

18 *Are The 'Drawing' Passages Explaining Salvation Principles?*

Is Predestination Found in Jesus' Words?

Some teach that salvation does not involve a voluntary human decision. God instead causes your human will, against its will, to make whatever first and later steps God requires for your salvation. If God insists you must persevere in good works, obedience, etc., for salvation, God supposedly does not merely supply the power, but *makes* you do the works and obey *against your own will*. It is an irresistible grace from the beginning to the end.¹

The advantage such doctrine of salvation holds, if true, is that you do not have to worry about exerting yourself to do good works or to obey. God will perfectly make sure you accomplish the requisite obedience, whatever that may be. By you relinquishing all responsibility to God, a predestinarian view of salvation makes it clear that you have utterly *no* responsibility to do anything to be saved. This is not merely an indirect deduction. This is the main point of this doctrine, so that salvation remains *without works on your part*.

Yet, in interpreting Jesus' doctrine of salvation, are there any verses *from* Jesus, and Jesus alone, that support this idea of irresistible grace? Are we ultimately saved on judgment day without any human will involved at all?

1. Sometimes this is expressed in self-contradictory ways. In one breath Calvin will say it is a "powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit" or Gill will say it "supposes power and influence, yet not always coercion and force...." (See "Irresistible Grace," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irresistible_grace, accessed 7-10-07).

The answer is a resounding *no*. In fact, the opposite is found.

Predestination's Importance In Certain Denominations

I was a member for over 15 years in a Presbyterian church. Predestination is a dominant theme of this denomination. For a Presbyterian, predestination is an important source of assurance. It is how the Calvinists ultimately can agree with the Lutherans that we are saved by *faith alone*.

The Presbyterians, as taught by their Calvinist heritage, would say the regeneration of the Holy Spirit gave you faith, and from that sprang all the works and obedience by God's faithful assurance. Hence, salvation is by faith alone. In this way, the Calvinist-Presbyterians would disavow and discourage any notion one should contemplate doing works for salvation-sake. That view of works is, according to Calvinism, a heresy. It is a heresy because one is saved by God's predetermination that you would do works rather than by works *per se*. You are saved without any *impetus* for obedience coming by your *will* trying to follow God.

This aspect of predestination is also known within Calvinism as the tenet of perseverance of the saints. This doctrine simply states that the saints (those whom God has saved) will remain in God's hand until they are glorified and brought to abide with Him in heaven. There is never any chance you will lose your salvation.

Curiously, Calvinists also teach you must nevertheless be **warned** you could lose your salvation for various behaviors (*e.g.*, the many passages from Jesus in this *Jesus' Words on Salvation*) because God uses the warning of your losing salvation as the guaranteed-way that you will not lose it. Thus, the message of the warning is itself *untrue*, but it is a necessary *untruth* that makes the real truth — the inability of you to lose your salvation — become true.²

Thus, in Calvinism, it is often said salvation depends on the sovereign discriminating grace of God selecting those who are to be saved.

When sometimes this doctrine must face Scriptural challenges and looks like it will collapse, it scrapes by with one final solution to trump all arguments: supposedly all things happen by God's sovereign *will*. This is an active not passive *will*. Hence, no human decision happens that God has not always already *willed* in advance. Hence, whether you accept Christ or reject Him, it is always the sovereignty of God that wills either choice.

This may seem nonsense to evangelicals, but it is all quite serious business among Calvinists. Among my closest friends for years are those who think this way, and think anyone who does not *see* these truths are deluded.

The Key Passages

The passages cited by Calvinists for perseverance that are from Jesus are those where the Lord talks about 'drawing.' For example, John 6:44. Then this *drawing* is claimed to potentially mean 'dragging.' Indeed, *helkuso* does have this meaning sometimes. *See*, John 18:10, 21:6; 21:11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; James 2:6. However, Vines says it is unlikely it means *drag* in John 6:44-47.³

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2. The self-contradictoriness of this Calvinist doctrine was highlighted and discussed in my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) at 504.
 3. As Vines points out, *helkuso* is distinctly less forceful than *suro*, which means *to drag violently or forcefully*. Vines then says "this less violent significance" to *helkuo*, which is absent in *suro*, dictates the correct understanding in spiritual contexts is a "drawing by inward power, by Divine impulse...." ("Drag," *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, reprinted at http://www.antioch.com.sg/cgi-bin/bible/vines/get_defn.pl?num=809 (accessed 7-10-07).)

The Calvinists do not respect Vines' opinion, and remain undaunted. Thus, they say if truly John 6:44 really says dragging, this would imply the dragging is against our will. Then this *dragging* of which Jesus supposedly speaks is to be equated to predestining you to salvation.

However, there is a fundamental categorical error in this reading. None of these *drawing-dragging* statements are salvation statements.

The First Drawing Passage

Jesus according to the American Standard, with corrections capitalized, says:

No man can come [aorist active infinitive] **TOWARD** [Greek, *pros*] me, except the Father that sent me SHOULD [Greek *subjunctive*] **draw** [*helkuso*] **him**: and **I SHOULD** or **SHALL** [Greek, either subjunctive or future] raise him up in the last day. (45) 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**. (46) Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he that is from God, he hath seen the Father. (47) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. (John 6:44-47 ASV.)

If one pays better attention to the Greek word *pros*, then the passage takes on a very important shade of meaning different.

The first statement more properly reads:

No man is able to have come **toward** (*pros*) me except the Father that sent me drew him.

The word *pros* means *towards*. (Do not confuse it with *pro*, which means *before*.) It did not mean *to* — which had that been the intent, the word *eis* in Greek would have

been used. (This is because the verb *come* is one of motion.) With verbs of motion, *eis* means *to* or *into*. When you instead wish to show merely a change in direction *towards* an object, the preposition to use is *pros* in Greek. With our attention on *pros*, we can see the verse means you come *towards* Jesus. Many examples of this meaning can be cited, such as Acts 24:16: “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a consciousness void of offence **toward** [pros] God and men.”

This preposition *pros* opens up the possibility that this first part of John 6:44 is not a salvation statement. Because *pros* means *towards*, Jesus is potentially talking about a precursor activity before you *arrive* at Jesus’ feet. It is **not** necessarily about having *confessed Jesus* or even having *met* Him yet. Instead, the *pros* in the verse can suggest you are drawn, or if you prefer, dragged in the direction *towards* Jesus by God’s influence. We will see the clear example of this in the life of Cornelius in Acts chapter ten, which we will discuss below.

It will prove important later to realize that the next clause in John 6:44 says either “I **should**” or “I shall” raise him up on the last day. The actual verb is *anastêsô*, which is either aorist subjunctive active or aorist future indicative.⁴

The word *anastêsô* in 6:44 is typically translated as a future tense in English Bibles. However, since the first verb is subjunctive — “should draw” — this indicates the second verb is subjunctive. This parallel structure is used again in John 3:16 “should not perish [subjunctive] but should have [second subjunctive] eternal life.”

The purpose of the subjunctive mood is usually to imply some level of uncertainty. This will take on importance later, because in hindsight the choice of rendering this *future*,

4. Bring up this page in Greek at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0155&lay-out=&loc=John+6.1> and find verse 44, highlight the word, and you will see Liddell Scott identifies a dual possibility that this is either subjunctive or future.

not *subjunctive*, leads to incongruities. For this “come towards” reappears in other verses. In them, these words cannot imply a guaranteed salvation without dictating everyone on earth *shall* be saved (universalism). Hence, the *subjunctive* option is, in hindsight, the correct translation in John 6:44.

For example, this first becomes a necessary conclusion when you look at the very next verse. Jesus explains what draws towards Him by quoting Isaiah in John 6:45:

It has been written in the prophets, ‘And they will **all** be taught of God.’ Therefore, every [one] hearing from the Father and having learned comes TOWARDS [*pro*] Me. [Isaiah 54:13] (Joh 6:45 ALT.)

Jesus is quoting a passage that they *all* will be taught about God. The word for *all* is in the plural. This explains what draws *all* people *toward* Jesus. It will be those hearing and learning from God — the same “all” who will be taught by God in the prior sentence. But if this coming “towards me” meant necessarily salvation in John 6:45, as is supposed for John 6:44, then John 6:45 would teach everyone will be saved because it says “all” will be taught by God, which in turn is what causes one to “come towards me.”

Thus, this “come toward” activity in John 6:45 could not be speaking about salvation without teaching *everyone* will be saved. Hence, the same language does not have that purpose in John 6:44. This likewise tells us that the correct translation of the ambiguous *anastêsô* is not “shall” raise up but “should raise” up. This fits the fact that “come toward” is not speaking of salvation.

Nor is it saying that God is selecting some to be saved. Jesus is not talking about an *election selection* as the proximate cause of this drawing. Rather, Jesus says it is teachings about God that draws all men *towards* Him.

The second corroborating proof that John 6:44-45 is not a salvation statement is John 12:32. There Jesus says:

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw [or, drag] all [*pantas*, plural] TOWARDS [Greek, *pros*] Myself. (John 12:32.)

If *draw-drag* means an irresistible pressure in John 6:44, then John 12:32 says Jesus will drag all to Himself. If “to myself” then means salvation in both passages, then this irresistible grace must mean all people will be saved. Yet, Jesus says elsewhere “few” find the path to salvation. (Matt. 7:14.) Thus, universal salvation cannot be the intended meaning of 12:32. Hence, if it is absurd to read the identical language in 12:32 that appears in 6:44 as identifying salvation (“draw ... to myself”), then we need to locate the source of our misunderstanding in John 6:44 that made us think it was a salvation passage.

The answer is right in front of us. We need to look back again on the fact John 6:44 says the drawing is “*pros ego*” — ‘towards me.’ One is drawn *towards* Jesus, not necessarily *to* Jesus. The importance of paying attention to this meaning of *pros* is underscored that if this ‘towards Him’ meant salvation in John 12:32 as is supposed to be the case in John 6:44, then all men are going to be drawn-dragged to Christ, and all men would be saved.⁵ Hence, *towards him* in John 12:32 cannot mean salvation. And if does not (and can not) mean salvation there, then it does not (and can not) mean it in John 6:44 or 6:45 (and 6:37 for that matter).

‘Come to the Light’ Passages Seal the Case

In identical language, Jesus explained from whence comes the human impetus to come towards the light which is drawing people.

5. Various Calvinists offer specious escapes, claiming this *all* means *all kinds of peoples*, not all individuals. (See “Irresistible Grace,” *Wikipedia*.) Yet, the verse does not say that, does it? *Pantas* in the plural means *all* or even *everyone*. This is the way it is used in John 6:37: “All that the Father gives to me will come *pros ego*.” We are not free to *add* words or *subtract* words from Scripture. (Deut. 4:2.)

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not TOWARDS [Greek, *pros*] the light, lest his works should be reprov'd. (21) But he that doeth the truth cometh TOWARDS [Greek, *pros*] the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God. (John 3:20-21 ASV.)

This verse proves that no one is being drawn against their will to Jesus — the light of the world. Their own tendency to do good works or evil works predisposes them whether to follow the drawing by God. This drawing is directed at everyone when Jesus is lifted up (John 12:32). Yet, Jesus describes *some will resist* and *some will come (further) towards the truth*. The drawing of God to all is not always successful. Hence, salvation cannot be caused *solely* by God irresistibly drawing/dragging hearts. Each heart, based on its own predisposition, will either reject or come *to* Christ. God merely draws them TOWARDS (*pros*) Christ.

Likewise, if one pays careful attention to the Parable of the Sower, one will see the identical message about predisposition. For the seed is sown in some instances where the ground prior to the message was either *already* hard, rocky or good soil. (Luke 8:5-15.) In particular, the saved fourth seed Jesus described was already the “good ground” when the Word of the Gospel was sewn. Jesus says even at this pre-salvation point the fourth seed landed in a “good and noble heart.” (Luke 8:15.)

Thus, predisposition has a lot to do with whether one is able to hear the word and obey it. Jesus is exhorting changing one's behavior in the Parable of the Sower so one is disposed properly to even hear the word. Hence, we are not supposed to understand God's drawing is *against* our will. Instead, God's drawing is designed to *influence* our will, just as it did for Cornelius in Acts chapter ten, as we shall see. Jesus wants us to prepare our hearts in the Parable of the Sower so that God's drawing will be effectual to a final salvation experience.

The Example of Cornelius: Drawing and Voluntary Acceptance

These points are all self-evident in the story of Cornelius in the account of Acts chapter ten. Prior to hearing the gospel, Cornelius (a Roman centurion) had come to God's attention as a good praying man, due to his charity to the poor and his prayers. This is specifically what the angel told him was *the reason*. (Acts 10:3-4.) Cornelius was ***not inherently depraved*** prior to receipt of the Holy Spirit, which in the story he only *later* receives. In this pre-Holy Spirit condition, Cornelius was told simply by the angel to fetch Peter. (Acts 10:6.) This means there was no irresistible grace message delivered by the angel. God was simply setting in motion the *learning* from the Father to come, which Jesus in John 6:45 quoted from Isaiah as the *proximate cause* of coming to God.

Then Cornelius — because he already is disposed to the light (John 3:20-21) — follows up and fetches Peter so he can “hear the words” from Peter (Acts 10:22). Peter then says that a vision from God the night before proves to him the following:

And Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: (35) but in every nation ***he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.*** (Act 10:34-35 ASV.)

Peter is sure God does not intend for any Christian evangelist to assume his audience is inherently depraved. Some are already acceptable to God by being doers of righteousness. Some are already inclined therefore to accept the gospel. Thus, Christian evangelism should recognize that a target group to seek out are those like Cornelius — those who want to come to God because they are already doing good works to please God (not men). (John 3:20-21.)

Peter then gave Cornelius the history of Jesus on earth, and then told Cornelius that God appointed Jesus to be the Judge of the living in the dead. Then Peter explained:

To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that **KEEPS ON OBEYING FOR** [*pisteuo*, present participle active, + *eis*, for] him shall receive remission of sins. (Act 10:43 ASV with modifications in bold.)⁶

Interestingly, Luke never says Cornelius' response. It simply says the Holy Spirit fell on them "that heard the word," including Cornelius. (Acts 10:44.) Then Peter commanded that Cornelius and others be baptized. (Acts 10:48.)

In the story of Cornelius, we see plenty of the drawing power of God. However, we never see the irresistible power of God. Instead, God is going out of His way to make sure *words* are heard by Cornelius. This emphasizes God desires deeply that Cornelius accept a message from God. Cornelius is learning more from God, as John 6:45 contemplates in the quote from Isaiah. Yet, the whole point of the effort is God wants to see a voluntary response. There would not point in any of these efforts to use *hearing* to get to the final point if the final point did not depend on Cornelius' *voluntary acceptance*. For if there was a way simply to zap the Holy Spirit in us *unconditionally* and *against* our will, that is the far less elaborate and more direct way. This path taken by God with Cornelius is intended to give us every impression that salvation only comes by hearing and *voluntary* acceptance.

Thus, the story of Cornelius shows us God does all the drawing. But Cornelius had a decision to make.

This lines up with what Jesus said about our receipt of the Holy Spirit. It is not zapped into us from above. Rather, Jesus said:

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more **shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to**

6. How the *eis* dictates *pisteuo* should be translated *obey*, see "John 3:16: Obeying Unto Christ Should Save?" on page 1 et seq.

them that [keep on] ask[ing] him? (Luk 11:13 ASV.)

This was a passage teaching the need for persistency in prayer. Jesus gives a story of an unjust judge dispensing justice due to the persistency of the plea for help. Jesus says if this is true for an unjust judge, how much more will the Heavenly Father dispense His Holy Spirit to those who diligently ask for its receipt.

Thus, again, Jesus' focus is not on God's zapping you. It is about His insistence that you be diligent in prayer, as Cornelius was cited by the angels for being, and you will then receive the Holy Spirit if you keep on asking.

How Cornelius' Experience Proves the Meaning of John 6:44-46.

This story of Cornelius perfectly proves the truth about John 6:44-46.

Cornelius was brought *towards* Jesus by the drawing power of God. (John 6:44.) Cornelius was already favorably disposed to come *towards* the light because he was a "righteous man" living in the era of grace who yet did not know Jesus. The Lord Jesus said such a man would want to come to the light. Jesus said "he that doeth the truth cometh TOWARDS [Greek, pros] the light." (John 3:21.) What drew Cornelius *towards* Christ were the words of an angel and the words of an evangelist who cited the words of prophecy that had been fulfilled in Jesus. Yet, the very point of God's drawing was so that Cornelius ultimately would make a decision. The drawing was *not dragging*. Otherwise, why would God bother with any *winsome* drawing as He did with Cornelius? God would zap you. Yet, that is precisely what Jesus said God *will not do*. He wants you to diligently ask for receipt of the Holy Spirit. This is what Cornelius must have done *voluntarily*, encouraged by the loving *personal* drawing effort of God Almighty. Then Cornelius received the Holy Spirit.

The key point is that all this drawing accomplished is bring Cornelius *toward* Christ. It did not make the decision inevitable or irresistible. Cornelius was free to reject God. In fact, Cornelius' story is told to exhort us to make the same decision. A doctrine that negates human responsibility to make a decision is a direct encouragement to *apathy*. If it were true doctrine, it does not really matter what you *do*, *think*, or *initiate* because God supposedly is doing it anyway. What an ungodly doctrine!

The Sovereignty of God Thesis Demolished

Calvinists have one more means of arguing in favor of irresistible grace. This is a claim based primarily on an idea thought to flow logically from the nature of God. They claim God is all power-ful. Nothing supposedly can happen that He does not will or otherwise He is not all power-ful. God would have to sit back and let feeble creatures have their way if there was anything known as free-will. Thus, allegedly there must be no free-will and irresistible grace is a fact.⁷

By this argument, it does not really matter to Calvinists any more to discuss the Scripture texts above. They win the issue based on their supposed superior understanding of the nature of God, principally their tenet regarding the sovereignty of God.

This is the easiest argument to demolish.

7. This was discussed in my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) at 434.

1. Omnipotence Does Not Imply His Will Equally Obeyed Everywhere.

First, as to the nature of God, He does not have to will everything to happen or otherwise lose His status as all-powerful. Omnipotence does not mean there must be something called the Sovereign will of God which necessarily must happen identically on earth as in heaven.

The clearest proof of this comes from the Lord's Prayer. Jesus said we are to pray daily that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:10.) That ends this Sovereignty of God argument. Jesus did not think God's will is done on earth to the same degree as it is done in Heaven. Only if you imagine Jesus gave us a pointless prayer to pray can you disagree. Hence, Jesus refutes the sovereignty of God argument. And that's that.

2. God Does Not Necessarily Ordain Everything

If there is one single human act that can be performed by free-will then the Sovereignty of God doctrine is refuted. The theory depends on believing *all* things happen by God's sovereign will. This is how the theory ultimately claims that man is saved by God's work alone. Because this doctrine claims every little human thought is directed by God, then it can say salvation remains only the work of God even if Jesus requires good works for salvation. Calvin was fully aware of the problem passages outlined in this book. This way the Sovereignty of God doctrine was Calvin's way to reconcile Jesus to Paul's dictum that we are saved by *pistis, not works*. (Eph. 2:8-9.) Calvin's solution was to say perseverance in good works is the exclusive work of God because nothing happens in the human heart that God did not already direct.

However, the defect in this argument is self-evident. The notion that the Sovereignty of God means God directs all the saved to belief and the necessary works for salvation without any voluntary will or obedience on their part necessarily implies that God directs all the damned to unbelief and

disobedience. Calvin anticipated this objection, and he embraced this point and vigorously defended this. Calvin, in fact, insisted that God does direct and cause the damned to suffer from unbelief and disobedience. He called this double predestination.

However, if this lack of voluntariness for the saved means they are saved *without voluntary works*, then the lost are lost *without voluntary disobedience*. They are being damned without moral culpability. To this point, Calvin responded that we are simply imbecilic (his word) for not understanding how this doctrine is really true. But name-calling is no answer. You cannot claim one side of the equation works for your doctrine, and ignore the other side of the logical equation that refutes your theory. If the saved are saved without works for which they are morally responsible to perform by this theorem, then the lost are saved without any morally culpable disobedience. If salvation by obedience is satisfied without human obedience then damnation by disobedience is being satisfied without human disobedience because God is performing the evil in us.⁸

The modern Calvinist realizes Calvin's notion made God no better than a demon, as critics pointed out.⁹ Thus, in response to this quandry, modern Calvinists retreat, and say the lost are still lost by their own will and disobedience. But this retreat in effect denies the very core principle of the Sovereignty of God principle. ***This retreat assumes a human has***

8. Jesus told us the real reason the lost reject the gospel. Jesus told us when the lost reject the Gospel it is due to their hard hearts (stony ground) plus the work of Satan to snatch away the word. Jesus taught this in the Parable of the Sower. God is never the secret instigator of man's rejection of the gospel.

9. Thomas Jefferson, the writers of the Declaration of Independence, spoke as an outsider to the faith, but with insight on this problem: "I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. He was indeed an Atheist, which I can never be; or rather his religion was Daemonism. If ever man worshipped a false god, he did." (Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823.)

Conclusion

free will to sin even if God did not will it. This contradicts the key tenet of the Sovereignty of God principle.¹⁰ However, but for this retreat, the defender of this theory would have seen his/her theory demolished because the theory made God into a demon. Yet, since the retreat itself demolishes the theory, there is no need to debate the point further. Either the evildoer is likewise directed to evil by God (which makes God a demon) or the evildoer is evil due to his free will, in which case the Sovereignty of God doctrine is falsified anyway. Hence, anyway the theory is examined, it cannot possibly be true.

In sum, the Sovereignty of God argument is no support for irresistible grace, irresistible salvation, irresistible perseverance, etc. There is no reason to believe God compels people to be saved, to have the requisite good works, perseverance, etc.

Thus, there is no support in John 6:44 nor in the Sovereignty of God theorem to believe God is going to compel us to have the obedience and works He requires, as set forth in all the prior chapters. It is as much the responsibility of the saved as it is of the lost to obey God from a free-will.

Conclusion

The drawing verses in John chapter 6 were misunderstood to be talking about salvation. They have no bearing directly on salvation doctrine. They tell us God is drawing all men *toward* Him by the cross and by Jesus' teachings. That is great to know and be encouraged by, but it does not tell me anything about what I must do (or believe) to be saved.

10.As Calvin expressed it: "That men *do nothing* save at the *secret instigation of God*, and *do not discuss* and *deliberate on anything* but what he has previously *decreed with himself*, and *brings to pass by his secret direction*, is proved by numberless clear passages of Scripture." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book 1, ch. XVIII No. 1.

How did the wrong view develop? The English translation rendered *toward* as *to*. The Greek word *pros* was being overlooked in the various translations. It did not mean *to* — which would have been *eis* in Greek because the verb *come* is one of motion. Instead, the preposition *pros* meant *towards*. Hence, those who *come toward* Jesus by the drawing of God are heading in the direction of Jesus. They are close but like Cornelius, the drawing merely led Cornelius to listen. There is no compulsion in drawing that necessarily means Cornelius had to decide to obey for Christ's sake. If one insists *to* is correct, and these are salvation verses, then John 6:45 and 12:32 would necessarily mean that "all" men are saved. These verses likewise speak of "all" being taught of God or "all" being drawn to God who then "come to me" or "come to him" in the common English translation. Since such a universalism would contradict Jesus' remark that "few" find the path to salvation, the *pros* in these three verses (John 6:44, 6:45 and 12:32) must retain its original Greek meaning of *towards*. The English translation of *to* was misleading in the *extremis*.

Hence, none of the drawing verses have any bearing on analyzing the pre-requisites for salvation. They have nothing to do with salvation *per se*.