

The Effectual Calling of God

John 6:44 Bible Commentary

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In John 6, Jesus said: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44). In this verse Jesus taught that in order for anyone to be able to come to Him, they must be drawn by God the Father. Otherwise, they are unable to accept the Gospel of Christ; they are unable to believe in Him. Now let us look carefully at the second part of this verse. After Jesus said that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him, He then immediately said, “and I will raise him up at the last day”.

Notice the certainty in the statement where Jesus said, “I will”, which teaches us that those whom the Father draws to His Son *will* be raised up at the last day. Jesus did not say that those who are drawn must then make the decision to come to Him in order to be saved, as opposed to rejecting Him. However Jesus did say clearly, and without any added conditions or any mention of man’s cooperation, that those whom the Father draws *will* be raised up at the last day.

John 6:44 is one of several Bible passages we will consider that teach us about the calling of an individual to faith in Christ. Jesus taught us that this calling of God, this drawing by God the Father, is an effectual calling, meaning that all of those who receive this inward calling *will* indeed come to Him, and they will all be raised up at the last day. Without this effectual calling of God, the mind of sinful man, which is hostile toward God, has no desire to come to Christ and has not even the ability to come to Him (Romans 8:7).

There is an outward calling whereby the Gospel of Christ is preached in the hearing of men, which is illustrated in the parable of the sower recorded in Matthew 13:1-23. Jesus taught

us in this parable that *the only place where the seed sown by the farmer produced a harvest of good fruit was where it fell upon "good soil"*. This is to say that when the seed of the Gospel of Christ is spoken in man's hearing, the only place where a harvest of good fruit will be realized is where the message is heard by God's elect. In contrast to others who hear the same Gospel message, God's elect both hear *and understand* the message, and they will therefore be saved and bear fruit to the glory of God. (Consider Matthew 13:23 and Acts 22:9).

As opposed to others who may receive the outward proclamation of the Gospel of Christ in their hearing, God's elect not only hear this outward calling for men to put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, but they also receive the inward calling of God, which always results in the regeneration of those who receive it. In His time, the Father draws His elect to faith in His Son Jesus Christ, and they all do in fact come to Him. This drawing, which Jesus spoke about in John 6:44, is the inward calling of God, and it always results in the one who is drawn being raised up at the last day, just as Jesus said. *With this inward, effectual calling of God regeneration occurs, and one is born into the kingdom of God, apart from their own personal decision or cooperation.* The one who has received this calling has no more chance of refusing it than Saul had of refusing God's call when he was struck down on the Damascus road, even while he was still intent on persecuting the church.

If anyone rejects the Gospel of Christ, it is only because they have never been drawn by the Father; they have never received this inward, effectual calling of God which Jesus spoke about in John 6:44. Believing in Christ is not something that sinful, unregenerate man has the ability or capacity to do, in and of himself, in order to obtain salvation for himself. He must be drawn by the Father. When a man is drawn to Christ by the Father, he is regenerated. He is born into the kingdom of God, and evidence of this regeneration and conversion which God has wrought within him is that he does indeed believe in Christ. Man does not reject the inward calling of God. Rather when the Father draws a man, Jesus *will* raise him up at the last day, just as He said He would.

There is one other thing that we should mention regarding the "drawing" by the Father that Jesus spoke about in John 6:44. The Greek word in the original text which is translated to English as "draws" in John 6:44 is the word "helko", which means "to draw" or "to drag". With this meaning in mind, we can easily see from the accounts of Saul's conversion in the Book of Acts how he was forcefully "dragged" into the kingdom of God apart from any decision or cooperation of his own, even as he was "still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1).

Later in John 6, Jesus once again emphasized man's inability to come to Him, unless it has been granted to him by the Father. Speaking to a crowd, Jesus said that the words He had spoken to them are "spirit" and "life" (John 6:63), and yet there were some there who did not believe. Jesus then explained the reason that there were some who had heard His words but did not believe, when He said to them: "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." (John 6:65).

Jesus knew that some of those following Him at the time refused to accept Him and His words. Knowing His own sheep, and knowing that there were also some there who did not

believe, Jesus emphasized again in John 6:65 what He had already taught in John 6:44, when He said that no one *could* come to Him; no one was *able* to come to Him, “unless it has been granted him from the Father”.

In John chapters eight and ten, Jesus again taught of the inability of unregenerate men to hear His words and come to Him, unless they are numbered among those whom He referred to as His sheep. In John 10:24-26, we read that some Jews had gathered around Jesus and asked Him not to keep them in suspense, but to tell them plainly if He was indeed the Christ. Jesus replied to them saying that He had already told them, and that the miracles He had done in His Father’s name among them bore witness to His claim that He was in truth the Christ. And then Jesus told them: “But you do not believe *because you are not of My sheep*.” (John 10:26, emphasis added). It has only been given to God’s elect, or those whom Jesus referred to as His sheep, to believe in Him.

Notice that Jesus did not say to them they were not His sheep because they had decided for themselves not to believe, but conversely He said that the reason they did not believe in Him was because they were not His sheep. Only those who belong to God, or those whom Jesus calls His sheep, will hear His voice (John 10:3-4, 10:27). *All of the rest will not be able to hear* (John 6:44, 6:65, 8:43, 8:47, 10:25-26). Jesus, being the Son of God, knew that these individuals to whom He was talking were not numbered among His sheep. Only God’s elect, or those whom Jesus referred to as His “sheep”, will hear His voice. These will be called to faith in Christ, and they will therefore believe in Him. All of the rest will be left in their sins.

Jesus said: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” (John 6:63). The Spirit of God gives eternal life, and unregenerate man, or man who is “in the flesh” so to speak, is completely without the ability to accept the Gospel of Christ unless he is called to faith by God Himself (John 6:44, 6:65, Romans 8:7, I Corinthians 2:14).

If and when this calling of God occurs in an individual’s life, they are regenerated; they have been born again. Their being born again does not come about as a result of their own decision made when they are still dead in their sins, or still in the flesh, because as Jesus said: “the flesh profits nothing”. Man’s salvation comes about by the sovereign choice and effectual calling of God.

All men will remain hostile toward God unless and until they are called by Him to faith in Christ, just as was the case with Saul right up until the moment of his conversion on the Damascus Road. The Scriptures teach us that man’s depravity is total. Since man in his unregenerate state is hostile toward God and unable to seek Him, then God must seek men and Himself bring them to faith, if any are to be saved.