

**GOD'S WILL IS ETERNAL LIFE**  
**John 6:30-40**

At some point Jesus and the disciples had gone up to Capernaum where Jesus was now teaching in the synagogue (6:59). Probably early in the morning after they landed at Genneserat, they had walked up to Peter's home. There in the synagogue, the foundation of which sits under the ruins you see today in the town, Jesus unfolded the most remarkable teaching about God's grace.

The Bread of Life discourse, as 6:25-59 is often called, is one of the most precious passages in the Bible to those who are born again. It is one of the most confusing passages to those who are not. And the same passage is a point of contentious debate among those who are religious (like the crowd Jesus addressed) and yet unsaved. Today we begin to try to plumb some of the depths of one of eternity's greatest truths.

**Can Your Faith Be Bought with Bread (vv.31-34).**

The crowd showed up and said to Jesus, "Give us a reason to believe You," (vv.30-31). They claimed that they would believe Jesus if He would do something to prove His claim that He was the Son of God come from heaven. *So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"* (v.30). That seems like an unexpected question or request in the experience of our culture. But it was not unusual at all in the culture where those folks lived.

We can understand why they asked the question if we follow the line of reasoning that actually began in our previous study. We will remember that a crowd of people had been looking for Jesus (6:22-24). When they found Him, they wondered how He came to the other side of

the lake (6:25). Instead of answering the question they asked, Jesus abruptly accused them of searching for Him, not because of the sign that He had done in multiplying the bread and fish, but because He gave them food (v.26). The food was the issue, not the fact that this man from Nazareth did a miracle. Jesus warned the people not to labor for food that perishes, but to labor for eternal life – which only He, the Son of God, can give (v.27). This admonition drew out a natural response: "What kind of labor is the work of God?" (v.28). Jesus explained, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (v.29).

If Jesus was the prophet like Moses that God would raise up according to His promise, He would certainly do miracles, wonders, and signs, wouldn't He? If He was indeed like Moses, wouldn't He do miracles similar to the ten plagues that Moses dumped on the Egyptians? Or even if He was the promised "Elijah," as some folks speculated (John 1:21), they could expect Him to do signs like Elijah did. The Rabbis had taught and the people had believed that when Messiah came, He would give a sign to validate who He claimed to be. Therefore, it was not infrequently that the Pharisees demanded that Jesus produce such a sign.

We who live in a modern, post-Christian age cannot identify with this desire for a confirming miracle from Jesus. Signs like that are not necessary because people in our age simply trust the Bible message. Right? Don't we wish that were true? If modern people are not swayed or impressed by signs, why do devout Catholics flock to the latest apparition of Jesus or to the newest impression of Mary? Why do some people think the miracle of speaking in tongues is proof of salvation or filling of the Holy Spirit? Is that not a sign? We cannot ignore the fact that human nature demands the spectacular in order to be convinced. Are you willing to read the Bible and simply take God at His Word? If that alone is sufficient to satisfy you, you are indeed unique compared to your world.

Though we might not be able to identify with this sign-seeking mentality, we can easily conclude that asking for a sign was an unnecessary question in light of the context. Didn't these people just eat bread and fish that Jesus provided miraculously? What greater sign did they need? Well, Moses gave the people food, and, if Jesus is greater than Moses, He needed to do something greater. If He did what the people wanted, they would believe! Right. Sure. Those people gathered around Jesus would believe Him just like their forefathers believed God.

They told Jesus, *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat (v.31)*. The implication is that if Jesus provided manna like their forefathers ate, they would believe everything He said about Himself. That is why Jesus was perfectly justified to accuse the people of wanting physical, temporary, passing bread. They appealed to the fact that Moses gave manna to their ancestors every day. They implied that Jesus ought to do the same thing.

The people could argue persuasively because they were convinced they had Scripture on their side. They quoted the Scripture to Jesus to make sure He understood what or who they were comparing Him with. The Scripture is from no particular text (chapter and verse) but certainly the truth from the Old Testament. It definitely described the original event: *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not" (Exodus 16:4)*. Asaph wrote, *And he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven (Psalm 78:24)*. Nehemiah remembered, *You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them (Nehemiah 9:15)*.

They might have been able to quote Scripture pretty well, but they sure didn't have historical facts on their side. True, their forefathers ate manna that God provided every day. They also ate quail the God provided miraculously. And they drank water that God provided miraculously. Most amazing might be the fact that their clothing did not wear out, their feet did not swell (Deut. 8:4). And they crossed the Red Sea. Those people had multiplied reasons to believe God and yet they chose not to. They refused to believe God's word through Moses, refused to enter the promised land, and rebelled against God for 40 years until they died. And all the time they claimed to be God's people.

You live in a world that ignores God, disbelieves God, refuses to acknowledge the truth of His Word and, therefore, lives in rebellion against God. That is, until they think they need His help. We should not soon forget the obvious resorting to God and appealing to Him for help that quickly followed the tragedy of "9-11." At that time there were a lot of prayers and appeals to God for help. But it didn't last long. There is not argument that America is a religious culture, but that does not mean

that we are a God-honoring, God-fearing culture. No amount of miracles, no multiplying of signs is going to cause individuals to turn to God in faith believing. We must trust the Bible alone. It is sufficient to reveal Jesus as Messiah and Savior.

Many of our peers are much like the ancient Israelites whose faith was so misguided (vv.32-34). God is the author of true bread, but the people were impressed with Moses. *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven" (v.32a)*. According to their own argument, it is obvious that the people assumed that Moses provided bread. They drew this conclusion in spite of the fact that Moses clearly disavowed any part in providing the bread according to the old account in the Torah. He plainly told the people that this was heavenly bread from God. That would be like well-meaning people actually believing that their church or religion could grant them salvation. Moses didn't give manna and churches can't give salvation.

So Jesus pointed out that Moses wasn't the author of the blessing, God was. It wasn't Moses, *but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (vv.32b-33)*. The blessing of manna was from God's hand of mercy and grace. Though the stubborn and rebellious people did not deserve grace, God gave it. The gift should have drawn out of the people thanks and gratitude. It didn't because the people loved themselves, were self-centered, and rebelled against God.

In the same way, God still offers the greatest of blessings from His hand of mercy and grace. The wording actually says, *My Father is giving you true bread from heaven*. It means that the true bread, that which satisfies for eternity, is Jesus Christ alone. He came down from heaven to give life to the world. The present tense verb helps us understand that Jesus Christ alone is still, and always will be, the author of life and eternal life. He is the Creator. He is the Sustainer. In Him alone is eternal life. The opening words of the book teach us as much. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:1-5)*.

God still offers Him to sinners who are dying from the moment they are born, sinners who will experience eternal death. And religious

people of the world are still confused. They like Jesus, they talk about Jesus, and they set Jesus up as a good example. But they do not know Jesus or understand His truth and work. While they talk about Jesus and quote Jesus, they are actually living in rebellion against Jesus. Just like the Jews in Jesus' day talked about God's blessing of manna but assumed that Moses was the author.

But talking about Jesus often reveals how confused people are. Consider from this example just how confusing religious talk can be. Recently Cory Booker, Mayor of Newark, New Jersey said publicly, "Before you speak to me about your religion, first show it to me in how you treat other people. Before you tell me how much you love your God, show me how much you love all His children. Before you preach to me of your passion for your faith, teach me about it through your compassion for your neighbors. In the end, *I'm not as interested in what you have to tell or sell as how you choose to live and give.*"

That sounds really good and really religious. It sounds like the kind of thing we believe – the kind of things for which we aspire. The mayor's words sound good because they sound like what Jesus would say. For example, Jesus told us, *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16)*. He said, *Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you (Matthew 5:42)*.

So we agree with Mayor Booker. That's good. Well, all is well and good until you ask people like the mayor of Newark to explain what he means by showing good to other people and about having compassion on your neighbor. What's to know? We must know what he means, because if he believes that showing compassion is to tolerate and embrace that which God condemns, we are incapable of showing the mayor's kind of compassion. Hitler convinced many German people that exterminating a race of people was to show compassion to the Fatherland. If Booker truly believes that all people are the children of God and, therefore, redeemed from sin's penalty, we cannot possibly agree with him. And, therefore, we are guilty of not showing the love and will of God. And so the people in Jesus' day were terribly confused.

Jesus' peers wanted bread that passes away. *They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always" (v.34)*. Even after Jesus' explanation of God's offer of eternal life in Him, they were focused on the temporal. That Jesus could give them eternal life escaped them. All that mattered to

them was health, wealth, and prosperity. Their response reminds us that there is a reason why ministries that focus on passing things like wealth and self-esteem are often the most popular ministries. The problem is that most people are spiritually dead. Spiritually dead people seldom find the truth of God's Word satisfying. God promised that *the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14)*. These people were spiritually dead so they craved the wrong bread.

### **Trust the Bread of Life (vv.35-40).**

Jesus explained that He is the Bread of life (vv.35-36). As such, He satisfies eternally. *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (v.35)*. Now Jesus was very direct in His teaching. He bluntly told the people, "I am the bread of life." Jesus is the everlasting bread that God sent down from heaven. Okay, that's kind of deep. More important is the truth that whoever embraces the truth about Jesus will never hunger or thirst spiritually.

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount what people like this are like. These are people who give up on themselves and their own efforts knowing that they are spiritually bankrupt and have nothing to offer to "buy" this bread. Jesus said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*. These are people who understand their sin and rebellion against God and sorrowfully confess it. Jesus taught, *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4)*. These are people who humbly bow before their Creator. Jesus promised, *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)*. And therefore, they are those who Jesus satisfies. That is what Jesus meant when He said, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6)*.

People cannot believe it. Jesus said so. *"But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe" (v.36)*. They saw Jesus and yet do not believe. The wording means more than the fact that they were seeing Him in passing. The word translated, "to see" (*horao*) does indeed mean to observe. But it also means to perceive, to experience, to be an eyewitness or to grasp. The people watched Jesus do mighty signs like

healing the sick. They heard Him teach with unusual authority. They ate the bread and fish and were satisfied. Was that not enough evidence to convince them about who Jesus was?

How amazing that after all the opportunities in which they saw Jesus' power, the people could not believe that He is God, the Savior from sin. They are like multitudes of people who know so much about church, the Bible, and even Jesus but still allow Him only to be a good example, a doer of good deeds, or even a martyr for a lost cause. Or even worse, they are like the number of people who call Jesus Lord and Savior, but who do not submit to Him, seldom pray to Him, and treat Him like a fire extinguisher to have on hand in case of trouble. What hope do they have?

Their hope, our hope is that Jesus came to complete the Father's will (vv.37-40). Have you ever wondered what God's will is? Listen to Jesus as He lays down the truths that explain the Father's will. He said, *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out (v.37)*. In the outworking of His will, God the Father gives people to God the Son. Since He is the Creator and Sustainer of His creation, He can do what He chooses with it. This includes people who He creates in His own image.

This is the sovereign election of God. Paul described it like this: *Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him (Ephesians 1:4)*. The Church, the Body of Christ, is God the Father's gift of love to God the Son. Out of a universe of fallen creatures God picks out sinners to give to the Savior. Everyone who the Father gives will come to the Son. We come to Him because the Father draws us to the Son. Later in this conversation Jesus will say, *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44)*. Everyone is invited. Those who are chosen come to Jesus and believe.

Everyone who comes to the Son will **never** be cast out. Here is the amazing promise: *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (Romans 8:28-30)*.

Furthermore, regarding the Father's will, Jesus taught, *"And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me" (v.39a)*. The Son will never lose anyone who the Father gives. That is how He prayed. *"While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12)*. This is the will of the Father and it cannot be revoked.

And again, *"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life" (v.40a)*. It is God's will that everyone who looks and believes will be saved. The look of faith is not casual observation like the people who watched Jesus do miracles and then walked away unaffected. The look of faith is not curiosity like seekers who run to various churches and ministries trying to find one that satisfies. The look of faith gazes on Jesus of Nazareth and wonders how He could love me a sinner condemned unclean. The look of faith marvels at God's plan of salvation and the doctrines of grace. God's will is that the look of faith results in eternal life.

At this point, we should have no doubt what the will of the Father is. The Son accomplishes all that the Father sent Him to do. He came to earth for the one purpose of carrying out the work of God. *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (v.38)*. That Jesus the man from Nazareth came down from heaven is shocking to human ears. That He came to do the will of God is more shocking. And yet that is precisely what Jesus accomplished. He forged the link in the chain of God's grace that allows God to wipe away the sins of those people who trust His Word and Christ's work.

The completion of that work will be most obvious in the end. Twice in this brief conversation Jesus promised that He will raise up from the dead all who believe Him. He said, *"But raise it up on the last day" (v.39b)*. And He promised, *"I will raise him up on the last day" (v.40b)*. The last day will be a day of incredible, unimaginable rejoicing by us who are redeemed. The last day will be a day of unimaginable grief by those who saw Jesus or knew about Jesus and chose to reject Him from running their lives.