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Let Me Say It Another Way

John 6:41-51

Intro: We have discussed a few of the more weighty topics of theology in the last few weeks; topics that range from the total depravity of man, God's grace in drawing men to salvation and the security of our salvation. This security results from the fact that our salvation both originates and is preserved by the combined wills of the Father and Son. We have not only seen these truths revealed in our text but also corroborated by many other indisputable verses. Man is, by nature, incapable of believing and accepting Jesus but God has already, even before the foundation of the world, called those who will be saved. Of all those given to the Son by the Father, none will be lost.

Salvation is a gift that originated entirely in the mind of God and is maintained entirely by the will of God. We don't earn our standing before God the way a convicted felon gets access to early parole. It isn't by good behavior that we become pleasing to God. You and I look no different to God the Father when we are crushing life or when we are being crushed by it. When God sees us, all He sees is Jesus. Salvation is a nonstop flight and Jesus paid our ticket the whole way through. You can't lose through bad behavior what you didn't deserve in the first place.

Sadly, one of the surest facts of Christianity is that when the doctrines of man's total spiritual depravity and the necessity of God's electing grace in salvation are taught, they are too often met with resentment by many who hear them. This is as true in our day as it was in Christ's day. In fact, this is exactly what happens next in our text. Jesus' teaching on the need for God's grace in salvation is immediately followed by an outbreak of protest and resentment by some of the religious leaders in the area.

41-42- the Jews- We have a change of persons here as well as a change of location. Up to this point Jesus has been speaking in the open to the multitude that followed Him from the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Now He's speaking to the religious leaders and was probably speaking in the synagogue of Capernaum (59). In this discussion Jesus will restate His teaching and support it with evidence both from the OT & from His own

experience.

The first thing we see is that these religious leaders “complained about Him.” Jesus refers to it as a murmur. What does mean? Murmur is one of those unique English words that exist solely because they sound like the thing they describe. Hiss is another and so is buzz. In the same way, murmur is the sound people make when they disagree with someone and protest what they are saying. It’s the confused and/or disgruntled sound that runs through a crowd when people are angry and oppose what is being said or taught. It’s what the Jewish leaders were doing right here.

But note, the Jewish leaders don’t object to the doctrines Jesus was teaching per se; their objections appear in the form of personal criticism against Jesus. They don’t offer any reasons why they cannot agree with Him or why they consider His teaching to be wrong. Of course, they couldn’t do this because Jesus’ doctrine was too consistent and too air-tight for any coherent theological rebuttal. So, in lieu of that, they attack Him personally! 5 times Jesus had used the phrase, “came down from heaven” but the leaders refused to accept it. They knew better – they knew who He was and where He came from and their response in [vs42](#) says, in effect, “Don’t listen to Him. He’s a nobody from the backwaters of Galilee, the son of Joseph the carpenter. Listen to us!” As usual, their response said more about them than it did Jesus: it revealed their religious snobbery, their relentless pride and their great spiritual ignorance.

43-47- How did Jesus respond to this personal attack? Not by defending Himself personally, as we might like to do. He could have done it, sure. Their personal knowledge of Him was as limited as their spiritual knowledge. Instead of defending Himself, Jesus went back and restated His teaching again and then offered them two proofs to back it up. Why did He do this? This was nothing more than a challenge to the Jews to investigate His teaching for themselves. Then, after having restated His teaching and given His proofs, Jesus restates the doctrine again one more time.

First, Jesus tells them to stop complaining among themselves because that’s certainly not the way you learn divine truth. Then He repeats what He said in [vs37](#), but in a slightly stronger manner. Whereas in [vs37](#), Jesus says that “all that the Father gives to Me will come to Me;” here, the same truth is stated in the negative, “No one can come to Me unless...” This must have

been a shock to these religious leaders. The Jews suffered under the delusion that they were all chosen of God by virtue of their physical birth. Jesus makes it clear that God must draw an individual before they can come to God. Of course, everyone who responds to the Father's calling will respond to the Son as well.

Now, the problem with this truth is that we humans tend to feel as though we are in charge and that we choose to give ourselves to God. The truth is, He calls and we come. But even in this, if we consider this as being partly God's work and partly our, we're still wrong. Man is not passive to the call of God but in fact, is obstinate towards it. We see this in the Greek word translated "draws" in [vs44](#) – *helkuo*: to drag. Everywhere else it is used in the NT, the word always implies resistance to the power that draws. Whether it's a net full of fish ([21:6, 11](#)) a sword from its scabbard ([18:10](#)) or even Paul and Silas being dragged before the civil authorities in Philippi ([Acts 16:19](#)), there's always the idea of resistance to the drawing. In the same way here, there's the idea that people resist the call of God.

Thankfully, for all the NT instances that refer to this resistance, in not one case is the resistance ever successful! The fish do get to shore, the sword is drawn from its sheath, Paul and Silas do appear before the magistrates. In every case, the drawing power is triumphant just as it is here. People resist God's call, in this their depravity is revealed. But the power of God always overcomes the resistance in all those whom He has determined to give to Jesus. Is this discouraging or disconcerting to you? It shouldn't be. Actually, the fact that God does draw men and women to Christ in spite of themselves is our hope! This understanding of God's initiative in salvation should make us even more confident in evangelism because we know that God is still drawing people to Jesus and if that is the case then we can still expect to see all those who the Father is drawing come to Jesus.

Next, Jesus gives two points of evidence to support this teaching. His reference to the OT ([45](#)) is actually a partial quotation of [Isa 54:13](#). As it stands in here, we might read it with the idea that the all applies to all men, indicating God illuminates all, and men either come to Christ or refuse to come to Christ on their own volition. But the full text in Isaiah refutes this idea. The verse clearly applies to God's children only, not to all men, meaning one must first be a child of God through the new birth before one can understand the message of Christ and come to Him. Jesus then goes

on to show that this truth is also confirmed by experience: “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” All of those whom the Father has taught do eventually come to Jesus.

Of course, hearing and being taught by the Father is not the same as seeing the Father. No human being has ever seen the Father except Jesus Christ, the Son. The fact that He has seen and has been sent by the Father points to the intimate relationship enjoyed between the father and Son and shared by no one else – not even the angels! This truth only serves to reinforce His declaration in vs47 that faith in Him brings eternal life. Hearing the Father’s call and believing in Jesus are indications of the new life of God miraculously implanted within the individual.

48-50- bread of life- This is the 2nd time in ch6 that Jesus describes Himself with this image. By this and the other “I am” statements recorded in John, Jesus shows that He is all that fallen man needs and that He is the sole access to the Father. Jesus then elaborates on who He is and what He does by comparing and contrasting Himself with the OT concept of manna. It was the multitude that first brought up the topic of manna but now Jesus points out to them that manna had its limitations. It was food for the body and nothing more. All those who ate of the manna still died.

When Jesus calls Himself the “bread of life” He’s not claiming to be exactly like manna, He’s claiming to be greater! Manna only sustained life for the Jews but Jesus gives life to the whole world. Israel ate the daily manna and still died; but when you receive Jesus into your heart, you live forever. When God gave the manna He only gave a gift; but when Jesus came, He gave Himself. It didn’t cost God anything to send manna each day, but it cost Him dearly to send His Son. Israel had to eat manna every day; but sinners only have to trust Christ once to receive eternal life.

This is a great rebuke to those who hold to the prosperity gospel. Their entire religious world is centered around what ever material blessings they may happen to receive from God. “If you have faith, you will have...” “If you only believe strong enough, you will receive...” Clearly, manna was miraculous and life-sustaining. It was something Israel had to have, couldn’t live without. It was clearly a great blessing from God – but it was only a blessing from God; it wasn’t as great as God Himself. Israel thought they were something because God gave them the manna but they missed out on

the greater blessing of getting to know and serve the God who was so gracious to reveal Himself to them.

It reminds me of a story I read about a Scotsman who was coming to America. He bought passage on one of the great ocean liners. He did not have much money, so he decided to save on food by stocking up on crackers, cheese, and fruit before his departure. The ship sailed, and he began to eat his sparse meals. This went fine for the first 4 or 5 days. But as the ship drew closer to New York the crackers became increasingly stale, the cheese became moldy, and the fruit spoiled. Finally, there was nothing left fit to eat. He decided he'd go up to the dining hall and have one last, good meal before landing in NY. Imagine his surprise to discover that nothing in the dining room cost anything and that all that he could ever have eaten had already been included in the price of his ticket before he left home!

Unfortunately, this is the same way many people act toward the true bread of life that is offered to us without price in the person of Jesus Christ. He's there for all. But the sad fact is that many would rather feed upon the dry crackers of human philosophy, the moldy cheese of man's doctrine or the spoiled fruit of good works than come to Him.

These verses not only contain Christ's great claim, they also make a requirement – we must feed on Him! This means to believe on Jesus, commit your life to Him and take Him into yourself so that He becomes a part of you and you of Him. It's the process of letting go of every thing you think endears you to God. You must release these things so your hands will be empty to receive the righteousness Jesus will give you. There's no substitute for that. If you've not done that, you're not a Christian, no matter how much you know about the Christianity. If you have done it, then you're already a Christian and God has placed His eternal life within you and will keep you until the last day.

What does eating involve? 1) Its necessary! You must eat to live. So, spiritually, you must eat of the Lord Jesus Christ if you are to come to life spiritually and grow strong. How do you feed upon Christ? Bible study – there's no substitute for that. If we use the Word, God will bring us into contact with Jesus. He'll use it to bring to mind what we most need to know; He'll reveal sin in us and correct it; He'll certainly lead us in the way that we

should go.

2) Eating is always a response to a felt need. We eat to satisfy our bodies need for nourishment. Similarly, we feed on Jesus thru Bible study because we recognize our need to do this. Christians who don't regularly feed on Jesus mistakenly believe they are spiritually all-sufficient; they have it all under control – but they don't, not even close.

3) Eating involves appropriation. Knowledge is not enough. You can sit down at a banquet table and know all the ingredients to every dish on the table but if you don't eat anything, all the food in the world will do you no good! Seeing bread doesn't satisfy your hunger. Knowing the ingredients of the bread doesn't satisfy your hunger. Taking pictures of the bread, posting on line to all your friends, selling it on eBay or even playing catch with it will not do the trick! Nothing will satisfy your hunger and bring you abundant life except actually eating the bread.

4) Eating must be personal. You must eat. No one else can do it for you. Not me or anyone else – just you.

51- In **vs27**, Jesus said He was the One who gives the food that endures to everlasting life. Now He says He is the food – the bread of life. From this, we are to understand that what He gives is Himself! But, how does He do this? He will give His flesh for the life of the world. We should recognize this terminology as being sacrificial. It's similar to what John the Baptist witnessed of Jesus in **1:29** when he called Him the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." To give one's flesh can hardly mean anything other than death. The wording here points to a death that is both voluntary (I shall give) and vicarious (for the life of the world). He is speaking of His death on the cross.

It's not hard to see an illustration of Jesus in the OT manna. Manna was a mysterious thing to the Jews; in fact, the word manna means, "What is it?" Likewise, Jesus was a mystery to those who saw Him. The manna came at night from heaven and Jesus came to this earth when sinners were in moral and spiritual darkness. Manna was sweet to the taste and it adequately met the needs of the people.

The most striking similarity is that manna was given to a rebellious people; it

was the gracious gift of God. All they had to do was stoop down and pick it up. If they failed or refused to pick it up – they walked on it – to their own detriment and loss. Jesus is not far from any person. All anyone needs to do is humble themselves and take the gift of salvation that God is offering to them. If you haven't done this, you need to. It's the only way to experience true happiness and contentment in this life.

If you have done this; are you feeding on Jesus daily? Don't wait until a crisis befalls you to find out how necessary it is. 😊