

## HOW SALVATION WORKS (JOHN 6:37-40; 44)

A friend of mine from a previous church is a fire fighter. His name is Wes and we were at a youth camp years ago and students were talking to us about doubting their salvation. And Wes said he struggled with this for the longest time when he was young. He would go forward Sunday after Sunday during the invitation just to make sure he was really saved. So eventually, his mother began to carefully slip her finger through his belt loop because she knew what would happen as soon as the pastor gave the invitation!

You may not struggle *that* bad with doubting your salvation, but we can all relate to Wes's desire to find assurance – to feel safe and secure in his salvation. Wes said it was a game-changer when he finally understood how secure his salvation really is in Christ.

And, over the next 4 weeks, I hope to help you understand it as well. We'll look at questions like...

- Do you know you're saved?
- Struggle with doubt about it?
- Can you lose it?
- How would you know when you've lost it? How can you find assurance?

So tonight, let's begin by getting a big-picture view of how salvation works.

### 1. My salvation is initiated by God, not by me.

***John 6:37; 44 "All that the Father gives me will come to me...<sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..."***

In these two verses (and throughout Scripture)), we see the *sovereignty of God* AND the *responsibility of Man*...

- **The Father sovereignly draws us to Jesus.** Jesus says, "*No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.*" The word "draw" (*helkyo*) literally means to *pull* or *drag*.<sup>1</sup> For example, it's used in John 21:6 to refer to a heavy net full of fish being dragged

<sup>1</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 207). United Bible Societies.

to the shore. And in Acts 16:19 it's used to describe Paul and Silas being dragged into the marketplace before the rulers.

You may be thinking, "Wait, are you saying God *drags* us, kicking and screaming, to salvation?" No, because you would need to be alive to kick and scream. He has to drag us out of the grave of sin because we're spiritually dead...

***Ephesians 2:1-9 "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins...  
4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved... 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast."***

**Illustration:** People sometimes describe salvation as Jesus seeing a person drowning in a sea of sin. So, He comes near and throws the drowning person a life preserver, which they grab and are saved. But, according to Ephesians 2 the sinner isn't drowning, they're already dead! And a dead person can't do anything to help themselves. So, in that illustration, Jesus would need to drag us out of the sea of sin and breathe life into us as we're born-again.

**Remember:** Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. He came to bring dead people to life! BUT, there's a seeming contradiction here in John 6 (and throughout Scripture)...

- **We are responsible to come to Jesus as the Father draws us.** In both of these verses (37; 44), Jesus says we are responsible to "come to" Him as the Father draws us.

So, now you're probably thinking, "Wait a minute Gene. You said – before we're saved – we're spiritually dead so we can't do anything to help ourselves. But then you say we're responsible to "come to" (or cooperate with) the Father as He draws us. So, if we're *dead*, how do we cooperate?"

Great question! These are the two truths that run side-by-side in Scripture, yet we have a hard time reconciling the two.

**Illustration:** Charles Spurgeon described salvation like a train that runs on two tracks or two rails. One rail is divine sovereignty, and the other is

human responsibility. Up close, the two tracks never intersect, but if you look far down the track, they run together. (show pic)

That's how it is with God's sovereignty and Man's responsibility. Here in this life (up close), we can't see how the two could ever intersect. But down the road in eternity, God will show us how the two intersected and worked together all along.

In fact, when a church member asked Spurgeon how he reconciled these two, he said, "I never try to reconcile friends." Because, in God's mind, the two are not at odds with each other.<sup>2</sup>

*"Intellectually harmonizing the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man is impossible humanly, but perfectly resolved in the infinite mind of God" – John MacArthur<sup>3</sup>*

Many people have a hard time believing these two truths are compatible because they can't fully explain it or comprehend it. But isn't the same thing true about the Trinity? Or the dual nature of Christ – He's fully God and fully man? Can you fully grasp or explain those? If so, then you are a prodigy that the world has never known.

So, salvation involves divine sovereignty *and* human responsibility. The Father *draws* us to the Son, but we are responsible to cooperate and receive Jesus as the Father draws us...

***John 1:12 "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."***

There's a responsibility on our part. But God is the One who initiates this good work in us – the work of salvation. But how secure is it once we have it?

## **2. My salvation is kept and protected by God, not by me.**

***John 6:38-39 [Jesus continues] "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> 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."***

<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 312). Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2006). *The MacArthur study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Jn 6:40). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Jesus said the Father's will is two-fold...

- Every person that the Father gives Him will come to Him.
- Jesus won't lose ANY of those who come to Him.

***John 18:9 [Jesus said] "This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."***

***John 10:27–30 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."***

It's impossible for Jesus to lose even ONE of His children. If it does happen then Jesus was either wrong or He lied.

***1 Peter 1:4–5 "[We have] an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."***

The word "**kept**" in verse 4 means "to be guarded, shielded, or watched over." It's a military term that shows how believers are under God's perpetual, round-the-clock protection. Your salvation is kept by God, NOT by you! Why? Because...

### **3. My salvation rests on God's promise, not my performance.**

***John 6:40 "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."***

Notice the promises of Jesus in the four verses we've looked at tonight...

- All who come to Me, *I will never cast out.* (vs.37)
- *I will lose none* that the Father has given Me. (vs.39)
- Everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him, *I will raise him up on the last day.* (vs.39; 40)

***Philippians 1:6 "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."***

Our eternal security – the assurance of our salvation – is anchored NOT in our commitment to do something for God, but in what Christ has done *for us* on the Cross. Our eternal security is NOT based on our faithfulness to Him; it's based on His faithfulness to us!

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### **Tangible ways to know if Jesus is “drawing” you to salvation...**

- 1) The Holy Spirit begins to convict you of your sin and your need for a Savior (John 16:8).
- 2) He awakens in you a previously unknown interest in spiritual things. Suddenly your ears are open, and your heart is drawn toward Him and His Word.
- 3) He places within you a desire to know Him, obey Him, and walk in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4).<sup>4</sup>



*Are those things happening within you tonight? (Invitation)*

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### **Small Groups**

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<sup>4</sup> What does it mean that God draws us to salvation? | GotQuestions.org