

Called by the Gospel

“The Jews therefore murmured concerning him, because he said, I am the bread which came down out of heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How doth he now say, I am come down out of heaven? Jesus answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me” (John 6:41-45).

What are these words to you, and your life? Are they an occasion of comfort, or an occasion of stumbling? Often times, when man’s imagination mingles with the divine revelation, a myriad of doctrines and practices arise, either by addition or subtraction, and this is one of those revelations.

Here is how the conversation goes: How does an individual come to Christ? Answer: “No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day.” Pour this revelation into a pot, stir it thoroughly, and add a dash of man’s imagination, and *voila!* you have a concoction that will knock your socks off!

So, you ask, what was in man’s imagination? The position formulated from this combination is that “Whether plowing in the field, or sitting in the pew, God will call those who are His by touching their hearts in some spiritual way,” i.e., “In addition to the outward general call to salvation (which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel), the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be -- and often is -- rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call, the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ...The Holy Spirit's conviction and drawing is what drags us to God. We do not come by our own will, which is utterly depraved and naturally hostile toward God.” In short, according to this doctrine, if God determines to save you, you are saved whether you like it or not.

However, Jesus continued his explanation of how this drawing is accomplished, saying, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me:” thus, hearing and learning. How is this accomplished?

The night the Lord was betrayed, he prayed to the Father: (1) for the apostles, saying, "I have given them thy word; and the world hated them...Sanctify them in truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:14, 17). (2) "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20-21). Therefore, the Lord instructed his apostles to "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

The Apostle Paul also affirmed that mankind would receive salvation through the process of teaching, or hearing, saying, "...for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14), and that his gospel "is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). It is through this process that man is taught, hears, and learns from the Father, and it is through this process that though "ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18), and thus, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The Apostle John affirms that his and other apostles' writings are the means through which man comes to the Father, saying, "'Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). ret