

I Am the Bread of Life
John 6:25-71
Steve Mood

Introduction

During the 17th century, at the end of the Reformation, there was controversy in the Dutch Reformed Church about what is Reformed Orthodoxy. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) was a distinguished Dutch pastor and professor at the University of Leiden. He had a problem with some of the teachings of the Reformed Church and clashed with one of his colleagues, Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641). After Arminius' death, two of his successors: Johannes Uitenbogaert (1557-1644) and Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) issued a Remonstrance, a document of disagreement, in 1610. Their document had five articles: (1) Election is conditional upon faith in Christ, and that God elects to salvation those who will have faith in Him, (2) Christ died for all, but salvation is limited to those who believe in Christ, (3) Man is unable to do the will of God, and cannot save himself unless enabled by the grace of God, (4) Man can resist God's grace by exercising his free will. (5) Salvation is conditional upon the believer remaining in Christ. An assembly known as the Synod of Dort (Nov. 1618 through May 1619) met to discuss these issues. The passage in John before us today deals with most of the issues and let us see how the Remonstrance lines up with what Scripture says.

What have we covered so far in John? In John 1 Jesus had an encounter with John the Baptist. In John 2 Jesus had a discussion with His mother. In John 3 Jesus had an encounter with Nicodemus during the night. In John 4 Jesus had an encounter with the woman at the well. In John 5 Jesus had an encounter with an invalid at the pool of Bethesda. Last week, in the first half of John 6, Jesus had an encounter with a hungry multitude and his frightened disciples. Notice that in all of these encounters Jesus continued to proclaim who He is and what He came to do.

In the passage today Jesus had a discussion between Himself, some Jews, some disciples, and the twelve. Notice that the Jews mentioned in this passage were not Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, or any of the hostile groups against Jesus. The location was Capernaum: **John 6:59** *Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as He taught at Capernaum.*

The Jews asked Jesus a series of questions and made some comments. Jesus provided an answer for each, which led to another question/comment. Here are the questions and comments:

John 6:25 *When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?"*

John 6:28 *Then they said to Him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"*

John 6:30 *So they said to Him, "Then what sign do You do, that we may see and believe You? What work do You perform?"*

John 6:34 *They said to Him, "Sir, give us this bread always."*

John 6:42 *They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"*

John 6:52 *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"*

John 6:60 *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”*

After the response to the questions and comments **John 6:66** says *After this many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him.* Let’s look at Jesus’ comments in response to the questions and comments of the Jews and disciples. The nature of the discussion and Jesus’ response deals with the means, intent, and application of salvation. The discussion is salvific, which Merriam-Webster defines as “*having the intent or power to save or redeem.*”

Lesson

Point 1: Salvation believing in the Son

John 6:27, 29 *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal... This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.*

We are called to believe in Jesus. Belief here is not merely knowing about Jesus, but that it is true, and trusting in Him for our salvation. The word in the Greek is πιστεύω (pisteuó) according to **Thayer’s Greek Lexicon** “*is used in the N. T. of ‘the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of his soul’; thus it stands absolutely to trust in Jesus or in God.*” It means that man cannot earn his own salvation. We are to cling to Him and to trust in Him.

Point #2: Salvation planned by the Father

John 6:32, 57 *Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven...As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on Me, he also will live because of Me.*

Salvation was planned by God the Father. It was His plan and He sent Jesus to come to this planet. As it says in v27, *for on him God the Father has set his seal:* whom He appointed and authorized as His agent attested by the miracles Jesus did and for the bestowal of life-giving food. Salvation based upon Jesus dying on the cross is God’s Plan A. There is no Plan B. He planned it before the universe was created.

Point #3: Salvation procured by the Son

John 6:35, 48-51, 58 *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...I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh...This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*

Jesus says in this passage that “*I am the Bread of Life,*” one of the seven “I am” statements made by Jesus in the gospel of John. As bread is necessary for our physical life, so Jesus as the Bread of Life is necessary for our spiritual life. He sacrificed Himself for our sins by dying on the

cross. Without Jesus' death on the cross there would be no salvation for sinful mankind. It took God the Son, the one who is without sin, to become man and to be sin for us so that by His death the debt of sin that we incurred was paid for. Only a perfect being, that is the God the Son, could pay the eternal debt owed to God for our sins by His death. Nothing we can do on our own would make us worthy of salvation: Not works, not good deeds, not a life dedicated to God, not being faithful to your church, nor faithful to your family and spouse, nor never getting a traffic ticket, would make you good enough that you didn't need Jesus' death for our sins.

Eating this bread means that you must come to Jesus, to believe in Him that He paid the price for our sins, and to trust in Him. It is only by this can we have eternal life and perpetual refreshment for our souls.

Rom. 5:6-9 *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.*

Point #4: Salvation chosen by the Father

John 6:37-38, 65 *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent me...This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father.*

The Father has chosen those that are going to turn to Him and be saved. Those that the Father has chosen will come to Jesus and they will never be cast out. Jesus came to this planet based upon the will of the Father. These verses also state that if the person is not granted to come to Jesus, that person will not be saved. Part of God's plan for salvation is choosing those who will turn to Him. It was done according to His purpose:

Eph. 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.*

Man on his own will not and cannot chose to be saved without God's help:

Rom 3:10-12 *"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*

R. C. Sproul commenting on John 6:37 says:

With these words, Jesus taught those who were gathered, including His disciples, that there are a number of people whom the Father had determined will come to the Son. They are gifts of the Father to the Son. – R. C. Sproul, John: An Expository Commentary

Does this make you feel comforted or uncomfortable? To me these verses are an encouragement: God has chosen me and I know that I am saved and that I have eternal life, because it is part of God's plan and He has the power to make it happen. If it was left to me to choose my own salvation, I would always be second guessing myself and wondering if I was worthy to be saved or whether I had done enough to earn salvation.

Point #5: Salvation secured by the Son/Father

John 6:37, 39-40,54 *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out...And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day ... Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Our salvation is secure. If God has chosen me and Jesus has died for me, then I can be secure that I will be saved. I can be confident in what God has done for me and it does not depend upon myself. What God began God will finish. What if I did something wrong? Would I lose my salvation? No. What if I did some really big sin, would I lose that salvation that Jesus procured for me? No. These verses tell us that Jesus will never cast us out. These verses contain no conditional statements. They are statements of fact about what will happen, not what might happen.

Verse 37 does not say “*All who come to Me the Father will give to Me.*” It says “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.*” What comes first: the giving by the Father or coming to Jesus? It is the Father giving to the Son in eternity past and then the person comes to Jesus during their lifetime. Not only that: those who come to Jesus will never be cast out. Our salvation is secure because it is part of God's plan and it was secured by the Father and the Son.

Not only is our salvation secure, Jesus promised that we will have eternal life and we will be raised “*on the last day.*” This phrase is repeated four times in this passage: verses 39, 40, 44, and 54. This indicates that it is going to happen. All the Father has given to Jesus will come to Him and they will never be cast out, and they will be resurrected on the last day. Our eternal destiny is assured. Is it based upon something we did? No. It is secured by the God the Father and God the Son. No matter what happens in your life you will live eternally. Some are called to die for their faith. Some die through some disease or tragic event. Some die at a ripe old age. No matter when you die, your eternal life is secure and we will be with Jesus forever. Our eternal life is secure because of what Jesus has done for us.

Point #6: Salvation drawn by the Father

John 6:44 *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day...*

What is this verse telling us? This verse is called a universal negative proposition. The verse starts with “No one.” That means “No person” without exception. It doesn't say “some.” It doesn't say “most.” It says “No one.” The next word is “can.” This word has to do with ability. No one, no human being, is capable of coming to God on their own. The next word is “unless,”

and indicates a necessary condition, something must take place before the action takes place: No one can come to Jesus “unless” the Father does something. No one has the power or the ability to come to Jesus “unless” the Father “draws him.”

But what does the word “draw” mean? Some think that it means “wooing.” God tries to convince us to turn to Him and then when we want to, we accept what He is asking. But how is the word used in the Bible? The Greek word is ἐλκύνω (helkón), means “to drag”. It is translated, “drag, haul, or draw.” When dealing with physical things it means to force someone/something to do something:

John 21:11 *So Simon Peter went aboard and **hauled** the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.*

Acts 16:19 *But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and **dragged** them into the marketplace before the rulers.*

Acts 21:30 *Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and **dragged** him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut.*

According to **Thayer’s Greek Lexicon** the metaphorical sense of the word means “*to draw by inward power, lead, impel.*” The concept of wooing, enticing, or begging is not found in the meaning of the word. What does it mean then? F. F. Bruce in his commentary states the following:

Those who come to Christ are here described as being drawn to him by the Father. In John 12:32 it is Christ who, by being “lifted up from the earth,” draws all without distinction to himself. One way or other, the divine initiative in the salvation of believers is emphasized. The responsibility of men and women in the matter of coming to Christ is not overlooked (cf. John 5:40), but none at all would come unless divinely persuaded and enabled to do. – F. F. Bruce, “The Gospel of John”

So, what does this mean to us? God is the initiator of salvation and those whom He elected become Christians and without His initiative no one would turn to Jesus. But it does not mean that God forces us to become Christians. I like what it says in Acts 16:14:

Acts 16:14 *One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord **opened** her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*

This should encourage us as we witness to others. We are told to preach the Word, to share the Gospel. This is where our responsibility ends. For it is God who has chosen those who will be saved and it is God who draws those to Himself to be saved. The results are up to God and we are not a failure if our sharing the Gospel does not lead to salvation. This is comforting to me.

Point #7: Salvation applied by the Spirit

John 6:63 *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*

Man left on his own by using his own means cannot be saved. His “*flesh is no help at all.*” Jesus told Nicodemus the same thing in John 3:5-7:

John 3:5-7 *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*

In order to enter the kingdom of God we must be born of the Spirit. The flesh, that is our natural, fallen condition, cannot do the things of God. It is the Spirit who gives life and it is by the Spirit that we are regenerated and it is by the Spirit that we are renewed.

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.*

We are given a new nature by the Holy Spirit. It is His job to regenerate and renew us. It is the Holy Spirit who changes us and our heart to be God focused and centered. There is nothing you can do to be born again, to be regenerated, for it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If you are resting on your strength and abilities to be righteous, to be born again, you will fail. For it is the Spirit who accomplishes these goals and it is by His power we become a new creation.

Application

1. *We must realize that it is God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that brings salvation to us: God the Father planning and choosing, God the Son obeying the Father, becoming man, dying on the cross for our sins, and God the Spirit who gives a new nature. We cannot save ourselves.*
2. *We must praise and worship God and give Him thanks that He was willing to become man for our sake, to die for our sins, and make possible our salvation. Left on our own we would never be saved and only have the wrath of God in our future.*
3. *We must present the gospel to those whom God brings into our lives, but leave the results to God, and be the good and faithful servant of a holy, righteous, and sovereign Lord. Leave the results to God and be faithful to what we are called to do.*