

That Others May Live
John 6:38-40, April 21st, 2024

When wounded Navy seals or Army rangers are trapped behind enemy lines, when returning astronauts need to be plucked from the sea, or when someone in dire straits needs an otherwise impossible rescue, the Air Force sends in their most elite special forces, the pararescue jumpers. Their 2-year training, known among servicemen as “Superman School,” has the one of highest attrition rates, failing 90% of the special force servicemen who begin. But those who make it through those refining fires become PJs; warrior-medics. PJ’s are hailed as the “guardian angels of the armed forces” for the way they descend from the heavens, sometimes by repelling out of a helicopter, sometimes by sky diving out of a plane onto the battlefield and into the line of fire, to save the lives of the fallen. You can spot a PJ on the battlefield by the patch on their shoulder which reads *Haec Ago Ut Alii Vivant; this I do that others may live.*

So too, our Lord Jesus Christ was a man on a mission, sent by his Father from heaven into a world aflame with sin and at war with God to seek and save the lost. In our last study we considered God’s sovereignty over our salvation and saw that since man is totally depraved and “dead in sin and trespasses,” God must do all the saving. He must choose us because we would have never chosen him. He must lovingly subdue us and irresistibly draw us to himself because we would have never come. He must regenerate our hearts and give us the gift of faith because we would have never believed the gospel. He must make us to persevere unto the end or else we would fall away. *But if God is sovereign over my salvation, what duty do I have, if any, to come to Christ in faith?* IOPTM we see that ***God’s sovereignty does not negate man’s responsibility.***

First, consider ***the duty of Christ towards sinners.*** To express the degree of his duty, Christ proclaims the nature of his *origin*, saying in **v38**, “For I have come down from heaven.” You see, the Son of God did not suddenly pop into existence in the womb of Mary, but from everlasting to everlasting the Son is God. From all eternity God the Son dwelt in the realms of endless glory and basked in the bliss of unbroken fellowship with God the Father and God the Spirit... “God in three persons, blessed trinity.” But at the time appointed, God the Son “came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man,” as we confess in the Nicene Creed; one person with 2 natures: divine & human.

Years ago, Jordan and I led a mission trip down to Mexico to help build a church. For kids from a cushy suburb, it was a *rough week*. The heat was oppressive. The labor was hard: mixing and pouring concrete by hand. What’s worse, the tap water wasn’t potable, so if we drank from the sink we got terribly ill. At night, we fought for sleep on sweaty hammocks in rooms with no AC. And as the week rolled on and our spirits began to wilt, our leader reminded us, “We came from FL to Mexico, but Christ went so much further ... all the way down from heaven to earth.”

He was right! When the Lord Jesus came down from heaven, he left sapphire paved courts for the thorns and thistles of a cursed world. He exchanged the praises of angels for the scorn of sinners & malice of Satan. He removed the robe of his divine majesty and dawned the garb of a servant. *If one’s love for another is measured not just by what they are willing to do, but by they are willing to do without, how great is the love of Jesus for you sinner?* He didn’t just come to your rescue, he left heaven to save you! *How great is the love of Christ for his Father who sent him?* For Christ explains not only the nature of his origin, but the nature of his *obedience* in **v38** “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

What does this mean? Is the will of Jesus opposed to the will of God? Certainly not! From all eternity God the Father, Son & Spirit have shared the same divine will and been inseparably united in all their holy purposes. But when God the Son put on humanity, he put on a created human will with distinct inclinations & desires. Since our first father, Adam, fell when he failed

the test of his will in Eden & sinned against God, the 2nd Adam, Jesus Christ, had to have a human will that could be tested and proven true in order to fulfill all righteousness for his people. By these words in **v38**, Jesus is saying: “I am a man on a mission from God. I haven’t come to live for myself but for God. I haven’t come to pursue my own comforts and pleasures but to fulfill the will of my Father. If it is His will to cast me out into the wilderness for 40 days to be tormented by hunger and thirsts, wild beasts and the devil himself, so be it. If it is his will that I ceaselessly preach the gospel on street corners, synagogues, and seashores so be it. If it is the Father’s will that the Son of Man should have no place to lay his head, so be it. If it is God’s will that I should be betrayed by my friend, abandoned by my disciples, brutally beaten, scourged, and crucified, so be it. If it is the will of the Lord to crush me and put me to grief when my souls makes an offering for guilt(Is.53:10), so be it.” *Do you remember what Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, on the eve of his passion, as the strain upon his soul was so great it burst capillaries in his pores and squeezed sweat droplets of blood from his brow?* “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet, not what I will, but what you will.” He was praying as he had taught his disciples: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

If your life were a tapestry and each day were a thread; and if you were to come forward and unfurl your tapestry upon the communion table, what would we see? We would see shameful inkblot stains of sin: anger, pride, lust, greed, selfishness, malice, impatience, apathy. We would see the gaping holes of omissions; good things left undone. We would smell the septic stench of rotten thoughts, words, and deeds. What would you do if you found such a rag in your attic or garage? You’d destroy it, wouldn’t you? How much more is a holy God bound by his own justice to destroy evil? But in the gospel, Jesus steps forward and owns our sin soiled and spiritually torn life as his own. In its place he and unfurls the tapestry of his glorious life; vibrant with love for God, heavy as a leaden blanket with holiness, and perfumed with the pleasing aroma of perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to the will of God. Now, when the Father looks upon us he sees us covered in the beautiful holiness of Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus didn’t just die for our sins; he lived for our righteousness in perfect conformity to the will of God.

In each of our 3 verses this morning, Christ speaks of the “will of God.” *Why?* Because his heart, soul, mind, and strength were so gripped by God’s glory that his life was dominated by God’s will expressed in the law of God. Jesus sang with David, Ps40:8 “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.” *Can you sing the same? Is God’s law delightful to you? Would you display the 10 comm. in your home?* Friend you were made to obey the law. As fishes were created to swim & birds were created to fly, you were created after the image of God to be holy as he is holy. But you weren’t just made to be holy, you were saved to be holy! We distort the gospel when we set grace & the law against one another. Now to be sure, we are saved by the grace of God, not the law of God. But he saved us by grace for obedience unto the law. Paul was writing to believers when he said, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1Thes4:3). When Christ saves us, “he breaks the power of reigning sin and sets the prisoner free” to walk in the light of God’s law as children of God, “1Jn5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” That’s what Solomon discovered at the end of his lifelong pursuit of happiness that drove him to the bottom of the bottle & the bed of strangers; that drove him to build great cities & amass a vast fortune. But it was all vanity, emptiness. Then looking back upon the broken road of his life, he concluded, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc12:13). Never forget that since God who gave the law is a good God, his law is good, “and there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust & obey.”

John Chapman was an early 19th century American pioneer who spent much of his life walking and panting apple seeds. His appearance is legendary, “barefoot, dressed in rags, with a tin pot

for a hat.” From Pennsylvania to Illinois, Johnny Appleseed worked with locals to plant & establish self-sustaining nurseries. Once an orchard was growing well, he left to plant another. At times it may feel like Christ’s approach to salvation is similar, he plants the seed and once it begins to grow and bear fruit, he leaves us on our own to be self-sufficient. But see the constancy of his care in **v39**. From beginning to end, from rebirth to resurrection, Jesus has promised to never leave and never lose his own. Because Christian’s aren’t hardy fruit trees... we’re sheep: easily deceived, prone to wander, quickly frightened, vulnerable to weather and predator. You don’t need a Johnny Appleseed you need a Good Shepherd who leads us to green grass and still waters, who is with us in the valley comforting us with his rod & staff, who pursues us with goodness and mercy forever. The Christ I proclaim to you is such a Savior! As Judah promised his father Jacob that he would safeguard Benjamin’s life during their trip down to Egypt offering his own life as surety, so the Lord Jesus has promised to let nothing separate us from the love of God and cancel out Christ’s cross work for us. This filled Paul with great confidence and the assurance of his own salvation: “For I am sure,” he wrote in Romans 8:39, “that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” When you find yourself overwhelmed by the weight of your sin, wounded by hard providence, discouraged by the fierce opposition of the world, afraid of the dread of death, may this promise of Christ’s steadfast love buoy your soul with blessed assurance. As the priest wore a stone for each of the tribes of Israel to keep them close to his heart(Ex 28:29), so our Great High Priest has inscribed the name of his people on his hands that though we sin and fall and let go of him, he would never let go of us.

Well, my salvation is wholly the work of God; appointed by the Father from all eternity, accomplished by the Son’s life and death, and applied by the Spirit at the appointed time what responsibility, if any, do I have to put my faith in Christ? The hyper-Calvinists say, “None. God is sovereign.” Now a hyper-Calvinist is not a presbyterian after espresso. Hyper-Calvinism is twisting of the doctrine of sovereignty into fatalism that frees man of all personal responsibility and moral culpability from coming to God and living for his glory. But Jesus sets the two side by side: the duty of Christ and the **duty of man (40)**. *What great thing must you do to be saved? To inherit eternal life? To become a child of God and coheirs with Christ? To be raised up in glory from the grave on the last day and enter the joy of your master?* You need only look on the Son and believe in him.

The thief on the cross beside Jesus couldn’t touch Christ. He couldn’t clean himself up and live a great life for Christ. He couldn’t go to church or tell the world about Jesus. He could only look upon Christ. But he needed only look! He could see that he was a sinner receiving the due penalty for his crimes. He could see that Christ was innocent of all evil, the spotless Lamb of God “...we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong”(Lk23:41). The thief knew that while he was suffering the *temporal* physical consequences of his sins the man on them middle cross was bearing the *eternal spiritual* consequences of those sins for him. More than that, he could see that Jesus was the King of Kings whose kingdom was not of this world. And so, with his dying breath he pleaded, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.(Lk23:42)” And for that look of faith alone, Jesus responded with words of mercy, love, and triumph, “truly I say to you this day you will be with me in paradise.” So as that thief closed his eyes in death, the eyes of his glorified soul opened in the paradise of heaven to behold the lovely face of the one who saves to the uttermost.

You can face life death with the very same confidence. As it is the will of God that the Son should save and keep those, he had given to him, it is the will of the Father that you would look upon the Son and believe and sing “But I know whom I have believed, And am persuaded that he is able To keep that which I’ve committed Unto him against that day.”