

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

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"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

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NINTH ANNUAL MISSION BIBLE CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 29-31, 1990

Come join us this fall at our Ninth Annual Mission Bible Conference. In years past, we have enjoyed a great feasting on God's word and some wonderful fellowship. Our conference starts on Monday evening, October 29; and runs through Wednesday evening, October 31. Our members welcome overnight guests in their homes; all meals will be provided at the church. Make plans to join us; we are looking forward to seeing you!

Can Every Man Come To Christ?

By Dr. C. D. COLE

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).
"And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father" (John 6:65).

These words of the Lord Jesus Christ are directly opposed to the very popular expression, that every man can either accept or reject Jesus Christ as Saviour. And these plain words of Christ are just as offensive to men today as when He first spoke them. That there might not be any mistake in what He meant, He repeated Himself, changing the wording just enough to make the

meaning plain and to emphasize the bondage of the human will in spiritual things. It is true that every man can reject Christ, but none except those to whom faith is given can accept Him. And he who looks into the original in the hope that the expression may be somewhat softened will be disappointed. The Greek text says: "NO ONE IS ABLE TO COME TO ME, EXCEPT THE FATHER WHICH HATH SENT ME DRAW HIM."

It is a sad sign when professed Christians deny these plain words of Jesus and oppose and slander men for preaching what Jesus preached. It is showing like spirit with those who, when they heard Him utter these words in the long ago, went back and walked no more with Him.

On the other hand those who, like Peter, bow to the authority of Christ and cling to Him, must not abuse His words or draw wrong inferences from them. May we ponder them today in such a way as to promote humility and gratitude of heart.

An effort has been made to explain these words away by saying, that God draws every body, but that some will not yield and come, while others do yield and come. If this be true, then God actually draws nobody to Christ, but merely tries to draw. The Father's drawing would not be the cause of any coming to Christ, but their own willingness to come. And if men are willing to come to Christ, they do not need to be drawn. The text means that no man is willing to come unless he is drawn. The sinner is kept away by his own unwillingness: he comes through the drawing power of the Father. If God cannot draw the sinner to Christ, then who can? Can the preacher draw him? Can the sinner draw himself? To say that he can is like saying that a man can lift himself by his own boot straps.

THE BONDAGE OF THE HUMAN WILL IN SPIRITUAL THINGS

The will is the faculty or organ of action, and has ability in natural and moral matters, but is in bondage to a corrupt and depraved nature in spiritual and holy things. To deny this and to say that man is just as able to choose holiness as he is to choose sin is to deny the fall of man, and put man back where Adam was before he sinned and fell. Let us make our way prayerfully and cautiously as we attempt to open up this text. Jesus said that no man could come to Him unless he was drawn by the Father.

1. Coming to Christ is the same thing as believing on Him. It is the act of the will by which the sinner depends upon Christ for salvation. Physical action is not involved—the process is mental and spiritual. In verse 35, "Coming to Christ," and "Believing on Christ," are used interchangeably. Coming to Christ involves renouncing all confidence in self and

putting confidence in Christ as Saviour and Lord.

2. My understanding of this text does not make it contradict the Bible teaching that "Whosoever will" may come to Christ and be saved. Those who hear me preach now or who have heard me preach in the past know that I have and do emphasize the willingness and ability of Christ to save every soul that comes to Him. The words of Jesus where He said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out," have perhaps been quoted by me more often than any other passage in the Bible. What we have done in the past, and now do in the present, and will do in the future, is to affirm that nobody will come to Christ unless drawn by the Father, and that all who are drawn by the Father will and do come.

Take a simple illustration analagous to the one given by Christ Himself in Luke 14:16-23. I give a six o'clock dinner and send out a general invitation to everybody in the community to come. I say, "Whosoever will, let him come." But suppose that I do not have a single friend in the community—everybody hates me, and therefore, the invitation is universally scorned and rejected. Nobody will come. But they are polite in rejecting and send various excuses. One says that he has to work in his crop; another says that he has bought a new automobile and must try it out; and still another says that he has married and must stay home with his wife. Do you not think I would have enough sense to know that they did not come simply because they did not want to come? Night time is a poor time to work in a crop; the man with the new automobile could drive it to the dinner; and the man who had just married could bring his wife—everybody is invited. Now did my invitation to "Whosoever will" bring anybody? No, not a soul came, because they all hated me, and had no fellowship with me. So God's invitation to "Whosoever will" does not bring anybody. In the parable, representing God's great Gospel feast, they all made excuses and not a single soul responded to the invitation. In John 5:40 Christ said, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." That passage explains the "cannot" of my text; they cannot because they will not. It is the inability of the will of a man who by nature is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), and to whom the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness (I Cor. 2:14).

3. Every man may come to Christ, but no man can come to Christ, except he be drawn. The words may and can do not have the same meaning. Webster says: "So far as can and may come into comparison, can expresses ability whether physical or mental; may implies permission or sanction." If a young man asks a young lady if he may walk home with her, and she says "Yes," she is merely giving him permission and not the ability to walk with her. If he should ask, "Can I walk home with you?" if she knew her grammar, she would probably say something like this: "You look as though you

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are able to walk that far." If I should ask: "May I lift this piano?" you would likely say: "You have my permission." But if I should ask: "Can I lift this piano?" you might express doubt as to my ability to do it. Now, our text does not deny the permission of men to come to Christ, but it does deny their ability to come. Every sinner who hears the gospel has permission to come to Christ; yea, he is even commanded to come. Moreover, his inability is not natural and physical, but mental and spiritual. It is the inability of a sinful and ruined disposition of mind and heart.

4. The Scriptures distinguish between having a thing in the power of the hand, and having that same thing in the power of the heart. In Prov. 3:27, 28 we read: "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee." You have the power of the hand when you have the means with which to do a thing. In I Chron. 28:2,3, we are told that David had it in his heart to build a house unto the Lord, but he was not permitted to do so because he was a man of blood. You have the power of the heart when you have the desire or disposition to do a thing. A voluntary act depends upon the means and disposition both, and when either the means or disposition is lacking, it can be truly said, that he cannot do it. A covetous man may be a millionaire, but more than money is needed to cause him to cheerfully relieve the poor. He must have a disposition or heart to give as well as the means. Every sinner who hears the Gospel has the means of salvation, but he does not have the disposition to believe the Gospel. Regeneration, as defined in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind so as to secure voluntary acceptance of the Gospel. Pharaoh had the means of understanding the mission of Moses and of letting Israel go, but he was an unregenerate and a hater of God, and did not have the disposition to let them go. Our Lord was talking about a sinful disposition and depraved will when He said that no man could come to Him unless drawn by the Father. Where is the man who dares deny that every unregenerate sinner has a sinful disposition? And this disposition comes from a mind that hates God and a heart that is desperately wicked.

THE DRAWING POWER OF THE FATHER

Our text ascribes drawing power to the Father and affirms that the cause of any sinner coming to Christ is this drawing power. That which keeps sinners away from Christ is their unwillingness which Christ calls inability; that which brings them to Christ is the drawing power of God.

1. Our texts give encouragement to the minister or other Christian worker who desires to

win souls to Christ. There is a divine power to make our witnessing effective in the salvation of souls. We are backed by Him that called us and He will not allow His word to return to Him in vain. Sinners will not come to Christ of themselves, however, much we plead, but there is one who is able to draw them to Christ. So the power of God is to be our hope of success after we have faithfully preached Christ and Him crucified as the only hope of lost men. We are told to preach in meekness, "instructing them that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (II Tim. 2:25,26).

2. What does God do in drawing a sinner to Christ? He works upon the nature of the sinner—upon his mind and heart and will. He does not drag the sinner physically by the hair of his head. There is an old proverb, that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. You can bring the gospel to the sinner but you cannot make him appropriate it. You cannot make him do the very thing he must do to be saved; you cannot make him partake of Christ. Jesus said, "I am the living bread....if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever" (John 6:51). Now God can make the horse drink and He can cause the sinner to trust Christ. It is our business to bring Christ, in the Gospel, to the sinner; it is God's prerogative to give him the faith.

God draws the sinner by an inward teaching. John 6:45: "Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." This is not a teaching through a human ministry, for many are preached to who never come to Christ. This teaching of the Father is an inward work of grace by which a spiritual understanding is imparted. Thos. Goodwin, one of the Puritans, calls it an instinct which God implants in the soul, so that the sinner instinctively trusts Christ for salvation. In the same way, God teaches the saints to love one another. Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (I Thess. 4:9). In the new birth God implants the instinct of love for the saints in the heart. In the same process, He implants the instinct of faith in Christ.

God does not force the sinner to believe in Christ. He exerts power but not force. Force implies that He brings the sinner to Christ against his will. This God does not do, but He exerts power in causing the sinner to become willing. It is with the will that the sinner rejects Christ, and it is with his will that he accepts Christ. In the one case, it is the will of the old man, "which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22); in the other it is the will of the new man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

Take this illustration of power without force:

We will suppose a trough ten feet long with water in it. The end to my left is higher than the other end, and so the water flows to the end to my right. To get the water back to the end to my left, I must use force—it must be forced back against the law of gravitation. But if I lift the end to my right to a higher level than the end to my left, no force is required to get the water to the left end; it acts according to its nature to flow down hill. I have exerted power in changing the level of the trough, but I used no force with reference to the water. I did not even touch the water. I worked on the

trough. So God in drawing the sinner to Christ, does not force his will. He exerts power in effecting a change in the nature of the man. Dr. Robertson, in his Word Pictures, says that "The impulses to faith comes from God. Jesus does not expect all to believe and seems to imply that Judas did not truly believe." And Dr. Robertson further says that "Jesus drew the line of cleavage between the true and false believers. These half-hearted seekers after the loaves and fishes and political power turned abruptly from Jesus." But the true disciples refused to leave when He asked them if they wanted to go.

