the pride of human reason is never satisfied. Jesus knew that no sign he provided, no work of supernatural power he performed, would ever be enough to convince anyone to stop living as if we are God and start worshiping the One True God. Second, even if we decide the life we need comes from God, we don't want to receive it as an unmerited gift. We want to earn it. We don't like the truth of v. 29, that the only "work" God requires is the obedience of faith.

Our hearts are hard. Our minds are proud. As J.C. Ryle observes of every man and woman, "It is not true that he would come if he could. It is true that he could come if he would." Our biggest problem is not a lack of power to come to Jesus. It's a will to come to Jesus on his terms, not ours, for who he really is, not what we fancy him to be in our own minds. The sobering reality of v. 36 begs the question, "What hope do we have?" Is genuine faith and life in Jesus possible given the spiritual obstacles within us?

Here's the good news of the gospel, friends. God doesn't just have the life we need. He's the one who decisively acts to impart it to us. Here's the main point of Jn 6:35-47. **Faith in God is a work of God.** Why is that the case? Two reasons.

### **1) THE WILL OF GOD IS SOVEREIGN**

Throughout Ch. 6, "coming" to Jesus and "believing" in Jesus are two ways of saying the same thing. The parallel in v. 35 couldn't be clearer. They both describe the activity of faith or trust that turns away from creating life for ourselves and turns toward finding life in God. If you want to experience satisfaction of soul, the life that is truly life, you must choose to come to Jesus. Trust in Jesus is absolutely essential.

But what enables hardened hearts like ours to do that after years of running as far away from Jesus as possible? Or what hope do we have after choosing to come to Jesus that we will persevere in trusting Jesus to the end of our days? What ultimately ensures the success of Jesus' life-giving mission in the world? Look at v. 37. "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." It has nothing to do with you or them, friend. It has everything to do with the sovereign power of God.

**First, God is sovereign over the onset of faith.** Every sinner the Father has chosen for salvation as an unmerited act of mercy and entrusted to the Son so that he might save them to the uttermost will not fail to come to Jesus. As the Apostle Paul marvels in Eph 1:4-5, "He (the Father) chose us in him (the Son) before the foundation of the world...he (the Father) predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ."

It's the God-exalting, man-humbling, biblical doctrine of election. His sovereign will doesn't just make the invitation of life in Christ possible. It makes his invitation effectual. In other words, there is a divine activity of appointing that precedes and guarantees the human activity of believing.

It's what enabled Jesus himself to not lose heart in the midst of his own ministry, surrounded by widespread unbelief. No matter how many times you see me and do not believe, no matter how many times you hear my word and refuse to submit, this I know.



"All that the Father gives me will come to me..." His eternal purpose, his sovereign will from eternity past to redeem men and women for himself through my life, death, and resurrection will not fail to come to pass.

Christian, it's not the perfection of someone else's prayers or the proficiency of someone else's words that caused you to come to Christ. And the perfection of your prayers and the proficiency of your words does not determine whether someone you love comes to Christ. Does God command us to pray? Yes. Does God command us to speak of Jesus? Yes. But he has not set up the board and then left it up to you and me to determine the outcome of the game. He reigns. He rules, which frees us to pray joyfully and speak boldly and to do it all with an abiding confidence that his kingdom will come not because of our will but because of his that he might receive all the glory.

**Second** (and in the same vein), **God is sovereign over the endurance of faith.** Look back at v. 37, "...and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." Have you ever stepped back, Christian, and thought about all the tribulations and tests of faith that will come your way over the course of your life? Trusting God in the past was hard enough. Trusting God in the present is exceedingly difficult. What hope do you have that your faith in Jesus will not completely fail in the future?

If your answer starts with any form of "Because I..." you're on dangerous ground, friend. You don't know what tomorrow will bring, let alone how you will respond. You can hope. You can desire. What can you know for sure? Only this. That he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. If you have come to Jesus, if you are trusting Jesus right now, not perfectly but faithfully, Jesus himself will see to it that your faith in him endures for the rest of your days.

And when you hear the voice of fear. "I believe he will never cast me out, pastor, but what if I run away myself?" remember this. V. 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." Jesus will never cast you out and will also never allow you to remain lost.

The Great Shepherd is not bound to let some sheep wander out of the fold and never come back on account of some sort of cosmic obligation to uphold the freedom of your will. No. If the Great Shepherd brings you in he will keep you in and bring you back if necessary, even if it means leaving the 99 to go after the 1 and carry him home on his own shoulders. None whom God the Father has entrusted to God the Son for salvation will be lost. All will be saved. All will be raised to eternal life on the last day.



As Leon Morris says, "This thought is of the greatest comfort to believers. Their assurance is based not on their feeble hold on Christ, but on his sure grip on them." You could not have a better anchor for your soul, Christian. Nothing less than the Son's perfect obedience to the will of his Father guarantees your perseverance in the faith. Think about that. It means the Son can no more disobey his Father than you could fail to be raised on the last day, Christian. The sovereign will of the Father, fulfilled by the Son, ensures your bodily resurrection.

So what should we do given faith in God is a work of God, both in its onset and endurance? Toss up our hands in resignation? Give in to a life of spiritual passivity? I mean, if this whole sovereign will of God thing is true, why does it matter what I do or how I choose to respond to Jesus? Look carefully at v. 40 for here Jesus tells us how we must respond to the will of God.

"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." Whether you choose to trust Jesus matters exceedingly, friend. For unless you look on the Son and believe in him, you will not have eternal life. You will die in your sins and be condemned by God on account of your sins, chief among them your refusal to obey King Jesus.

Yet know this as well. V. 40 isn't just a fearful warning. It's an unspeakably great promise. If you choose, right here, right now, to look on the Son and believe in him, if you stop trying to create life in this world and cast the weight of your life on Jesus as the only one who can give you the satisfaction of relationship with God through his life, death, and resurrection, you will close your eyes in death only to awake and behold the Lover of your soul.

Three times in thirteen verses Jesus makes a promise to whoever trusts in him. "And I will raise him up on the last day." Right now, it feels like today matters most, followed closely by tomorrow, next week, and maybe if you're one of those planner types, the next year. None of them compare the eternal importance of "the last day," friend. For on that day, the day King Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead, your eternal destiny will be determined. There will be no second chances. There will be no grading on a curve.

So don't wait, friend. Don't delay. Tomorrow could be your last day on earth. Choose to live for the last day by believing in Jesus today. And rest in knowing if you are trusting in him to give you life, he will not fail to keep you to the end and raise you to eternal life with him. Why is faith in God a work of God? First, because the will of God is sovereign.

## **2) THE WORK OF GOD IS EFFECTUAL**

To the Jews listening to Jesus, his words made no sense. How can this man be God? How can he claim to have “come down from heaven” (v. 42) and do what only God can do, raising people from the dead and giving them eternal life? We know his mom. We know his dad. We watched him grow up. No way. God himself was literally standing before them, God himself was preaching the word of the gospel to them, and they still refused to believe. J.C. Ryle writes:

“We shall do well to remember this, if we ever try to do good to others in the matter of religion. We must not be cast down because our words are not believed, and our efforts seem thrown away...If even He, so perfect and so plain a Teacher, was not believed, what right have we to wonder if men do not believe us? Happy are the ministers, and missionaries, and teachers (and parents) who keep these things in mind! It will save them much bitter disappointment. In working for God, it is of first importance to understand what we must expect in man. Few things are so little realized as the extent of human unbelief.”

Jesus doesn't lose heart on account of their unbelief and nor should you, Christian, when you're talking about Jesus with your kids, your friends, or your neighbor next door. Jesus continued to rest in the sovereignty of God and so should we. V. 44, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” To the assurance of election and the comfort of the perseverance of the saints Jesus adds the promise of effectual calling.

The Father doesn't just appoint people to come to Jesus and then watch from afar as his sovereign will comes to pass. He actively works and moves in the world, wooing, drawing, turning, and transforming the hearts of men to draw to Jesus all he has purposed to grant life in Jesus. How does the Father do it? Through the power of his Word.

V. 45, “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father,” Jesus says, “comes to me.” But there's a problem. No one has “seen the Father” except the Son. By “seen” Jesus doesn't just mean physically setting eyes on the Father. The sight of the Father which he alone has eternally enjoyed is a sight that consists of intimate knowledge, a sight that results in comprehensive understanding. Because no one else has seen the Father except the Son, no one else is qualified to reveal or make known the Father except the Son.

Here's what that means. The word we hear from the Father that draws us, the knowledge we learn from the Father that awakens faith, does not come to us directly. It is mediated, it is revealed to us, through the person and work of the Son. So how does the Father teach us now that the Son has ascended back to heaven?

The Holy Spirit takes the Word written, the Bible, bearing testimony on every page to the glory of Jesus, the Word made flesh, and impresses its truthfulness on our hearts such that we see Jesus for who he is, trust him for who he is, and follow him accordingly. In other words, the substance of the Father's speech that draws us, the content of his instruction that compels us to come, is revealed through Jesus, is all about Jesus, and directs us to Jesus.

Jesus is both the means through which the Father draws us and the One to whom the Father draws us. And it's an effectual work he accomplishes through the word of the gospel, a word that announces all God has done in Christ all that is necessary to accomplish salvation for mankind. He lived for you. He died for you. He rose from the grave so death might not have the final word over your life if you are willing to repent and believe in him.

That's the good news of the gospel and where it is truthfully proclaimed from every corner of God's written Word, the Father will draw the hardest of hearts to confess that Jesus is Lord. Apart from his effectual work, none of us would be saved, which means an arrogant Christian is a contradiction in terms. In the words of Leon Morris:

"The thought of the divine initiative in salvation is one of the great doctrines of this Gospel, and indeed of the Christian faith. People like to feel independent. They think that they came or that they can come to Jesus entirely of their own volition. Jesus assures us that this is an utter impossibility. No one, no one at all, can come unless the Father draws him."

For it is the Father who opens our ears. It is the Father who instructs our hearts. Unless the Father draws us, we cannot come. Praise God, his work through the powerful word of the gospel, is effectual.

## **CONCLUSION**

When Jesus says in v. 47, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life," he's not inviting us to do what is humanly possible. He's calling us to do what God alone has made possible. His will is sovereign. His work is effectual. From beginning to end, faith in God is a work of God.

