

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life:  
(1) Coming to Christ for Salvation”**

**Introduction:**

As we look to the remaining weeks of this summer, before autumn with all of its activities, we begin a new series this morning. We are calling this subject, “The ABC’s of the Christian Life.” It is our intention to address the most important truths of God’s Word that concern the manner that we are to live as Christians in this fallen world. Only the Lord knows how many weeks we will be addressing this subject. There are a number of considerations that will affect our choice of topics as well as the degree to which we will examine each one. On the one hand we desire to address only that which is basic and foundational, those general matters that are essential for us to know and practice. On the other hand, if we are to explain these matters properly, there is need for some complexity in order to navigate through the error and ignorance to which evangelical Christians are exposed and have been wrongly taught. And given my own propensity to be perhaps more detailed and meticulous than not, we may be here a while.

Regarding the difficulty of balancing the presentation of the broad and general from the narrow and precise, our first topic reveals our dilemma. Today we will consider *what it is to come to Jesus Christ for salvation*. Now there is a *simplicity* of this matter that we should preserve. The Apostle Paul was concerned for the Christians in the church at Corinth, when he wrote, “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity<sup>1</sup> that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). On our part, coming to Christ is not a great prize that may be successfully acquired through tremendous effort. Coming to Christ is simply to believe on Him alone to save us. Paul expressed it this way:

<sup>3</sup>For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. <sup>4</sup>For Christ is the end (i.e. goal, destination) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

<sup>5</sup>For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” <sup>6</sup>But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) <sup>7</sup>or, “‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup>But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): <sup>9</sup>that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. <sup>11</sup>For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” (Rom. 10:3-11)

**Verses 6 and 7** in this passage show that the attaining of righteousness through faith alone is an easy matter to see realized in one’s life. It does not require great effort, even fighting your way into heaven or struggling to escape death. As one rightly said,

Here too the truth to be emphasized is that *the really difficult task is not for us to undertake. It has been accomplished for us by Christ*. It is he who came down from heaven, dwelt among us as in a tent (John 1:14), suffered the agonies of hell for us, died, was buried, rose again, ascended into heaven. *The hard work was accomplished by him!* Therefore, any attempt on our part to ascend to

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<sup>1</sup> The ESV and the NIV translate this clause, “to be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

heaven to bring Christ down would amount to a most ungracious denial of the reality and value of Christ's incarnation. Similarly, any attempt to descend into the realm of the dead in order to bring Christ up from the dead would be a disavowal of the genuine character and meaning of Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead and triumph over the grave.<sup>2</sup>

The matter is as easy and attainable as expressing faith in Christ with one's mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in one's heart that God did raise Jesus from the dead. The righteousness based on faith says, "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." Again, as we read in **verse 8ff**.

<sup>8</sup>But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Rom. 10:8-10)

The antecedent of the pronoun "it" in verse 8 is "the righteousness based on faith."<sup>3</sup> "It" says that faith is manifested in a public confession, which speaks forth from a heart with the conviction of what God has done in Jesus Christ. God was in Christ reconciling the world onto Himself. God the Father exonerated all people of true faith when He raised Jesus from the dead, proving by that act that He had accepted Christ's death as a satisfaction for the guilt of their sins. The faith that justifies the guilty sinner is of the heart -- a deep-settled conviction of the truth of what God did in Christ. True saving faith is manifest in the believer's open confession of his faith in Jesus Christ. The believer is thereby saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. If a sinner, even the greatest of sinners, comes to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, through faith alone, he will be saved. And so, may the *simplicity* of salvation through Jesus Christ be preserved in the gospel we believe and proclaim.

But also to be considered is the problem of being *too simplistic*. Shallowness of understanding may easily result in errant thinking. And there is terrible shallowness regarding the nature of salvation and what it is to truly come to Christ. There is error respecting what it is to come to Christ. Many are believe that they have "come to Christ" for salvation, but their "coming" does not reflect what the Word of God describes as truly coming to Christ. There is much error regarding the nature of true, biblical salvation that coming to Christ obtains. And we are called to turn people back to truth who have been led into that kind of error. James wrote, "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19f). Our coming to Jesus Christ for salvation should be with informed faith. If we truly come to Christ, it will lead us into a life of holy obedience to our Lord, even a life of righteousness before the Lord. For true salvation not only bestows the gift of the imputed righteousness of God to the believer, but it also brings to the believer the desire and means to experience the imparted righteousness of God. Paul admonished the Gentile Christians at Ephesus of the importance of being taught rightly of the Lord so that it directs the way they walked. Paul wrote,

<sup>17</sup>This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup>having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup>who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

<sup>20</sup>But you have not so learned Christ, <sup>21</sup>if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: <sup>22</sup>that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which

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<sup>2</sup> William Hendriksen, *Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1980, 1981), p. 344.

<sup>3</sup> Notice how Paul personified this doctrines as though it were a person instructing how and what a person is to believe.

grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,<sup>23</sup> and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,<sup>24</sup> and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:17-24)

In order for us to consider what it is to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, and perhaps to learn what it is not to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, let us read a rather lengthy passage of Scripture that speaks of this matter. John 6 refers to “coming to Christ” in a number of places. Let us turn to John 6:22ff.

<sup>22</sup>On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone—<sup>23</sup>however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks—<sup>24</sup>when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. <sup>25</sup>And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”

<sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup>Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

<sup>28</sup>Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

<sup>29</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, “***This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.***”

<sup>30</sup>Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup>Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. ***He who comes to Me*** shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me ***will come to Me***, and ***the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*** <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup>And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that ***everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.***”

<sup>41</sup>The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup>And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

<sup>43</sup>Jesus therefore answered and said to them, “Do not murmur among yourselves. ***44No one can come to Me*** unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father ***comes to Me.*** <sup>46</sup>Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

These people of Galilee sought the Lord Jesus. They had desired to come unto Him wherever He was. Jesus had greatly impressed the crowds on the previous day. A great multitude had followed Him, “because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased” (John 6:2). Our Lord became concerned about the wellbeing of the crowds, so He had said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (6:5). Jesus said this to Phillip in order to test him, for the Lord knew what He Himself was about to do. Phillip basically told Jesus that it would be impossible for them to feed this crowd. He said to the Lord, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little” (6:1). It would seem that Phillip had failed his test.

Andrew appears to have had a little more spiritual sense, but not more faith. He said to Jesus, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” (6:9). You know what then occurred. We read beginning in verse 10:

<sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. <sup>11</sup>And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples<sup>1</sup> to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup>So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.” <sup>13</sup>Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. (John 6:10-13)

Of course the multitude of people were greatly impressed. This miracle had convinced them that Jesus was the anticipated end time Prophet whom Moses declared God would send into the world in the day of salvation. We read in John 6:14, “Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’” Upon this miraculous feeding of the 5,000, the people would have made Jesus their King, had He not departed from them. We read of this in John 6:15, “Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.” Later that night our Lord traveled in a boat some distance across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum.

It was the following day that the Lord taught the people the words we read earlier from John 6:22-51. In the morning they had looked for Jesus where He had been the previous day. But seeing that He was no longer there, they traveled to Capernaum to find Him, *for they desired to come unto Him*. But when they came to Him, He rebuked them, for their desire of Him was not in accordance with the salvation that He was bestowing through faith. They would have Jesus become their king. But Jesus said unto them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled” (6:26). They “came to Jesus” because they had worldly needs that they perceived He would provide for them. Many of them had illnesses, and He had healed them. Many had been hungry, and He had fed them. They would make Him their King for He could provide for their needs and desires that were the focus of their daily interests and concerns.

How did our Lord respond to them? We read His words in **verse 27**, *“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”* They were “coming to Jesus”, or so they thought, but actually they were seeking Him for things that the Father had not primarily sent Him to bestow upon them. He had rebuked them for only looking to their present, daily, albeit pressing needs, rather than for the well-being of their eternal souls. From this passage we may see illustrated the error of many in today’s world.

**Error: Coming to Christ for salvation does not occur when people only come to Jesus Christ in order for Him to heal them or to provide for their daily needs.**

It is a sad reality that there are many preachers who proclaim Jesus to be this kind of King, this kind of Savior to needy people. But just like these thousands did on this occasion, so it is that many

people everywhere are willing to make Jesus their “King”, but it is the crown of a king that our Lord refused to wear. People have problems. They are ill or injured and need healing. They are hungry or destitute and need food. They are weak or oppressed and they need deliverance. They feel guilty or lonely and the want to feel forgiven and accepted. They have little to make them happy or comfortable. And when someone stands up and declares to them that Jesus Christ can heal them and Jesus Christ can feed and clothe them, and that He will comfort them, and He can restore to them that which they have lost, they will respond to that preacher. They will readily make that Jesus their King. But very often they will be destitute of true spiritual knowledge. They are as these crowds who “came to Jesus” not because they saw the “signs” that testified to Who He truly was and what He was really offering them, but “they came to Jesus” because they “ate the loaves and were filled.”

Unconverted people will crown the one whom they perceive will serve them in these ways. And they will also exalt the one who claims that he can put them into contact with such a “king.” This explains the great response throughout the world to the so-called “health and wealth gospel” preachers, who in reality do not proclaim the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus refused to allow Himself to be made the kind of Savior and Lord these false teachers offer needy people. Salvation is a spiritual matter, not a physical one. Our lord rebuked these people, ***“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him”*** (John 6:27).

Do not misunderstand. The Lord will often use the immediate, physical and emotional needs of individuals in order to initiate in them a movement toward Him. God used a case of leprosy to bring a Naaman, a Syrian general, to the God of Israel (Cf. 2 Kings 5). And may God be praised, the Lord does answer prayer in that He will heal the sick, feed the hungry, and deliver the needy. But do not confuse this kind of “coming to Him” with “coming to Him” for salvation, with “coming to Him” as Lord and Savior. For to come to Jesus Christ in the manner that He taught here in John 6 is in an entirely different realm. The true desire for Him that results in coming to Him for salvation arises from other, more important concerns, namely, from one’s concern for his eternal destiny, for being found on the Day of Judgment to be righteous in His sight, rather than condemned as a sinner, being consigned to everlasting punishment. But when God first begins to deal with a person with His intention to bring him to the Savior, He will often cause that one to experience affliction or tribulation.<sup>4</sup> David wrote, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word” (Psa. 119:67). David declared to the Lord, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. (Psa. 119:71). This is true because when we are afflicted, we look to Him for help. And so, when the Lord does answer someone’s prayer, say, He heals someone who is sick, feed someone who is hungry, or deliver one who is in danger, that does not assure that person has “come to Christ” for salvation. Did not the Lord heal ten lepers, but only one was apparently truly converted (Cf. Luke 17:12-20).

What may we conclude from this? Let me propose the first of several truths of the gospel that our passage reveals to us.

**Gospel Truth #1: Coming to Christ for salvation occurs when people look to Jesus Christ alone to save them from their sins unto eternal life.**

Now when our Lord told these people, “Do not ***labor*** for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life”, *they thought in terms of what must they do* in order to be granted everlasting life. They assumed that they had to perform works pleasing to God, in other words, that they had to labor in order for them to achieve this end. So they asked Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” (v. 28). This is always the response of religionists who know nothing of the gospel. They believe that salvation is given to those who work for it, whose sacrifice, devotion, and commitment qualify them to receive God’s grace, whereas those who have refused or failed to do as they have done, are justly excluded from any hope of heaven. In short, they believe that they must keep some

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<sup>4</sup> We spoke of this not long ago when we addressed 1 Thessalonians 3:3.

form or degree of God's law, which will one day qualify them to enter everlasting life.<sup>5</sup> They said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" They are as unbelieving Israel, which Paul described in this way:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup>For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup>For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. (Rom. 10:1-3)

Jesus answered this crowd, saying to them, "***This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent***" (v. 29). This is quite a rich statement. Our Lord spoke of the essential need to have faith. But true faith is always that which rests upon revealed truth. And here, our Lord Jesus suggested to this crowd that God the Father had sent Him on a mission to effect the salvation of His people. And perhaps there is even a hint here that our Lord was betraying to them His preexistence as the eternal Son of God, in that the Father had "sent Him" into the world in order to save His people from their sins. **D. A. Carson** was of this opinion:

Jesus sets them straight: *The work of God--i.e.* what God requires-- is faith. This is not faith in the abstract, an existential trust without a coherent object. Rather, they must *believe in the one [God] has sent...* Jesus is supremely the one who reveals God to us, precisely because, unlike any other person, he has been in the courts of heaven and has been sent here from there so that the world might be saved through him (*i.e.* 3:11-17).<sup>6</sup>

One bit of evidence that the Lord Jesus was alluding to His preexistence as the eternal Son of God may be seen in what He overtly said to His disciples toward the end of this teaching session. After our Lord managed to scatter the crowds by confronting them with truth they refused to embrace, His own disciples were perplexed and troubled. But our Lord did not then deal lightly with them. We read of this in **verses 60** through **63**:

<sup>60</sup> Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

<sup>61</sup> When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> ***What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?*** <sup>63</sup>It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:60-63)

From this we may declare another gospel truth:

**Gospel Truth #2: Coming to Christ for salvation is when people look to Jesus Christ as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, whom God sent into this world to assume a human nature, in order to save His people from their sins.**

The Jesus Christ who alone saves sinners from their sins must be understood and believed to be eternal God who is also a man. He is the only Savior that God has provided for sinners. He is the only One through whom a sinner may come into everlasting life, dwelling with God in eternity. Biblical Christianity is the only way of salvation. Yesterday, Flo Pierce, who is about to pass into the presence of the Lord, struggled to speak. She kept repeating John 14:6, in which the Lord Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes unto the Father except through Me." She was rehearsing what

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<sup>5</sup> We will speak of this in some detail next week, Lord willing.

<sup>6</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 285.

we are here affirming. We claim that biblical Christianity is the only true religion, that Jesus Christ is the only true Savior. All other religions are false religions. All other gods are no gods, even false gods.

Now in response to our Lord's words to the crowds, they desired to know more. They wanted to have His claims demonstrated before them. We read of this in **verses 30 and 31**.

<sup>30</sup>Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" (John 6:30-31)

Jesus had given them the sum of their duty: they were to believe on Him. And what was their response? It is as though they said, "*This is fine and well, but you will have to give us some sign so that we can believe you. What sign will you give us?*" In effect they said, "*You have given us bread from the earth, and that on one occasion. We believed in Moses because when we were in the desert, he fed us daily from heaven. What are you going to do for us?*"

Our Lord had fed them the day before. They were filled and satisfied, at least for a time. But now they wanted to have this miracle of food provision repeated, even repeatedly bestowed upon them. But again, it reveals that in spite of what our Lord Jesus had taught them, they could not get past the here and now, the focus on today's needs and desires. Our Lord took the occasion to again compare and contrast that which is temporal and worldly and that which is spiritual and eternal.

<sup>32</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Moses, or rather God through Moses, had sustained the children of Israel for 40 years by supplying them every morning with manna, which they regarded as bread from heaven, bread from God. But our Lord contrasts what the Father gives through faith in Him with what Moses had given to Israel. The true bread from heaven gives spiritual life, that is, a true, abiding relationship with God, which is the essence of eternal life itself.<sup>7</sup>

The people's reaction was understandable, but flawed. **Verse 34** reads, "Then they said to Him, 'Lord, give us this bread always.' What was their response? *"Give us some of that!"* It would seem that the essence of their desire had not changed. They still wanted that which God could physically give them, rather than desiring God Himself. They were still looking for that which would satisfy their temporal, physical needs. But this is what unregenerate people do. Our Lord said it this way to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). An unregenerate man will not, yes, cannot rise above what is sensual, physical, self-satisfying. He wants what God can give him. He does not want God Himself.

Our Lord responded to them by saying that Moses had not given them bread "*from heaven.*" Manna had come down from the sky. But the only "*true bread*" that God the Father has given is Jesus Christ Himself, who had come down from heaven to give life to the world. And so, we read of our Lord's instruction that once again sets forth the spiritual nature of the life that He brings to His people. We read in **verse 35f**, "And Jesus said to them, ***'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.***

Our Lord's response in verses 35-40 contains some statements to which we should give particular attention. Now when He made this statement, "***I am the bread of life***", we have another claim to deity that must have pressed itself on the conscience, the thinking, of many who were before Him. This is one

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

of the “I am” sayings recorded in the Gospels. There are seven “I am” statements in the Gospel of John. They include the following:

- (1) “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35) (This is the first)
- (2) “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5)
- (3) “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7, 9)
- (4) “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14)
- (5) “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)
- (6) “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)
- (7) “I am the true vine” (John 15:1, 5)

Although each of these gives some additional information about the Lord Jesus, in each the emphasis is on the statement, “*I am.*” [Greek: Ἐγώ εἰμι (*ego aimie*)] It reflects what God had declared to Moses after he had asked God His name. God responded saying, “*I am.*” The meaning is that God is self-existent. He is everlasting and the ever-present One. God is Spirit and He transcends time. Here, in John 6:35, and in the other places where Jesus made the “I am” statements, He was claiming to be eternal God. Jesus Christ is eternal God Who has come down from heaven to give life to the world.

The manna that Moses gave was a temporal thing. It only gave physical life and it only gave one day’s worth at a time. Manna would rot if kept overnight. In contrast, Jesus Christ Himself is the true bread that is eternal and gives eternal life to all who feed upon Him. The old Puritan commentator, **Matthew Henry** wrote of this verse,

He is the bread of life, that **bread** of life, alluding to the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden, which was to Adam the seal of that part of the covenant, “Do this and live”, of which he might eat and live. Christ is the bread of life, for He is the fruit of the tree of life.

Our Lord then declared to them, “***He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and He who believes on me shall never thirst***” (6:35b). True life, the life that God intended for human beings to experience and enjoy, is to be found in God alone. Life is not in the things that He gives, but is in God Himself. True life is and comes to us through Jesus Christ alone. Again, Jesus said elsewhere, “I am... the life” (John 14:6). When the things of this world are sought for the meaning and purpose of life, dissatisfaction will result. This dissatisfaction with life cannot be remedied apart from Him. There is a spiritual hunger and a spiritual thirst that cannot be satisfied apart from knowing Christ as Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ Himself is the food that alone can satisfy. We may, therefore, assert another truth about “coming to Christ.”

**Gospel Truth #3: Coming to Christ for salvation is when one understands and embraces that Jesus Christ is the true source and the true meaning of all of life. To come to Jesus Christ is to desire Him, through which knowing Him and being in Him brings to the believer everything true, good, and important.**

But even after our Lord affirmed once again that He is the source of all life from God, even life more abundant in this world and in life everlasting, He acknowledges that the people did not believe Him. He said in **verse 36**, “***But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet you do not believe.***”

The Lord Jesus was not surprised that people did not respond to Him. He knew the sinful nature of fallen man. Perhaps the supreme evidence of the sinful nature of mankind is the refusal to come to God Who alone freely offers and freely bestows true and eternal happiness. That there is a natural aversion to the true God who has revealed Himself indicates that sin exists. People might deny sin. Or they may regard sin to be a trifle thing. But it is in the refusal of people to come to Jesus Christ that their sin will be shown for what it is. The sinfulness of these people was exposed. Sin becomes shown to be sin when



men refuse to embrace solely and fully the Lord Jesus. It reveals them as Christ haters and haters of God.<sup>8</sup>

Now one might respond, “*Well, then, if what you say is so, then how is it that not all reject Him? Are not all sinners?*” We read that those who do “come to Jesus Christ” do so because of the grace of God working upon them and in them. Jesus declared in verse 37, “***All that the Father gives Me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will in no wise cast out!***” (6:37)

The words of this verse may be viewed as quite **confronting**. For the child of God, however, these words are **comforting** and **assuring**. Let us consider the meaning and implications of Jesus’ words.

First, the Lord Jesus indicated that certain persons were given to Him out of fallen humanity. They would come to Him and as a result receive salvation. This is a clear teaching of Scripture regarding God’s election and predestination of sinners unto their salvation. All mankind are sinners. They will not come; they cannot come. Every one born into this world has this spirit of rebellion within them that says “*No, I will not have this man Jesus rule over me.*” If it were not for a work of God’s grace in us, we would remain in this sinful condition. God must do a work. He must utterly transform the nature of a person so that he/she will be compliant to the will of God and gladly receive the words of God. In another place in John’s gospel, Jesus said that a work must be performed by God that can only be likened to being reborn. The person who comes to God in Christ must be first a transformed person or he would never come (cf. John 3).

But who is it that will come to Jesus for life? They are ones that the Father has chosen to give to His Son. God in eternity, before the world began, before sin entered the world, chose certain ones out of fallen humanity and promised them to His Son as an inheritance. Jesus said of them here, “***All that the Father gives Me.***” He said in another place to His Father, “I have manifested Your name to the men ***whom You have given Me out of the world.*** They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word” (John 17:6). And one day, when our Lord Jesus has brought all of His redeemed ones before the Father, He will declare, “Here am I and ***the children whom God has given Me***” (Heb. 2:13). The Father promised these ones to His Son and so, God being true to Himself, they will come to Christ, each and every one. That is what the Lord Jesus is here declaring. And so, here is another gospel truth regarding one who truly comes to Christ:

**Gospel Truth #4: Those who come to Christ for salvation do so due to the sovereign grace of God effectually drawing them and enabling them.**

This kind of teaching will anger non-Christians about as fast as anything could. And frequently it even gets the people of God up in arms. “It is unfair!” “It is not right.” **Arthur Pink** addressed this in his classic book, ***The Sovereignty of God***. He also included the words of **Charles Spurgeon**. Pink was addressing Acts 13:48, which reads, “As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.”

Every artifice of human ingenuity has been employed to blunt the sharp edge of this Scripture and to explain away the obvious meaning of these words, but it has been employed in vain, though nothing will ever be able to reconcile this and similar passages to the mind of the natural man. “As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.” Here we learn four things: First, that believing is the consequence and not the cause of God’s decree. Second, that a limited number only are “ordained to eternal life,” for if all men without exception were thus ordained by God, then the words “as many as are a meaningless qualification. Third, that this “ordination” of God is not to mere external privileges but to “eternal life,” not to service but to salvation itself. Fourth, that all—“as many as,” not one less—who are thus ordained by God to eternal life will most certainly believe.

The comments of the beloved Spurgeon on the above passage are well worthy of our notice. Said he,

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. John 15:20-25 regarding the natural aversion of the sinner toward the true God.

“Attempts have been made to prove that these words do not teach predestination, but these attempts so clearly do violence to language that I shall not waste time in answering them. I read: ‘As many as were ordained to eternal life believed’, and I shall not twist the text but shall glorify the grace of God by ascribing to that grace the faith of every man. Is it not God who gives the disposition to believe? If men are disposed to have eternal life, does not He—in every case—dispose them? Is it wrong for God to give grace? If it be right for Him to give it, is it wrong for Him to purpose to give it? Would you have Him give it by accident? If it is right for Him to purpose to give grace today, it was right for Him to purpose it before today—and, since He changes not—from eternity.”

The basic problem of many who reject this teaching is that they do not see the gravity of their sin. They view sin as a relatively little matter that should be overlooked by a good and loving God. But God is a good God in that He is a holy God, and He will in no wise clear the guilty. People choose to live in their sin, because they love their sin. A sinner wants the “freedom” to be his own god, the governor of his own life, and his own determiner of his eternal destiny. But God has declared that there is room for only one God in His universe, and it isn’t going to be you or me.

Now again, this is not a popular message. Some say that this kind of thing should not be taught it would drive away people. Actually, for people who really want to hear the message of truth, they receive it. Others, of course, will not. And sometimes the most outspoken objectionists to this doctrine are preachers. Spurgeon once said, “*I heard a man once say that He knew the Gospel is true because it has survived so many pulpits.*” There is probably some truth to that.

I myself fought against this doctrine for a hand full of years in the 70’s. Two things however, brought me around. (1) I could not deny the fact it was taught in the Word of God. (2) I knew it had to be true in my case, because I knew that I was such a sinner that I would have never come to Him had He not arrested me in my tracks and subdued by rebellion and placed His Spirit within me.

Notice that the Lord did not reserve this teaching to be secretly conveyed to His people alone. He declared this truth openly. And so should we. Here again are the words of **Charles Spurgeon**:

And, do not believe, dear friends, that when you go into revival meetings, or special evangelistic services, you are to leave out the doctrines of the gospel; for you ought then to proclaim the doctrines of grace rather more than less. Teach gospel doctrines clearly, affectionately, simply, and plainly, and especially those truths which have a present and practical bearing upon man’s condition and God’s grace. Some enthusiasts would seem to have imbibed the notion that, as soon as a minister addresses the unconverted, he should deliberately contradict his usual doctrinal discourses, because it is supposed that there will be no conversions if he preaches the whole counsel of God. It just comes to this, brethren, it is supposed that we are to conceal truth, and utter a half-falsehood, in order to save souls. We are to speak the truth to God’s people because they will not hear anything else; but we are to wheedle sinners into faith by exaggerating one part of truth, and hiding the rest until a more convenient season. This is a strange theory, and yet many endorse it. According to them, we may preach the redemption of a chosen number to God’s people, but universal redemption must be our doctrine when we speak with the outside world; we are to tell believers that salvation is all of grace, but sinners are to be spoken with as if they were to save themselves; we are to inform Christians that God the Holy Spirit alone can convert, but when we talk with the unsaved, the Holy Ghost is scarcely to be named. We have not so learned Christ. Thus others have done; let them be our beacons, and not our examples. He who sent us to win souls neither permits us to invent falsehoods, nor to suppress truth. His work can be done without such suspicious methods.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner* (Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 22f.

Will people react negatively? Yes. But they did to the Lord Jesus as well.

The second portion of the statement in **John 6:37** are words of comfort to the child of God. The ones given to Him by the Father, who truly come to Him, will remain with Him. Jesus declared, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and *the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” From this we may assert one final truth regarding “coming to Christ”

**Gospel Truth #5: Those who come to Christ for salvation are brought by the grace of God and kept eternally by the grace of God.**

Assurance is bound up in knowing that you are one of God’s chosen ones Who was given to His Son as His own possession.<sup>10</sup> If you are a Christian it is because the Father saw to it that you would come to the Lord Jesus in repentance and faith. The Lord Jesus will also see to it that you remain with Him. **Verses 38-40** reinforce that this will be so. No other scenario is possible. All who are given to Him of the Father will be raised to life from the dead and they will dwell eternally with God and His Son and the rest of the people of God.

The reason for this is that the Father decreed in eternity that it would be so, and the Lord Jesus will do no other than assure that it will be so. The Father had issued a decree to His Son. He had communicated to His Son that this was His will: “Out of fallen humanity I have chosen a people to give to You. I commission You to redeem them with Your blood. I will see to it they will come to you.” In response the Son in essence commits Himself, “I will leave heaven and become one of them. I will declare Your name to them. I will redeem them with my blood. I will see to it that not one of them that You have given to me will be lost.”

May we praise God for His free and sovereign grace toward us in saving us from our sins.

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Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
To God our Savior,  
Who alone is wise,  
Be glory and majesty,  
Dominion and power,  
Both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. 2 Peter 1:10.