

Never Cast Away

John's gospel, beginning with the prologue, looks at things from a lofty perspective. When speaking of our salvation in today's text, Jesus reveals to us, not just our role, but also the divine role. This is vital, for several reasons: when we contemplate what God does for us in our salvation, we are humbled, we become more enthusiastic worshipers, and we are more greatly assured of our salvation.

John 6:35-40

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. **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."

In verses 35 and 36, Jesus gives us the overall context of His gracious promises to us: Jesus alone satisfies our human longings, and we are, by nature, consistently inclined to reject Him. Verse 35 is the first of seven "I am" statements in John's gospel, all of which emphasize that Jesus is our all in all. But the Bible frequently describes us in our fallen condition as being completely incapable of choosing the good. Look at these texts, for example:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:44

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—**3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Ephesians 2:1-3

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:14

7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. **8** Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:7-8

But Jesus explains in verses 37-40, that He has overcome our disabilities by calling us (37a) and keeping us (37b).

He calls us because we are a gift to Him from the Father Himself (see John 17: 1-2,6,9,24). This calling is what we call "effectual calling." The Westminster Confession of Faith describes it this way:

1. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that

which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

(WCF, X, i, ii)

This is the irresistible, never-failing "internal calling," about which both Paul and Peter spoke:

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:30

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

He not only calls us, but He keeps us, and this is His purpose in coming to the earth (vv.38-40).

Paul also refers to this same doctrine in several places:

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35 ,37-39

Notice in verse 40 that Jesus' emphasis on divine sovereignty does not exclude our human responsibilities. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are mutually inclusive, contrary to what some may think: He calls us and keeps us, but we also must repent and believe. This mystery is also seen in texts like the ones below:

27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. **28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:27-30

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13

Discussion Questions

1. How does the Bible describe the fallen human condition? Why is it important for us to know this?

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2. How does Jesus guarantee that the elect will come to Him? How does knowing this truth affect your life?

 3. Why is it important for us to know that Jesus will keep us to the end?

 4. How do you explain the reality that some people profess faith and join the church, then leave it?

 5. If Jesus sovereignly calls and keeps us, what difference do our faith and conduct make?

Going Deeper

1. If the truths of this text are meant to make us humbler and bolder and more reverent, how can you grow in these areas of your life?

2. If you find yourself still confused on these issues of sovereignty and responsibility, commit to read *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, by J. I. Packer.