

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. **47** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

In verses 36-47, the focus of the discussion turns to the necessity of believe in Christ and the certainty of the work that he has come to do. This section of Scripture is immensely important for the doctrines of election, effectual calling, and perseverance. Here is the progression of thought:

- All that the Father gives to Christ will come to him, and he will not cast them out
- Of those that have been given to him, all of those who look on the Son and believe in Him, he will raise them up on the last day to eternal life.
- No one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him, and those who are drawn will be raised up on the last day.
- Whoever comes to Christ and believes has eternal life.

"Seeing is not necessarily believing. Those who saw and heard our Lord could ask for no more proof that He was the Messiah. But for all they observed, they did not believe. **Only the sovereignty of God in salvation explains their persistent unbelief and rejection of our Lord. Only the sovereignty of God in salvation explains the conversion of a lost sinner. And the sovereignty of God in salvation is the basis for our security. The fact that it is all of God is the reason we can be saved, and it is also the reason our salvation is so secure.** He who began the good work of our salvation is also the One who will complete it (Philippians 1:6). **This does not mean that we have no choice to make, or that we are not held responsible for that choice. It simply means that salvation is of the Lord; it is His work.** Those whom He chooses and draws come to Him. Should this make us apathetic and passive in seeking to win others to Christ? Not at all. It should motivate us, both to pray to Him who saves and to share the good news of the gospel with those who are lost."

A question we must come to grips with and be able to answer biblically is - when the gospel is presented to a group of people, why do some believe and others not believe?

A few things are clear from this passage:

- It is the Father who takes the initiative in bringing people to Christ
- There is no need for concern that one may come to Christ only to be rebuffed. All who come to him are received and raised up.
- It is necessary that they believe, there are none who do not believe who will have eternal life.
- The one who does not come, does so out of the hardness of his own heart. The one who does come, doesn't do so out of anything inherent in him but out of the sheer mercy of God in overcoming the hardness of his own heart. Augustine wrote, "Our Savior, to teach that faith in him is a gift, not a merit, says, 'No man can come to me, except the Father, which has sent me, draw him,' (John 6:44). It is strange when two persons hear, the one despises, the other ascends. Let him who despises impute it to himself; let him who ascends not arrogate it to himself"¹
- Those who do come and do believe are assured of the protection of the Savior until the end. Calvin writes at length:

- "For those whom Christ enlightens with the knowledge of his name, and admits into the bosom of his Church, he is said to take under his guardianship and protection. All whom he thus receives are said to be committed and entrusted to him by the Father, that they may be kept unto life eternal. What would we have? Christ proclaims aloud that all whom the Father is pleased to save he has delivered into his protection (John 6:37–39, 17:6, 12). Therefore, if we would know whether God cares for our salvation, let us ask whether he has committed us to Christ, whom he has appointed to be the only Savior of all his people....But anxiety arises as to our future state. For as Paul teaches, that those are called who were previously elected, so our Savior shows that many are called, but few chosen (Mt. 22:14). Nay, even Paul himself dissuades us from security, when he says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," (1 Cor. 10:12). And again, "Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee," (Rom. 11:20, 21). In fine, we are sufficiently taught by experience itself, that calling and faith are of little value without perseverance, which, however, is not the gift of all. But Christ has freed us from anxiety on this head; for the following promises undoubtedly have respect to the future: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Again, "This is the will of him that sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing; but should raise it up at the last day," (John 6:37, 39). Again "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," (John 10:27, 28). Again, when he declares, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up," (Mt. 15:13), he intimates conversely that those who have their root in God can never be deprived of their salvation. Agreeable to this are the words of John, "If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us," (1 John 2:19). Hence, also,

the magnificent triumph of Paul over life and death, things present, and things to come (Rom. 8:38). This must be founded on the gift of perseverance. There is no doubt that he employs the sentiment as applicable to all the elect. Paul elsewhere says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," (Phil. 1:6). David, also, when his faith threatened to fail, leant on this support, "Forsake not the works of thy hands." Moreover, it cannot be doubted, that since Christ prays for all the elect, he asks the same thing for them as he asked for Peter, viz., that their faith fail not (Luke 22:32). Hence we infer, that there is no danger of their falling away, since the Son of God, who asks that their piety may prove constant, never meets with a refusal. What then did our Savior intend to teach us by this prayer, but just to confide, that whenever we are his our eternal salvation is secure?²"

When Jesus quotes the prophets, "and they shall all be taught of God," he is referring to Isaiah 54:13:

"All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children." (Isaiah 54:13, ESV)

This passage speaks to God's great sovereignty and his ability to protect his people.

"If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you. "See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to wreak havoc; no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord." (Isaiah 54:15–17, NIV)

"Secure on its foundation of righteousness, the city is doubly secure in the creatural sovereignty of the Lord: (i) No assault (were such possible!) would have divine authorization and therefore must fail. (ii) The people of the Lord will always be strong enough to overcome. (iii) The Lord, whose absolute sovereignty covers the manufacturer, the product and the intent of the user, pledges that neither weapon nor accusation can succeed against his people....Here, human skill (blacksmith), mechanical device (weapon), evil purpose (destroyer) and outcome (prevail) are all within the sovereign disposal of the creator." (Motyer, Prophecy of Isaiah, 451)

48 I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **50** This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” **52** The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” **53** So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. **55** For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. **56** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. **57** As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. **58** This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” **59** Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

- **Why is the comparison between the manna in the wilderness and Jesus' work a fitting one?**

- Jesus is giving his body to provide life to the world. Those who eat his flesh and drink his blood, that is, who come to him and believe, who receive his body broken for them and his blood poured out for them will not perish but have eternal life and the promise of being raised up in the last day.
- Isaiah 55:1-3 in the Targums:
 - Isa 55:1 Ho, every one that is willing to learn, let him come and learn, and he that hath no silver, come, hear and learn; come, hear and learn, without price and money, doctrine that is better than wine and milk.
 - Isa 55:2 Wherefore do ye weigh out your silver for that which is not food? and your wealth for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently to my Word, and ye shall eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. {(1) Literally," and that gotten by fatigue".}
 - Isa 55:3 Incline your ear and receive instruction of my law, obey my Word and your soul shall be quickened, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the mercies of David, which are sure.

- **Some would take our text here and use it as an argument for why salvation is mediated through Holy Communion. What is wrong with this view? How would you answer one who held it?**

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? ⁶² Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵ And he said, “This is why I

told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?”⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.”⁷¹ He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

- Why is this teaching offensive to many?
- What lesson can we learn about the dangers of judging the propriety of a teaching by the results it gets among the hearers?
- Why do the twelve stick around? What have they learned? What risk are they taking?
- What about Judas? In the context of our discussion of God's sovereignty, how does he fit in? Did he betray Jesus of his own free will, or did God cause him to do it?

¹ Calvin, J. (1997). *Institutes of the Christian religion*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

² Calvin, J. (1997). *Institutes of the Christian religion*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.