

God Completely Saves



"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." JOHN 6:37-40 N.I.V

Jesus in John chapter 6 has just started talking to a big crowd. John says there were five thousand men; presumably there were women and children also so there could have been ten thousand or more. We are also told that Jesus fed them all with just a few loaves and fishes. It is one of the most amazing miracles in the Bible.

Now if anyone is going to believe Jesus, it is going to be these people. They live in Galilee which is on the hick side of Israel. Up there the people hate the government which Jesus has already fallen out of favour with. If anyone is going to want to be on side with Him, they will; in fact they want someone who will lead them in a charge against the authorities. They don't think of them very favourably because they are the last people to get Government funding for any new projects. They are the people who don't have adequate representation, aren't listened to and if this man is out of favour with the Government, surely Jesus will be in favour with them. As He speaks and teaches them about Himself they all start to drift away and say to one another, "We don't want this fellow." He's showing them something marvellous in that He's the Son of God, but all they see is a man who has filled their stomachs. He said He's not going to do it again, at least not in the way they want, so they don't want Him. And they all start to go home and Jesus, who began with a crowd of perhaps ten thousand or more, ends up with a crowd of just twelve. Not very good odds, twelve out of ten thousand; and even a few of the twelve are a bit suspect at this stage.

If the Sydney Morning Herald were reporting this incident, I imagine the headline would be something like "PREACHER BLOWS BIG CHANCE." Or, "NEW PREACHER A FIZZER." The people in Jesus' day were convinced He had failed. I'm sure the Sydney Morning Herald would also say He had failed, and I think many Christians today think He's failed. I'm not just talking about unbelievers but many Christians also think He's failed.

We say we've been doing evangelism in some place for five, even twenty five years and what do we have to show for it? "Only two little kids converted after twenty five years, is not much is it?" Or "I've been talking to my next door neighbour about Christ for seventeen years or teaching children for seventeen years and what is there to show for all my efforts? Nothing."

By every measure it seems Christ's death is wasted and you hear preachers say things like, "Because Jesus died on the cross, almost everybody will go to heaven!" "Here is salvation!" "He's made it all available to you," But we look around and hardly anyone takes this great gift. We say, "What a waste, He tried to get billions but He only got millions or thousands. Pretty poor result, by any measure. So much of His love seemed to be spurned, so much of His death seemed to be wasted, and oh what a failure He is." The preacher today will say, "Well he would like to save you or He'd love to get you to heaven, but He can't, it all hangs on you. Poor Jesus, what an ineffectual Saviour He is." "He'd like to get us to heaven, He died to get us there but He can't. What a failure, what a fizzer Jesus is."

He started with ten thousand, ended up with twelve, but when the heats on and He's on the cross even the twelve ran away. Not a great statistic to write home about. If you belong to a missionary society and say to your supporters, "Well I had all these people listening and I ended up with nobody," the money would soon dry up. We like success, we don't like failure. Does Jesus keep going in the face of such failure? Yes reasonably early in His ministry, He keeps preaching, wasting His voice on people who don't believe but have another agenda. Perhaps He's optimistic about human nature; that eventually the deep potential in people will come to the surface. After all we really do have these little sparks within us, and maybe if He just talks long enough these sparks will fan to life and we will all believe. Is that what He thinks, if He just waits long enough?

I tell you if you wait long enough you'll be waiting a long time because it isn't long enough! Jesus never believed there was a spark in people! That they had the potential to believe and if you just wait, one day it would come to the surface. Jesus knew what His Father had said in His word because He is the agent through whom the Father had spoken. He knew scripture said man's heart is dead, hard, and stubborn, and he is blind, deaf and unable to see the truth. Jesus never put His confidence in those He spoke to, never once! "If I can just press the right button they'll all come?" No! Jesus knew there wasn't a right button to press so far as His hearers where concerned.

In this passage and indeed in the whole of his ministry, His confidence is in something else. Not in His hearers, not in His words of themselves. "If I can just get the right magic word that will convince unbelief." No His confidence is in something else, and right through this passage He shows us what His confidence is in and I tell you it's not in the people He speaks to, or in the power of words. His confidence is in God because God saves. "Hang on," you say, "I don't know an Evangelical preacher, who doesn't say anything other than God saves. After all that's what Evangelicals are on about isn't it?" *"God completely saves."*

What do I mean when I say *"God completely save?"* The answer is found in *'All that the Father gives me will come to me. and whoever comes to me I will never drive away'* (John 6:37). . It's a key verse on this subject and what follow in verses 38 -39 in this passage Jesus says;

There are those given to the Son by the Father

'But as I told you, you have seen me and still you don't believe,' (verse 36.) How do you explain this to someone who doesn't believe? The answer is found in verse 37a. 'All that the Father gives me will come to me...' It makes sense that some are given to the Son by the Father and presumably there are some not given to the Son by the Father. The Bible often speaks about the way God gives some people to the Son. For example; Jesus says, 'I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.' (John 17:6). So when Jesus shows the truth; it's not to everybody in the same way, He reveals it only to those the Father has given to Him. Now read verse 9; 'I pray for them I am not praying for the world, but for those who you have given me, for they are yours.' When Jesus prays, He doesn't pray for everyone in the same way. In other words, when I pray, in essence I'm praying for those that you gave me. Now here are those who the Father has given the Son and frankly, there are those who have not been given to the Son.

This is the simple Bible truth of election; that God chose who He will give to His Son. What can it mean, other than something as simple and basic as election? "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.' (John 17:9). Look at it negatively, why don't people believe? John 10: 26 tells us 'But you don't believe because you are not my sheep.' That's why Jesus can say 'And those whom the Father has given me....' (John 6:37a) Why don't people believe? Because they are not given by God the Father to the Son. 'Hang on a minute, does that mean that everyone comes the moment they first hear the gospel?' No! You may be given but it

may take many times of hearing the gospel before you come. In these verses Jesus is looking at the whole picture. So why don't people believe? Because they're not given to the Son by the Father.

All those given to the Son come to the Father

Look at the words, they are simple and straightforward. Almost so we miss the point. "All that the Father gives me *will come to me.*" You may be rich, or poor, you may be clever, or slow, it's irrelevant. If you're given to the Son you will come. You may not come the first time you hear the gospel or the second or even the hundredth time, but you will come. You may not come understanding everything but you will come. You may come joyfully and gladly, even a little reluctantly and hesitantly but you will come. 'All those who the Father has given *will* come. Not might come, not may come, but they *will* come. They will move from not believing to believing. They will leave behind certain things; their unbelief and sins like pride which says, "I can make it on my own." They'll leave all those things that don't belong to the kingdom of God and come to Jesus for life.

Notices there are promises for those who come 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and He who believes in me will never be thirsty.' (John 6:35). That's where life is. Jesus says, 'I'm not talking about what goes into you stomach, but what's in your soul and heart.' Here's another promise He gives, 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10).

How can you *come* to Christ? I've taken hundreds of funerals in 35 years of ministry and it never occurred to me once to say to the body in the coffin, "Hey get up, and listen to me." Why? Because the body is dead! I can talk to it all I want but it can't hear. The Bible tells us when we are not a Christian we are dead. In other words we can't hear Jesus, believe Him or get up and come to Him. So why does Jesus say here, "All that the Father gives me will come?" (John 6:37) The reason is Jesus believes of ourselves we can't come to Him. Now read John 6: 44, ' No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.....,' see if you are dead you can't come. Jesus is not saying you need permission to come to Him, no. He has already given you permission to come to Him. He has already said that 'He who comes to me.... He who believes in me...' (John 6:35). "So you've got permission to come to me, but you can't come!" That's why He says, 'No one can come to me...' (John 6:44). I have no more ability to come to Jesus Christ than I have to swim 1500 meters

in 15 minutes or even swim that distance. It's just not in me to come to Christ. Why? Because it's contrary to my nature to come to Him, I can't do it.

In our home we have battled like most parents with teaching our children lots of things. One is what the word *can* means. So, when we are at the table and one of them says, "Can I go to the toilet? I say, "You *can* but hold on, I didn't say you may." "You asked me do you have the ability." That's what the word *can* means. Now if you meant, "May I go to the toilet or do I have permission? That's a different question. "Can I turn on the television?" "Yes you can, but hey I didn't tell you, you may." You have the ability, that's can, may is permission.

Therefore, when Jesus says, "No one can come to me." He's talking about the fact we don't have the ability to come, but we do have permission. In other words, we're unable to see the truth and do the truth. So how can we come to Jesus if we can't? Is He mad, and contradicting Himself? No, not at all. What does He say? "No one can come to me *unless* the Father who sent me draws him.' (John 6:44). Oh praise God for the word *unless*, one of the big words of the Bible.

You hear a lot of preacher's today say; "The Father must draw you if you're going to become a Christian." What they mean is He invites or maybe even entices you by dangling a carrot before you; "Here it is, come and get it." Is that drawing? No! What does the Bible mean when it says draw? In John 18:10 we read, 'Then Simon Peter, who had a sword drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting his right eye.' What did Peter say? "Hey sword if you come out you'll have a job to do, you'll enjoy yourself." Is that drawing? No, he grabbed his sword and he drew it. In John 21 when the disciples are in the boat fishing and we are told, 'He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.' (John 21:6). And 'Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore.' (John 21:11). The word haul and dragged is the same word translated draw in John 6:37. We could literally say "No one can come to me unless the Father grabs hold of me and brings me..." (John 6:37) Let me make it clear the gospel gives us a word of invitation but I tell you God does more than just invite. He grabs hold of us and brings us irresistibly to Christ so in the end we say, "Yesterday I didn't want to come, but now I want to." God is not working against our wills but so changing us that we now desire to come. Yesterday we couldn't see the truth, today we can, and it's great! Why? Because God is drawing you, showing you, teaching you, Christ is your greatest need. This is what Jesus Christ is saying in the verse; 'It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God.' Everyone listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.' (John 6:45).

You can invite people till the cows come home or like the man in the coffin to get up and walk. What a waste of time! You need more than an invitation to come to Christ you need to be brought to Christ. The wonderful thing about God is that when He saves people, He not only gives them to the Son, but in experience, He brings them to the Son. Who do you think then gets all the glory and praise from you coming to Christ? "Oh thank you God that I'm not like my pagan neighbours, they've heard the gospel and didn't believe but I did, oh what a good boy am I." Is that what it's like? No, I tell you God brought you to believe! Praise God He not only offers you the Gospel but brings you into it. He not only shows you Christ but He brings you to Christ.

Jesus never made a hit and miss appeal. "Oh I'd like you all to become Christians and I hope maybe if I say the right words they will hit someone in the heart and they will come to me." As though some how Jesus didn't know what He was doing nor had any no assurance about it. It was quite the opposite; Jesus knew whenever He preached that those whom the Father had given Him would come. It wasn't a vain hope, just a possibility, let's try and gets 5% success rate. Instead Jesus knew He was going to get 100% success rate and the Father's will would be done. This is the most wonderful thing about the work of the Gospel; it will never ever fail. As you evangelize your family and friends, those who the Father has given, will come. It may not be today or next week but they will come. You don't need to panic when there is *so little* to show for your efforts. Don't pat yourself on the back either when there's *something* to show for it. When people come to Christ its God who brought them to the Son. The Father draws to Christ all those He has given Him.

Those who come are safe forever

Are you with me so far? But what if the Father has given some to the Son and brings them to Him but the Son says, "Well I do like you but I'm not sure I can hold on to you because you're a pretty wilful sort of person and maybe tomorrow you'll turn away from me again? The Son wants to deliver them to the Father but He'll drop the ball and they'll be lost?" He wants to hold us but He's not able to. What about that? Jesus answers, "All that the Father gives me, will come to me and who ever comes to me I will never drive away." v37 Now keep reading, verse 38 "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me." Keep going, verse 39 "And this is the will of Him who sent me that *I shall lose none* of all that He's given me, but raise them up at the last day." Those the Father wants saved the Son wants saved, those the Father resolves to save the Son resolves to save. Those that the Father will bring to heaven, the Son will bring to heaven.

You don't need to feel that you can suddenly come to Christ and He can't hang on to you, that He'll change His mind about you, not chance! God doesn't work like that, those that are given He will bring, until the last day." He says, "I'll raise them up at the last day." (John 6:39). All of them!

Now do you see what we mean when we say God completely saves? The Father just didn't put Jesus His Son on the cross and say, "I've done my bit you rotten sinners it's over to you. You do your bit and together we can get a bit of a deal going." See, a lot of people think it's like a fifty fifty sort of deal, that God does His bit, then we'll do our bit, and together we'll make up what we need. In his book 'The Sovereignty of God,' A.W. Pink talks about "If you have fifty fifty, send that doctrine to hell." He says. "With God it's one hundred one hundred because God wants 100 % my salvation and determines to save me completely, that's what I want 100%. God changes my will so I want to believe. It's not I do a bit and God does a bit. No God does it all and when He does it so graciously that's all I want. It's one hundred percent God's work not fifty percent His and effort percent mine.

If you come to Christ to eat, and drink spiritually you will never be hungry or thirsty again. You've only come in the first place because God has brought you and when you come, He'll keep you, isn't that marvellous? Because salvation is so much all of God, we'll give Him all, the praise. Evangelicals don't speak like that today; there is a million miles of difference between this truth and what passes as evangelicalism today. We've got to be honest and call a spade a spade; it's not what people are saying, it's not what's often preached. People are ending up with a Saviour that's not that big. Someone who'd like to save you if you'll let Him. Listen, the Bible talks about someone who saves miraculously from beginning to end

Now here are two people, call them Jack and Jill and someone tells them about Christ, they hear the gospel; that if they come to Christ and believe in Him they'll never be thirsty and never be hungry again. Jack scratches his head, "I can't understand what this guys talking about, I don't want any of that sort of stuff." and goes home in his unbelief. Now Jill hears and says, "Yes I can see what you mean, I want to leave my sins of unbelief, pride and carelessness and come to Christ." And she believes. So, what makes the difference between Jack and Jill? If you listen to most preachers today, they'll say it's Jill who made the difference. She was smarter and cleverer than Jack and fanned into life this spark within her. She had better desires, a higher potential than Jack had.

Listen to the way C. H. Spurgeon the great Baptist preacher put it over a hundred years ago. (Check quote) "Image this prayer, Lord I thank you that I was born with a glorious free will. I was born with power by which I can turn to you of myself. Lord I've improved my grace, oh Lord if everyone had done the same with their grace that I've done with mine, then all might have been saved. Oh Lord I know that you did not make us willing if we are not first willing ourselves." I've heard that before from hundreds of pulpits around Australia. He continues, "That God gives grace to everybody, some do not improve it, but some do. There are many that have as much of the Holy Spirit given to them as I. They had as good an opportunity and were as much blessed as I am. Oh it was not the grace that made the difference, I know it did a great deal but still I was the turning point. I made the difference, I made use of what was given me, and others did not. That's the difference between me and them." And that say Spurgeon, "Is a prayer of the Devil." That I made the difference between all the other people dead in sin and my going to heaven. Can you imagine being in heaven and saying, "Lord I'm here because I made the difference?" Can you believe it? That's what some preachers are preaching today.

When I'm in heaven, I'll be saying what the gospel says. "Lord I'm here because I was given, drawn and in coming I was kept by the grace of God. Did you make a decision to come to Christ? Of course you did, you can't be a Christian without asking that question. What caused me to believe when others made a wretched choice? It doesn't hang on me; it all hangs on God from beginning to middle to end. Those who the Father gives, they come because they're drawn and kept. It's God, God, God."

The theme song for many Christians is, "I have decided to follow Jesus," It's true, because you're a Christian you've decided to follow Jesus. However, for about ten percent of Christian's people their theme song is;

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound
In sin and nature's night,
I was blind and didn't know anything about it.
Your eye sent a quickening ray I awoke,
The dungeon filled with light my chains
Fell off my soul was free then I rose and followed thee."

Quote Hymn

Isn't that what Christians ought to be singing. That way God gets the praise and the glory and why would you want it any other way?

Now I know that raises questions. Does that mean we don't have a free will? Is it fair? If what you've said is true why bother preaching the gospel? Let alone going somewhere to preach it. These are fair questions but before I answer them I want to make two positive points.

Firstly be encourage you're not wasting your time. I reckon if you say, "It doesn't feel like I'm wasting my time I think you're a liar because sometimes it does and you can think of a hundred things you'd rather be doing. Now there is nothing better than telling the gospel, because when it's preached God does a great work; He calls and brings to Christ those He's given Him. Rather it's the very opposite. We are not wasting our money, when we put it into the work of the gospel. It's hardly a waste; rather it's the only thing in this world that's guaranteed of any success. Not much is certain in this world apart from the fact you'll die and pay taxes. But this is the most certain thing that all those the Father has given to the Son will come. We have some friends who use to go door to door some Sunday afternoons. Just before they would go, one would say to the other, "Well let's go and get God's elect." Wasting their time? No. I'm not saying you have to go door to door. I'm simply illustrating it as a means by which God may bring to Christ those who He means to bring that day.

We may not be that confident when it come to speaking about Christ, well join the club. All of us have certain relationships where we don't get it right. If only I had said that, let me tell you, you cannot muck it up. Who ever has said the gospel perfectly? Which preacher has preached a perfect sermon? He mucks it up every time he opens his mouth. In that sense, you can't muck up what God is doing. You cannot wreck it, or spoil it. "Those who the Father has given me will come." What? Through poor preachers like us, yes. To poor talkers like us over the back fence, yes, our confidence is not in our ability to talk or understand it's in God. You can't spoil telling the gospel so take great confidence in that.

Secondly, I'm painting a Christ worth believing in. I'm talking about a Christ, who says when you come to me and believe you'll get such satisfaction in your soul you'll never thirst or be hungry again, that's grace. I'm talking about a Christ, who says, "When you come to me, I'll not turn you away, I'm talking about a Christ who says, "And I'll hold you till the last day, I'll raise you out of the grave. Even if you are a few specks of dust, I'll raise you up and you'll be with me, body and soul in heaven. He's not a has been Jesus who'd like to do something, but your just stopping Him or the rulers of this world are preventing His great purposes coming to pass. That's not the Jesus of the

Bible who delivers what He promises and saves from beginning to end. He knows what He's doing and He does it. He doesn't say, "I've died for all these people perhaps someone somewhere will believe, me." No, "I've died for those that the Father has given me and they'll come, I'm confident and when they come I'll grab them and I'll hold them. That's the Jesus of the Bible, not the Mamby Pamby weak Jesus that is presented today. No, He's a Jesus worth believing, the invitation is clear, "Come to me, believe in me and you will never be hungry or thirsty again. All those that the Father gives will come, but you can't come unless God gives it to you to come, so pray that He will have mercy on you and bring you to the only Saviour worth having.

Now let me seek to answer those questions you may have. I think we ought to have questions to be quite honest if it doesn't make us say, well what about so and so we are not listening very well. Now that's different from saying, "I don't like what I hear." But it ought to raise some questions for us. I think that it's inevitable, and when they hear these truths of God's complete salvation there are lots of questions people raise. I've chosen three questions; let me try to answer them from the scriptures.

What about our free will?

We have said you can only come to Christ because the Father has chosen you, and you can only come to Christ because the Father brings you to the Son. If He brings you, you will come; you can't resist to the point of preventing His will. "Well then" says the person who hears this, "What about our free-will? Don't we have a choice to Christ?" You make it sound like it's only God's choice. But you say what about Christ's invitation, "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden. and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11: 28). That sounds like a choice, or what about when Christ says, "If your thirsty come to me and drink and you'll never be thirsty again, and out of you shall flow a spring of living water." (John 7:38). "Doesn't that sound like an invitation, a choice? How can you make it sound like the Father brings you to the Son?"

When Christ says, "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden," He's simply saying what you have to do, not what you've got the freedom to do. If you don't come you won't be relieved of your burden. He's telling you what's got to happen. He's not telling you, that you have the ability to do it. No He's telling you what He will do; to give you rest. He doesn't say, "Oh I'm really saying it's up to you and you alone to come. In these invitations He's telling us what He'll do, not what we have the freedom to do. How could Jesus on one occasion say it's all over to you? When He says, "I tell

you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3). If you don't accept what He says, don't think you'll go to heaven. He says that later to Nicodemus in the same passage. **Quote** (John 3:12). Therefore, you can't see the truth unless God gives you eyes to see it. How can you be saved if it's over to you to make yourself see?

What about here when Jesus says, "No one can come to me..." (John 6:44 a). In other words, no one has the ability to, "come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." John 6:44 b). Why couldn't He say the next day, "well you really do have the ability, the freedom, the choice is yours to come to me?" Jesus doesn't foolishly contradict Himself. Or what about when Jesus speaks to these Jews who thought they had great freedom and He says, "Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to understand what I say." (John 8:43). In other words, you're unable to hear because you're spiritually dead. You don't have it in you to come to me. "The reason you don't hear is you do not belong to God." **Check quote**(John 6:47) Here Jesus says God has already done something before time, but in time He gives grace to see and hear but you can't hear or see, if your not of God.

Some people think everyone drives an automatic car. When you drive a manual car you put the clutch in and chose to gear you need. Some people think it's like that. We're really in neutral and it's up to us whether we move into top gear or reverse. As though we are rocking through this world of neutral people choosing whatever way we want to go but God never says we're in neutral.

It's like the picture that Luther drew, in the "**Bondage of the Will**" when he said, "Some people think that we come into this world like a wild horse able to run this way or that way, yet it's not like that at all. We come into this world with a rider on our back and the rider is the devil and it's not till Christ knocks the Devil off and he gets on that we will be able to go any way that's right. Because the Devil will always have us going this way and that, pulling us around and so on. Pulling the rider this way and that way not as a free agent, which we never have been."

We are not free in so many ways, when you think about it? We don't do anything where we are completely free. We don't have a free choice or free will.

Imagine you offer me two plates of food. One is full of green succulent brussel sprouts. The other is a beautiful Pavlova with pieces of fruit on the top. Now you say, "Take a pick." Now I smell one then the other and already my taste buds are telling me what my choice will be. It's not a real

choice. If you were to come up our way, there's thousands of crows and birds. Bring them down to the highway, put before them a beautiful succulent dinner, and put a maggoty carcass of a rabbit. What will they choose? The crow will choose the maggoty carcass of a rabbit every time, instead of the beautiful baked dinner, why? Because that's its nature. We choose according to our nature, our taste buds...but I'll go for one in preference to the other every time. The brussel sprouts or the Pavlova. We make choices every time we are not free at all.

Now when people come to us and say, "Here is Jesus Christ, look at the marvellous things He provides, what a wonderful person He is, choose Him." You'll make a choice. You'll choose Christ or go the way I've always gone. It is a choice according to your nature. It is not a free choice because by nature you are already opposed to Christ. You already hate the truth, that's the way you were born. You come into this world saying, "No I will not do what my parents want me to do." "No I will not believe the truth." That's what we are by nature... but it's never a free choice. As Christians we are never, free from our circumstances, our other nature.

Some people say, "That means that when you become a Christian, you're grabbed by the neck, kicking and screaming into the kingdom saying, "I don't want to come but you're pulled in." That's the kind of caricature people make of Christians who believe these wonderful truths of the scripture. The Bible never says that.

Look at the very things Jesus talks about in our passage. That people "come and believe" verse 35. The people "look to the Son" verse 40. They are doing something real. When you become a Christian, it's a real action. It's not against your will; it's something that happened to change your will. So, where as before you couldn't come, didn't want to believe; now you do. God has changed your nature and that's required *before* you can become a Christian.

In His book 'How to be Born Again.' Billy Graham says, "Do you know how to be born again"? You do this and that, and then God will cause you to be born again. Now I don't think that's in the Bible anywhere. It's only because I am born again that I can then do the things that Billy Graham says I need to do. The wonderful thing about God's grace is that He changes us so enabling us to do what He has commanded, so that we do believe.

Remember when Paul preached at Philippi to a group of ladies and men in (Acts 16). There's a lady called Lydia and she hears Paul preach the gospel. And there is one of the most wonderful verses in

the whole of scripture; ' The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.' (Acts 16:14). The Bible doesn't say, "Lydia stirred herself up to believe," as though she had a magic spark within her. No, it says, "the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." This caused her believe and became a Christian. That's what God does by His gospel and His Spirit. That's what we have in this passage. Cf. (John 6:37-40).

In (John 6:45a), "It is written in the prophets, 'and they shall all be taught by God.' Who is the Old Testament prophet talking about? He tells us in the last half of the verse, (John 6:45b). "Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him come to me." In other words everyone whose heart is changed and mind is re-orientated will come. Just as they are, wonderfully worked on by the Spirit of God. That's one of the wonderful things about becoming a Christian; it's not your free will that brought to Christ. When Lydia responded, i.e. literally believed, what marks did you see on her? The bruises of a rapist who forced her to love Christ against her will or the marks from the kisses of love? That's why Isaac Watts could write;

Why was I made to hear His voice?
And enter while there's room
When thousands make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come
From the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in
Else, otherwise we refused to taste
And perish in our sin.

Isn't that marvellous? "The same love that spread the feast sweetly forced us in." I haven't met a Christian yet who resents being forced sweetly to Christ. You can praise Him every day that He took a hard will and made it soft, deaf ears and made them open, blind eyes and made them see and you were sweetly forced into the feast of Christ. Will your free will then take you away from Christ? Never! Rather don't you want a God who brought you to Christ and changed your will? So, you'll submit to His will.

Why thank God if you did it?

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13a. Paul says, "We ought always to thank God for you," Why thank God if you did it? Ever thought about that? Why thank God someone became a Christian if they did it? No we thank God because He makes them Christians. That's why we pray for evangelism and missionaries because we know people can't become Christians of themselves, God must do it. How do you know the Lord loves you? The Apostle Paul says, "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord." (2 Thessalonians 2:13a) What was God's goal? "He chose you to be saved." How does he do this? "Through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." (2 Thessalonians: 2:13b). Want an elaboration? "He calls you to this through our gospel that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:14) The end is clear, He loves you, and he chose you from before the beginning of this world, back when there was only God.

It's no accident that the founders of the modern missionary movement; men like William Carey, David Brainerd and Henry Martyn believed the great truths of John 6:37-40. You will hardly find a missionary group anywhere that believes these truths today. They think it all depends on man, but God says it all depends on Him. Now these gospel truths drove and kept Brainerd, Martyn and Carey. It focused them on going out and getting people saved who the Father had chosen. They didn't say, "Well God has chosen who is going to believe, so let's sit down and take it easy.

Take Henry Martyn, who had the greatest math's mind to come out of the nineteenth century. He had brilliant math's career ahead of him at Cambridge. At 21, he's lecturing and he falls in love with a beautiful girl, with the prospect of marriage. He has everything before him, but at 25 [check this] he leaves England for India, why? Because he said, "God's got His elect, that He's chosen and we must go and get them and our work can't fail." Ah," people, said, "but this beautiful girl Lydia maybe she'll join him or maybe she want." Maths will fail one day and all the achievements we've built upon it but the elect will be saved. Henry Martyn was dead by the age of 31 from the work he gave himself. You see these men didn't believe half of God's plan, they believed it all, the end and the means.

I don't know whether you're used to using the term Calvinist? They believe *God completely saves*. In the words of scripture, "Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2:9). When Calvin was commenting on this verse, he said that this was the sum and substance of salvation. It is to the heart of true Calvinism that salvation's all of the Lord, and that God saves from beginning to end. Calvin of course never used the term Calvinist; that only came after his death.

People who are Calvinists are said not to believe in evangelism. But they are the only ones who have any reason to believe in evangelism. Why? Because they are not wasting their time, there will be results. The elect will be brought in, "from every tribe and language and people and nation." (Revelation 5:9). When we get to heaven all the seats will be around the table with Christ at the head. Not one is going to be empty, and they'll have on them the names of all those chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world.

We are not wasting our time when you pray for evangelism; for missionaries, those who give out literature and go door to door. Those who talk to their neighbours and children. As you do the work of the gospel, it works. People who don't believe these things evangelize with the hope that someone, somewhere might believe. Where as if you believe *God completely saves you* have a guarantee that other Christians don't have. You'll have no doubt about it. Believing these things doesn't make you careless or casual and say, "Oh well the elect will be saved." Rather it makes you confident, not careless, and not casual but deliberate.

Is it fair?

It's the question that is most telling and strikes our hearts keenly. Is it fair that some should be given to the Son and they'll come? Where as some presumably aren't given to the Son and they'll be left with the word, they cannot come? Why? Because God hasn't given them the ability. Is this really fair? Why should some people get what others don't? And what is more, how could God condemn people to hell when they couldn't come anyway? It hardly seems fair or right in the first place. What about those listening to Christ in (John 6). Who of them deserves to be feed by the Son of God with these wonderful things He's telling them. When in their minds they are opposed to the truth, hating it and Him? Put your hand up if you can say, "I deserve to have the Son of God serve me,"

None of us deserve it, for God to be good to you. Have you been so good and kind and law abiding? For God to forget all the grumpy wicked things you've done with all the lousy attitudes you've had. Who deserves anything?

All right, if we don't deserve the things God gives you most graciously, can we say, "God gives us what's fair?" Some of these people in the crowd are given *life*. And some of the others later are given life because they deserved it? No, because it was fair? No, if God gave them what was fair He'd send them to hell. Isn't that right? Isn't that what they deserve? Isn't that what you deserve when you've raised your

fist against God and said, "I don't want you God, you can get lost." That's what it was like before you were a Christian and even now when you are Christian sometimes it's like that. If God gives you what you deserve you'll go to Hell. If God gives you what is fair, He'll give you what your unbelieving neighbours deserve. Those who are so rampantly immoral or careless or what ever it might be. If you get what's fair, you'll get what they get. Because you're really no different from them.

What God gives these people when He gives them life is the opposite of what they deserve. They deserve Hell but He gives them Heaven. They deserve death but He gives them life. The easiest thing would be to send them all away to perish forever but God doesn't give them what's fair. "Amazing grace that saved a good person like me." Is that what John Newton wrote? "Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me." Not a word we use much now days. Not a bad word, a wretched man, a man who does nothing good.

The Apostle Paul tells us, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath." (Ephesians 2:1-3). When we read this, who of us could say, "Lord gives us what's fair?" We are just the same as everybody else?" That's why you can't look down your nose at unbelievers. Oh we are so good we Christians! And the rest they are so grumpy, wicked, and evil. We think we've made it but we are just like the rest.

Next time you look down your nose, think about that fellow at work who cheats on his wife in a way that you never do. You are no different and given the opportunity you would do the same thing. All of us are capable of the same things, even as believers. I hope you don't think you are immune from sin because you are a Christian. There isn't a man or a woman who given the right circumstances wouldn't cheat on their spouse.

But by God's grace, He'll preserve you from that and you'll pray to be kept from it. But you can't say it isn't possible. No, by nature, we are the same; "By nature objects of wrath." (Ephesians 2:4). "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even while we were dead." (Ephesians 2:4). Here's one of those great little words, "But" that we so easily skip over. This word points forward to the word mercy.

When you get to heaven you're only going to have one song to sing; "mercy, mercy, mercy." The theme song in hell is going to be? "Fairness, fairness, fairness." Because people in hell get exactly what they have asked for, what's deserved nothing more. They don't go to hell not deserving it but deserving it. The whole of hell will ring with the praise of God's justice. God's doing what's right, fair and good. But heaven will have praise God's mercy. No one will be in heaven because they deserve but because it's just and. See the difference? People say, "It not fair that God should do this? If we talk about fairness, let's talk about hell, that's fair. But if we want to talk about heaven let's talk about God, who is rich in mercy, "of that great love with which He has loved us." (Ephesians 2:4) People go to hell because they want to. No one goes to hell who doesn't want to. No one says, "Oh I really want to become a Christian but I can't." If you want to become a Christian, become a Christian. People go to hell saying I don't God to rule over me. I want to do it my way. When you go to heaven, you want to say Christ has sweetly forced me in, that He changed your will.

If God should choose you, that's better than fair, because *heaven's better than fair, better than justice, it's mercy*. Let's be careful before we say it's not fair that God should do it this way. It's a dangerous thing to ask for fairness and God should do it some other way. I mean to say, who do you think you are to say to God? "You've got it wrong, you should have saved them. No, what does Paul says to the Romans? "Who are you O man, to talk back to God?" Shall what is formed say to Him, who formed it 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" (Romans 9:20). The question will not be how did you assess God. God is God and what He does is good. The question is did you look to the Son, come to the Son, believe in Him? Let's get rid of all this other talk about "Is it fair," that's not the debate. It's have you come, have you believed, have you looked to Christ? And if you have it's because of grace and if you haven't it's because maybe now's the time when He gives you grace like you've never needed it before. Why not come to Him now?

But why would you come to such a Saviour as Jesus? Don't think you can put yourself in the hands of Christ and next week you might find He's dropped you because you're too hot to handle. Or your sin will take you away from Christ because He doesn't have the ability to keep you. No! He will never, ever let you go. What a great Saviour. Who wouldn't you trust yourself, your family and friends to a Saviour like that?

John Paterson

