



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 6:34-40

“The Bread of Life”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading today is in John chapter 6. One of the great chapters on the sovereignty of God, and we're turning to verse 34 and reading through verse 40. John 6, verse 34 through verse 40. Now remember our Lord is having conversations with those who have in measure at least come to see him perform the sign of the five thousands, the feeding of the five thousand and also have perhaps heard of the walking on the water both by our Lord and by Peter, and these conversations gather around the theme of the feeding of the five thousands or Jesus as the bread of life. In verse 34 the conversation continues,

“Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. (Now let me interject these comments. The word “me” the pronoun in the objective case is in some of the manuscripts missing. Perhaps you have a version that reads, “But I said unto you that ye also have seen and believe not.” If the “me” is to be omitted, then the reference is probably to the signs that he mentions in verse 26. “Ye seek me not because you saw the signs but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.” On the other hand if the “me” is there then of course it is a reference to a seeing of him in a sense of coming to understand to some extent some of the significance of his claims. “Ye also have seen me

and believe not.”) All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (I’d like for you to notice particularly “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” And then notice that little phrase, “in no wise” in the last part of the verse.) For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. (One might ask at this point, “What is the will of the Father?” And so our Lord answers it from two standpoints.) And this is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

These are magnificent promises given by our Lord to which we ought to devote the greatest of personal attention. The subject for today as we turn again to the exposition of this great Gospel of John the theologian, as the ancient church called him, is “The Bread of Life.” One of the remarkable things about the brief passage that we have read from the conversation that the Lord Jesus was carrying on with the people of his day after the feeding of the five thousand is the fact that in this particular section that we have just read we have the first of the great “I AM” statements of the Gospel of John. They form tremendous claims of deity for the simple reason that the Lord Jesus uses this expression, “I AM” against the background that Moses had in Exodus chapter 3.

When he saw the burning bush and heard the angel of the Lord speak from the bush, and when he asked for the name of the God who was to guide him as he led the children of Israel out of Egypt was told that it was impossible for God to give him a name by way of definition. He simply was told, “I am who I am, Moses.” And Moses learned an important truth, that to attempt to define God is to limit him, and therefore there is no absolute definition of God possible. There is a relational definition possible and later in that same passage the Lord said to Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” Identifying himself as the covenant keeping Yahweh, Jehovah or LORD.

Now when he said, I am who I am.” That precise phraseology became very significant in the Old Testament, and particularly in the Book of Isaiah. The Prophet Isaiah speaks of God as the one who is. “I am he, any who.” In the Hebrew text. “I am he, the firsts and the last, the beginning and the end.” Expressions that are taken over by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation, and which in effect identify the Lord who led the children out of Egypt thousands of years before with the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Now in the New Testament in our Lord’s ministry it’s not surprising then to find that often there is upon his lips this little phrase, “I am.” And I am sure that the reason that he used this so much is that they might make the identification between the Yahweh who lead the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt and who dealt with Israel as the covenant keeping God in the Old Testament with the Lord Jesus Christ who was there in their midst and who would soon accomplish the atoning sacrifice which would lay the grounds for their forgiveness of sins and for the fulfillment of all of the other blessings that belong to them as people of the covenant of God. It’s remarkable that these things are found so plainly in the word of God. To listen to others today who speak of the Lord Jesus as an amiable carpenter, as a spiritual anarchist, as an emanate cataclysmatist, or an orthodox rabbi or a charismatic evangelist, or simply master and teacher or may refer to him simply and almost entirely as Jesus.

William Temple was one of the better known of the archbishops of Canterbury in recent years, and he once made a very significant statement, which has been cited often and I’ve referred to it before. Referring to the liberals for he himself was a conservative. He said, “At their worst the liberals scale down the imperial mind of Christ to the level of a well-meaning Sunday school teacher. The liberal Jesus is not nearly big enough to explain Christianity.” The archbishop said, “Why any man should have troubled to crucify the Christ of liberal Protestantism has always been a mystery. Who would bother to crucify someone who claimed only to be a teacher? But our Lord claimed a great deal more than that. He claimed to be the Jehovah of the Old Testament. He claimed to be

God and when he called God his own Father, they knew that he was making the claim of equality with God, and therefore they crucified him.”

These seven great, “I am” statements found in the gospel of John reveal the perfection of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and identify him plainly with the God of the Bible, the triune God—Father, Son and Spirit—and the person sharing in the one essence. Listen to what he says, “I am the bread of life.” In John 6:35. In John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. He followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of the life.” In John chapter 9 he repeats it in the fifth verse that he is the light of the world, and then in the 10th chapter in the 9th verse using another figure he says, “I am the door by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” In verse 11 he says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” And then in chapter 11, at the time of the restoration of Lazarus in verse 25, he says, “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this.” In John chapter 14, in verse 6, he says, “I am the way the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Notice the exclusiveness of the salvation that Jesus Christ claims to possess. And finally the last of the seven great “I am” statements in chapter 15 in verse 1, “I am the true vine.” So here is the passage in which the first of these remarkable statements, which begin with “I am”, is found.

Now he’s still in the first phase of his conversations with the individuals who had at least come to know something about the feeding of the five thousand and perhaps had heard reports of his walking upon the water, and of Peter’s walking upon the water as well. Now he has just said to them, “Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.” And they reply. “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” But it’s obvious they do not understand that he is speaking of himself. It’s just as it was when our Lord was speaking with the woman of Samaria. He spoke about whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water spinning up into everlasting life.” She said, “Sir,

give me this water that I thirst not neither come here to draw.” So she did not understand that he was speaking about the spiritual water of the Holy Spirit, and they did not understand that he was speaking about the bread of life, spiritual bread. So the interrogation of the multitudes reveals the fact that they do not yet understand what our Lord is speaking about, and so he explains giving his interpretation of the bread of God in verse 35, and verse 36. Notice his first statement, “I am the bread life.”

Now this is designed to be an illustration. The fact that he says, “I am the bread of life” would indicate that. What is it that is similar between our Lord and bread? Well first of all bread is a necessary food. Most of us eat bread three times a day. Some of us twice, some try to keep from eating bread just every now and then, but some of us who like bread, well we eat bread constantly. It is a necessary food. It’s the bread that sustains us. “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Jesus also said, so it’s a necessary food, and our Lord is the bread of life. He would like to draw the relationship between the necessity of the physical bread, and the necessity of the spiritual bread of Jesus Christ.

If we do not have him, we do not have the life that really counts, spiritual life. It is also a universal kind of food. And so he states in verse 40, “And this is the will of him that sent me that everyone who seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” In other words this food is for the world, both of Jews and Gentiles. And finally it is a very satisfying food. “I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger. He that believeth on me shall never thirst.” So here is an illustration in which our Lord sets out the necessity of believing in him, the necessity of feeding upon him, the universality of the offer of the food of eternal life, and the satisfying nature of in the enjoyment of life in Christ.

I think it was in our last study that I made reference too to the similarity between the process of making bread and the process by which the Lord Jesus becomes the bread of life. For the grain must be cut down. It must be bruised. It must be baked, and so the Lord Jesus Christ must go through the terribly fiery experience of the cross of Christ in which he bears the sin of sinners crying out, “My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?” And then ultimately those beautiful words, “It

is finished.” And so in the preparation of the bread of life, it was necessary for him to engage in his atoning ministry.

There is a human preparation and that is the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. And those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are those in whose hearts the Holy Spirit has already begun to work. For Paul says, “There is none that seeketh after God. No not one.” And so as we have often said, when a person is really seeking after spiritual things that is the evidence itself that the Holy Spirit has begun to work in that persons heart and life, and the individual appropriation is referred to by, “He that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” So that coming and believing are linked together and refer to the appropriation of the bread of life.

Now Jesus at this point is not like modern preachers. They tend to want to complement the congregation, never say anything bad about them because you are all so good. You put money in the collection plate and you support the preachers. And so you don’t have preachers saying things that are not so nice. If they do well then you point the preacher to the front door and say, “We’ll see you again one of these days.” Our Lord was not that kind of preacher. He preached truth. He did it in the right spirit, and there is a spirit in which one must do that, and I am not sure that I have the spirit to do it. But notice the next verse. “But I said unto you that ye also have seen and believed not.” In other words he chides them for their malicious rejection of God's offered gift.

Now at this point you notice there is no connection between verse 36 and verse 37. There is no “for” or “because”. Now when I was going through the college of Charleston in Charleston South Carolina many years ago, and was taking classical Greek long before I had ever sought after the Lord, I was a member of a Presbyterian church but so far as I know the only thing the Presbyterians believed was that they believed in God and I do remember Sunday School learning about Moses and a few other things that I have often said to you that knew that somebody swallowed a whale or a whale swallowed someone, and I wasn’t exactly sure whether the whale swallowed Jonah, and Jonah swallowed the whale which would be the bigger miracle I presume, but

nevertheless was no indication of the great faith that I had, only ignorance. I did know that I was to believe in predestination because all of my Episcopalian friends, and Charleston is an Episcopalian city, and all of my friends and even a number of my relatives were Episcopalians and they knew more about what I believed than I did, and they would say to me, “You believe in predestination.” And I usually would just kind of look at them, because I didn’t know exactly what they were talking about.

At any rate, when I was going through the college of Charleston, I, for some reason, sometime I will explain why it was the providence of God. I had majored in Latin in high school and also in college, and while playing golf everyday, and the only course that I could take one semester was a course in classical Greek. That’s the only thing that fit into my schedule so that I could continue playing on the golf team, and in golf tournaments over the summer over the country, and so I took classical Greek. And that’s how I was prepared for what I would do later on, even when I was not saved. Well I learned something from my professors, of Greek. I liked Greek, and one thing that they told me was this. The Greeks love to use connectives between sentences because they are usually very logical in their thinking, and so they like to connective particles such as “therefore,” “then,” “for this reason,” “consequently,” “so that,” and when those connectives were missing, usually one of two things was true. Perhaps there was just absolutely no connection between the following statement and the preceding or the authors were carried along by some sense of emotion, and did not have time to use that connective.

Well there is no connective that begins verse 37, and I suggest that this asyndeton for that’s the technical word, “no connection, no binder” that this asyndeton points to silent contemplation on the part of our Lord of the reasons why they refuse to come to him, so he said to them as they stood before them, “I said unto you that ye also have seen and believe not.” And as he thinks about this he realizes that the reason that they do not respond is because they’ve not been given by the Father. Listen verse 37, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” In other words our Lord here points to the distinction between the elect and the non-elect as the explanation for the failure of some to respond to his ministry.

Now I want you to notice the first clause very closely because it's a very important statement and in one of our later studies I want to draw together this text and one other in the 6th chapter of the Gospel of John to show that there is a logically incontrovertible proof of the sovereign election of God. And we'll do that one of these Sunday mornings in the next study or two of the Book of John. All I want you to notice at this point however is that he says all that the Father giveth to me shall come to me.

Now it's possible of course to come to our Lord by carnal attraction. That is to be attracted by the beauty of his message, but not really obey him, now of course to come to him and to obey him is what is desirable. You say [to] a little child, if you are a father and he speaks to his children and he says, “John do so and so.” And if John says, “My, doesn't my father speak with authority? Doesn't he use beautiful diction? Isn't there a remarkable climax in his tone too?” But if he doesn't do anything, his father is not too impressed by his admiration for his diction, and for the authority with which he speaks. So it's not simply enough to hear. One must also respond.

Now it's possible to be attracted to spiritual things in a carnal way. Everybody goes to church, and so we go to church. Everybody goes to Sunday school, so we go to Sunday school. Everybody carries their Bibles to Believers Chapel, so I carry my Bible to Believers Chapel. But there may be no real reality there. No spiritual reality. Our churches are filled today with people who are carnally attracted to Christianity. It's the nice thing to do. It's the respectable thing to do. It's the thing we do in Dallas, but there is no real heart relationship to our Lord. Our Lord is talking about that when he says, “I said unto you that you also have seen me and you do not believe. Multitudes come by carnal attraction but not by divine attraction. Divine attraction is the Father giving in ages past to Christ and then the Holy Spirit bringing to personal faith in Christ.

Now, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” He says. And so I learn from this that faith is not at man's disposal. In other words it is something that is given by God ultimately. Now our Lord is talking, and these are important words. Furthermore all are not given. Now the evidence that all are not given will be stated later on, but one if he just simply looks around and if he

looks at the Scriptures and notices that not everybody is saved he will know that not everybody has been given. Judas was not given. Esau was not given. Ishmael was not given. And down through the years individuals have not been given. All that the Father giveth shall be come.

Now if everybody was given, everybody would come and we would have the doctrine of universalism, which the Bible plainly opposes. So all are not given. Does that cause you to stumble? Does that disturb you? There is a sense in which it is proper to be disturbed, but does that so disturb you that you cannot feel a sense of attraction to the God of the Bible? These are some of the ways in which God has of separating the saints from those who are merely professors. The third point that he makes here is that not anyone who is given will fail to come, and also not anyone who is given will ever fall away. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”

Now that text means a whole lot to me and sometimes I get a little excited. I try not to get too excited in these studies because it's not nice to see a preacher dancing around a platform. [Laughter] Coattails flying—things like that. I put on my full dress suit and appear before the TV screen and act like some who act. I personally don't respond to that but occasionally the truth is so significant you know that you have to get just a little bit excited.

Now this text is one of those great texts of our Lord. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” When I was still in the insurance business in Birmingham, Alabama and I had just been converted, I was troubled as probably most of you are after you have become a Christian with assurance of salvation. I wondered if I really was a Christian. I remember reading this text, “All of that the Father giveth to me, shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” And just at that point it seemed to me that the thing that I ought to do was to go into my bedroom and to get down upon my knees and just acknowledge the truth of this text and rest upon it. I still remember the exact place I was in my room by the side of my bed, and I prayed something like this, “Lord, you know that I have been questioning my own salvation. Wondering if I really do have faith in Jesus Christ, but this text says, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ And I don't

know whether I have come at this point or not but I am coming now, and I am counting on this text.” “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” and since that time I have not had doubts of my salvation because it appeared to me that my salvation rested ultimately upon the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ to his promises. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Now, I like that statement also for the fact that he says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Now those of you that are able to read Greek will know that this is construction that is one of the emphatic ways of expressing a negative prohibition. The subjunctive of emphatic negation is technically what it is. And the construction is designed to stress, to emphasize the negation. Actually in the text itself there are no words that specifically correspond to “in no wise.” But that’s the sense of the construction, and it could be rendered, “I will never cast out” or “I will by no means cast out” or it could be just simply, “I will not cast out.”

John Bunyan found this text very important. And he writes about it. He says, “This Scripture did also most sweetly visit my soul.” Now Bunyan you know was a strong believer in the sovereign grace of God. And *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, or *Progress* as the British call it. *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is one of the great Christian books of all time. He said, “Oh the comfort that I have had from this word in no wise. As who should say by no means for nothing whatever he hath done, but Satan would greatly labor to pull this promise from me telling of me that Christ did not mean me, and such as I. But sinners of a lower rank that had not done as I had done, but I should answer him again. Satan, here is in this word, no such exception but him that comes. Him, any him,” Bunyan says. I can sense what he is going through. “Any him, Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. If ever Satan and I did strive for any word of God in all my life, it was for this good word of Christ, he at one end, and I at the other. Oh, what work did we make? It was for this in John I say that we did so tug and strive. He pulled and I pulled, but God be praised I got the better of him.” Bunyan said. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." So we are not only kept by his power. We are kept by his love. Paul says in Romans 8, and here he goes on to say. We are kept by the will of God. How wonderful is the will of God?

Now, notice what follows. He says, for I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. This is the reason for the success of the keeping ministry of the Lord God. Jesus Christ has come to affect the Father’s will. Therefore the one who comes to him will in no wise be cast out because I have come to do the will of God, so standing behind the word of the Son is the word and will of the Father. And in coming to Christ we have that assurance that we shall never be cast out. Well, someone might say, “What specifically is the will of God?” Well he tells us what the will of God is in verse 39 and verse 40, objectively and then subjectively. Objectively he says, “It is the life and resurrection that God gives to the given ones.” Listen.

Verse 39, “And this is the Father’s will who hath sent me that of all that he hath given me I should loose none or nothing but should raise it up again at the last day.” So objectively the Father’s will is life and resurrection for whom? The given ones. Look at the text, “And this is the Father’s will who hath sent me that of all that he hath given me I should loose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” John Calvin says, “From starting point to finishing post, the Lord God holds us.”

Now, Hendrickson, one of the commentators on the Gospel of John who has just recently gone to heaven, magnificent commentator in so many ways, Mr. Hendrickson says, “Scripture teaches a counsel that cannot be changed, a calling that cannot be resolved, an inheritance that cannot be defiled, a foundation that cannot be shaken, a seal that cannot be broken, and a life that cannot perish. This is the Father’s will who hath sent me that of all that he hath given me I should loose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day.” And you’ll notice the Lord not only cares for us spiritually, but for our body as well promising resurrection.

Now that is of course the objective side. He’s going to give life and the resurrection of the body for the given ones. But he also speaks subjectively speaking of the responsibility of men in the light of the divine work. “And this is the will of him that sent him that everyone who seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up again at the last day.” So on the subjective side the Lord Jesus stresses that the responsibility of men is to respond in faith to the

message concerning the Lord Jesus as the bread of life. What is the sign that we belong to the Lord? What is the sign that we are one of the given ones? What’s the sign? Well the sign is faith. Those who believe they are the given ones. Those who believe, they are the given ones. Those who do not believe, they are not the given ones at least we do not know that yet. The time may come when they do believe. But the sign that we belong is the human exercise of faith. You know in the New Testament you often read an expression like this, “When he saw their faith.” Do you remember how Paul knew that people were elect? He said to the Thessalonians that I know brethren, beloved by God you are election.

Now one might say how did Paul know that? Was it when he was caught up in the third heaven, he took a quick glance at the book of life as he passed through and happened to see the names of the church in Thessalonica? Did he have some access into the throne room of God? No as a matter of fact, Paul says that he heard things up there, which it was not lawful for him to utter. How did he know? Well he said that when he preached the word of God among the Thessalonians, when that word was preached in their presence they responded in a certain way that made it plain that they were elect. He said, “Knowing brethren beloved your election for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.”

That’s how you know individuals are elect. I do not know who are the given ones. I do not know who are the elect. No man knows who are the elect, even the apostles did not know who are the elect. Our Lord knew the given ones, but we can know the elect when we see that when that when the word of God comes among them they respond and they respond in power. They respond in Holy Spirit. They respond in much assurance. And the evidence of the life that is given to them is seen in the activity spiritually that takes place in their lives. They love the word of God. They love the saints of God. They seek to witness for Jesus Christ. These are the inevitable signs of new life. And so I ask you the question are you of the given ones? Do you belong to these that have been given by the Father to the Son? He will speak over and over about this. The Lord Jesus himself.

Now let me conclude by just making a few comments, but I also want to do something else in a moment. There is of course a tremendous invitation in this passage. We read in verse 35, “I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” There is no greater invitation that could be given by our Lord than come, believe, that he has died upon the cross for sinners. And that in his death there is forgiveness of sins. There is life. The Lord Jesus has accomplished that sacrifice so come and believe. There are three fundamental words that are related to this appropriation. One of course is that word giveth. That’s a word of destiny. It’s divine sovereign election. Yes, that’s the hated word, election. Isn’t it strange that people should rebel and react against election? Mr. Moody used to say, “The whosoever wills are the elect, and the whosoever won'ts are the non-elect.”

Now there is a sense in which that is true. Speaking purely from the human standpoint, those who do will to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and they will remember because the Holy Spirit works in their will to make them willing. They are the elect, and they evidence that by their faith, and those who do not to the end of their days evidence by their lack of faith that they don’t belong to him. It’s perfectly proper to speak that way. I know some of you thought, “That sounds like an Arminian to me.” Well Mr. Moody was something of an Arminian, but Arminians can say some good things too, and we of course as Calvinists, well I don’t want to include you. Some of us Calvinists may want to say things a little more accurately and we might be a little suspicious of someone who does not emphasize the divine side rather than the human side, but I find nothing wrong with that statement as it is.

Now when he says, “giveth,” I say this is the word of divine sovereign election. Should we preach election? Should we preach election? You know when I was going through theological seminary one of my reverend teachers Dr. Lewis Sperry Chaffer, when I get to heaven I want to renew fellowship with him. I learned a lot of things from Dr. Chaffer and I loved him as a man of faith, a great man of faith, but I do think when we get to heaven he will say, “Lewis I am sorry. I made that statement that I made in the theology class one day.” For he told us as students that we should never

preach the doctrine of election to unsaved people that we should only preach it to the saints because it was too difficult and too divisive. Well actually I've found it's at least as divisive among the saints as it is among the non-saints, and in fact may be more so among the saints than it is among the so-called non-saints.

I thought about that a great deal. I accepted it so far as I remember but shortly, well I think it was probably a year or two afterwards I was thinking about that statement. I have always thought about that statement, and I realized as I studied John chapter 6 that John chapter 6 did not really square with my theology professor's advice because our Lord spoke these great words on divine sovereign election to the unsaved Jewish people. Some were believers, but many an in fact it seems most were not. And furthermore the crowd responded in a negative way. For at the end we read, “And many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.” And in fact we read, “They said this is a hard saying. Who can hear it?” Well that is exactly what people say today. “God, deliver me from those who say this is a hard saying, who can hear it?” it is a hard saying, but I want to hear it because it's our Lord's word, and therefore important.

Listen to Johnny Calvin. [Laughter] “There are others,” Calvin says, “who wishing to cure this evil all but require that every mention of predestination be buried. Indeed they teach us to avoid any question of it as we would a reef. Therefore we must guard against believers of anything disclosed about predestination in Scripture, lest we seem either wickedly to defraud them of the blessing of their God or to accuse and scoff at the Holy Spirit for having published what it is in any way profitable to suppress. If I do not preach the doctrine of divine sovereign election, if I do not preach that there are some that are given and there are some that are not given what do I do? Why I take from the saints the wonderful blessed privilege of hearing the great doctrine of the sovereign electing God and the comfort that that gives us in the experiences of life. And then secondly I stand off and say the Holy Spirit has published something, for he's the author of the word of God. He's published something that it is really proper for us to suppress. I don't want to stand against a God who has revealed truth in the Scriptures.”

Calvin also says, “They say that this whole discussion is dangerous for godly minds because it hinders exhortations because it shakes faith, because it disturbs and terrifies the heart itself but this is nonsense.” Augustine admits that for these reasons he was frequently charged with preaching predestination too freely. But as it was easy for him he overwhelmingly refuted the charge. In another place he says, “Whoever then heaps odium upon the doctrine of predestination openly reproaches God as if he had inadvisably let slip something hurtful to the church.” Can you imagine that God should have let slip something that is really hurtful to us?

You know the saints of God, the true saints of God, see things a lot better than some of us who have been around Christians for a long, long time. Let me read you a letter that I got just a few weeks ago. This person is two years a Christian. She was listening to the radio in Portland, Oregon. “Dear Pastor,” She doesn’t know I am not the pastor of Believer's Chapel. “Today I listen to your message on the election of God’s chosen believers. How refreshing to hear a minister speak the word in an area where I have struggled for some time. I have often” She has that underlined. “I have often thought that we are elected according to my readings in the Bible. I could never understand how any other interpretation could be taken from the Scripture. Yet the overwhelming majority of Christians I discuss this with including several pastors,” She has in parenthesis. “felt everyone was elected. They cited Scriptures such as John 3:16 et cetera to back their ideas, but I looked at these and felt upon close examination that only by God’s grace are a few chosen.”

Now I think she’s wrong in saying a few chosen because we shall learn in Scripture that ultimately the world shall come to faith in Christ at the conclusion of his program. That’s not true, but she’s only two years a Christian. She’s a long ways along the path to understating Scripture. “My opinion never has swayed even though I have desperately tried to understand their ideas. I believe the Lord reveals truth to us by his Spirit when reading the word. Before becoming a Christian at the time I was called two years ago, I was totally blind to God’s truth and salvation. I had attended church all my life and yet lacked an understanding of God’s word. When I was called by God and believed that Jesus is the Messiah suddenly truth was revealed and I understood spiritual things like

never before.” She underlines, never. “There is much more to my testimony however this is sufficient in respect to the point of expressing my agreement with your message. One last thing, I also believe that we do not always know God's will for individuals, whether they are elect or not.” How much understanding she has been given in two years. “And it is our responsibility to share God's message to all, and to pray for their salvation. My husband is an unbeliever, and I know that God holds the power to call him as well. I pray my husband will be among the elect few. Will you pray with me? His name is Rick.”

I think that's a magnificent letter, and she's come to the truth of divine sovereign electing grace in spite of the preachers. And in spite of the friends in her church she has come by reading the Bible. Our responsibility of course is to believe. We don't know who the elect are. We are not able as Mr. Spurgeon used to say to run up behind someone, pull their coattails up and see if there's a stripe there, and if there is then say, “Ah that's one of the elect.” [Laughter] And we'll give the word to them. We don't know that we preach the word universally to all who are sinners, and all are sinners, that God may call his saints. And faith is our responsibility. And it should be personal.

There is a story of a Scottish minister, which I have always liked. He was teaching a small boy in the home of one of his parishioners to read the 23rd Psalm, and the young boy's father was a shepherd, and the little boy helped him from time to time, and they started out and he was saying, “The Lord is my shepherd.” And the little boy replied, “The Lord is my shepherd.” He said, “No that's not the way to read it. The Lord is not my Shepherd.” The little boy said, “The Lord is my shepherd.” He said, “No that's not the way to read it. Put the emphasis where it ought to be put.” He said, “Look, the Lord is my.” And with that he gripped his finger. “My Shepherd.” And the little boy said, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Not long after that he was sent out by his father to take a look at some of the sheep that were in the pasture. He didn't return. They went out and they found him at the bottom of a high cliff. He had evidently stumbled and fallen off. And life was ebbing from his body, but they were so delighted when they looked down and saw that little finger as life passed from him. He was saying, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

Just this past week I read an account of something that Vance Havener, a Southern Baptist Bible teacher and evangelist, said was one of his most useful illustrations. He said that he had often used this story in his sermons. It concerned a housewife who said to her husband, “This morning somebody knocked at the door, and when I opened it a stranger asked me rather abruptly, ‘Do you know Jesus Christ?’ And she said to her husband, ‘I didn’t know how to answer him, and finally closed the door in his face.’” And the husband said, “Why didn’t you tell him that you are a teacher of the ladies’ Bible class in our church and president of the woman’s missionary society?” and she said, “That’s not what he asked me.” [Laughter] He asked, “Do you know Christ?” That’s really the question. Do you know Christ? May God help you to respond positively? If you don’t know him, it’s very simple to come to know him. Acknowledge your sin. Look at the cross of Christ, where he died for sinners, and plead his saving work for your salvation for time and for eternity. Come. “And him that cometh to me,” Jesus said, “I will in no wise cast out.”

[Prayer] “Our Father we thank Thee and praise Thee for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful it is to know that eternal life is offered to all sinners. And we thank Thee for that great work in ages past whereby we were given to Jesus Christ. Lord, we pray that as the word has been preached and is preached there may be responsiveness to it. May the Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in his word? Go with us now as we part for Jesus sake. Amen.