

Drawn to Him

We have now arrived at the fifth chapter of the Book of Luke. If you will turn there with me, we'll begin by considering the first three verses. Follow along as I read, beginning in verse 1

¹So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, ²and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets. ³Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. (Luke 5:1-3)

These scriptures speak about a strange and mysterious attraction that takes place within people's souls, a special desire within their spirit that causes them to want to draw nearer and to know more about the word of God, and to know more about the person of Jesus Christ and about His teachings.

And as with these people that we read about today, who are said here to be "pressing" to get near to Jesus, that attraction can become almost irresistible, so much so that people will go to extraordinary circumstances to get near to Him and to hear His words.

Zacchaeus, a tax collector, climbed a tree to get a clearer look at Jesus.

In our day, we hear people tell stories about, while not really knowing exactly why they were doing it, have traveled long distances to hear Billy Graham tell them about Jesus and about salvation.

Jesus explained that mysterious experience in John chapter 6 when He said,

³⁷All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹This 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. ⁴⁰And 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. (John 6:37-40)

And in verse 44 of that same chapter, Jesus said,

⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

And also, in verse 65 of that same chapter, Jesus said,

⁶⁵ . . . “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (John 6:65)

The understanding from these scriptures is simple. There will come a time within each person’s soul that they will be drawn to the Lord Jesus and given the opportunity to truly know Him.

Consider that simple truth for a moment folks. It is a profound expression of love from God that is beyond measure. The very God who created the heavens and the earth desires to have a loving and eternal relationship with you and with me. And He proves it by drawing us up close to Himself so that we can get to know Him. That is pure love in its most precious form, and we dare not turn away and deny Him.

And please note in these words that when God uses this word “draw”, it is seldom ever used in the sense of a gentle “wooing”, or “coaxing”, as some would have us to understand, but it is rather a forcible “drawing” such as when a soldier “draws” his sword from its sheathe, or as when fishermen “drag” their heavily laden nets into a boat.

In these examples, neither the sword nor the nets add any of their own effort or will into the circumstance, only resistance. And Jesus adds to this understanding in verse 63 of John 6 where He tells us that

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. (John 6:63)

And again, in verse 65 of John 6, the words “granted him by the Father” has the sense of a king, sitting on His throne, giving permission for someone to enter into His presence. God must grant permission. Those words of the Lord Jesus again,

⁶⁵ . . . “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (John 6:65)

I’m reminded of the passage that speaks about that great and terrible day of judgment when many, having suddenly realized that they would not be allowed to enter into heaven, will cry out to God to let them enter, and He will say,

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in

your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity.' (Matthew 7:21-23)

Sadly though, this is where our doctrines begin to differ with some of our brethren in other denominations. Those folks believe that each person is born with an innate sense of need for a Savior. And because of that, each person can make a personal decision, on their own, to come to Christ, to accept or to reject Him as Savior, regardless of whether or not God draws them.

And while they would say that yes, this special drawing does take place, they teach that that "drawing" from God the Father is not completely necessary in order for them to be saved. They believe that yes, God does offer them salvation, but it is entirely up to them as to whether or not they accept His gracious offer.

And yes, we here in this church do believe that we too really must participate in those choices, but we believe that our willingness to make that right choice has also been given to us as a gift from God's precious Spirit.

So then again, our salvation is in every way dependent upon what these precious words of Jesus here in John 6 tell us,

⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. (John 6:44)

Folks, I am convinced by these words of truth and others like them that none of us is able, by our own free will, to choose Christ, that we are all born with a nature that is sinful from birth, inherited from our first parents Adam and Eve. And because of that sinful nature, we grow up and live our lives in a condition of "total depravity" unable, on our own, to even recognize that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

The Westminster Confession of Faith describes it this way,

9:3 Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation (John 15:5; Rom 5:6; 8:7): so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good (Rom 3:10, 12), and dead in sin (Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13), is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto (John 6:44, 65; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:2-5; Titus 3:3-5).

Also, the words of Romans 3, tell us that,

¹⁰As it is written:

“There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

¹²They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12)

Folks, this is a simple but very real truth. Yes, we can have some natural sense of right and wrong, good and evil, but only in secular and relative terms.

And contrary to what many preach these days, there really is no “good seed of faith” born into our souls that would prompt us or enable us, of our own free will, to choose Christ. We are instead born with a corrupt nature, “totally depraved” and incapable, on our own, of even “wanting” to choose Christ to be our Savior.

These scriptures are clear. We are spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins. And before our hearts, our souls, our minds can ever even think about turning from our sinful ways and to Christ, we must first be made “alive”, “quicken” by God's Spirit. It is then that the “special drawing” from God's Spirit will compel our spirit to come to Jesus for His redeeming salvation. Again, those words of John 6:44,

⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. (John 6:44)

The whole idea of being “totally depraved” is something that most people reject. They just cannot imagine themselves and especially their loved ones as being “totally depraved”. And I confess, that it really is a difficult thought, especially as we would observe our precious little children and grandchildren as they toddle about. It is hard to accept that they are already, at the core of their being, totally depraved. But they are, and it will not be long before their behaviors begin to demonstrate their sinful condition.

I certainly did not understand and accept that whole idea before the Lord drew me to Himself in salvation. But when the Holy Spirit began to live in me and to convict me of my wretched ways, I began to really know my condition.

And now, as I look back on the days before I was saved, I can clearly see what A. W. Tozer called the “Self-Life” . . . a hopeless condition of selfishness, self-awareness, self-absorption, self-centeredness, and with an ego that seemed always to put “self” first in every thought and consideration.

And though I am still a long way from being personally righteous, at least now, with God's Spirit, I know a lot more about my sins, and am, each day being convicted of them. Those words in John 16:8,

⁸And when He, (the Spirit of truth) has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. (John 16:8)

These words of the Lord Jesus are true for each of us as we receive Him as Savior. God's Holy Spirit comes to live and abide within our souls. And He is faithful to convict us of our sins. And not only of the sins that we have already committed, but also of the sins that we are about to commit later on.

That is a precious gift to us folks. Think about it for a moment. We go from a condition of not even knowing that we are doing anything really wrong, to a condition in which we are not only convicted that we have just committed a sin, but we are also warned about the sins that will tempt us next. That warning in 1 Corinthians 10:13,

¹³No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

But again, those misguided folks who insist on believing that there is at least a little bit of "good" born into every person take a different line of belief. They would argue that all these things are what the human conscience is for, to tell us when we have done or are about to do something wrong.

And there is some truth in their belief about their conscience. As a "common grace" God did put a conscience into each person at birth so that we would not be born completely and utterly without restraints on our behaviors.

But folks that is not nearly enough to keep us from sinning. The problem with the human conscience is that it often bases its beliefs and its standards, not upon real truth, but upon secular and "relative terms" and upon personal beliefs about right and wrong, personal beliefs like, "what is right for you might not be right for me, and what is wrong for you might not be wrong for me".

But folks, those are situational ethics and personal ethics that have nothing to do with real right and wrong. And those kinds of humanistic standards are almost always flawed.

As Christians, we believe that, of ourselves, no individual is capable of defining pure and unsullied truth. Real truth must come from a standard that is absolutely holy and righteous. And that kind of truth can only be found in and defined by the Person of Christ alone. And Jesus declared that to us in John 14, when He said,

6 . . . "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

Jesus does not just "define" truth for us with some wise sayings. He Himself is the "truth". That may be a "hard saying" for some of us to understand, but when we have Him as our Savior, we begin to grasp what He really means with those words. "He is the truth."

And please do note also those last words, "No one comes to the Father except through Him". It is only through the truth of the Lord Jesus that we can come to God the Father for the salvation and eternal life that we so desperately need. Jesus and His truth are the only way to eternal life.

So then, we arrive back at the question we were considering a moment ago. "Can a person who is totally depraved, on their own and without some "outside help", make a decision to turn their hearts to the Lord Jesus and to receive Him as their Savior?" May I say that based on these and other scriptures like them that the clear answer to that question has to be NO! It really is not possible. We must be "drawn" by God's Spirit to make that decision. Again, John 6:44,

⁴⁴No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him (John 6:44)

Before we go on from these thoughts, may we give one additional thought to this matter of our being "totally depraved". "Total Depravity" does not mean that we are "absolutely depraved". And we should not confuse the meaning of those two words. We are obviously not the absolute worst that we could be. There are many awful, despicable acts of violence, murder, corruption and perversity that we would not take part in. It is rather as one commentator describes it saying . . .

Total depravity simply means that every part of our being is corrupted by sin. And specifically, that our will, our human will, is bent in on itself, so that we will not seek God and we will not choose God in and of ourselves. We need God's effectual grace, (be truly born again), and we need His powerful working to change our hearts, and to change our minds, so that we will then choose Him.

So again, we are not as absolutely bad as we could be, but still, of our own nature, we are “totally depraved” and incapable of discerning true godliness. And that is why it is absolutely necessary that God “draw” each of us to Jesus for salvation.

And that is also why you and I are here in this church today. You and I are not only drawn to Christ for salvation, you and I are also drawn to Him to learn of Him, and to know Him and to worship Him.

Folks, recall in those words that I read to us in an earlier message from Ezekiel chapter 36, how when God put a “new heart”, and an “new spirit” within us, He also put His Spirit within us to “move us” to do His will. And that is what took place when we were first “drawn” to the Lord Jesus for salvation, and that is what takes place within us to “move” us to want to be here on Sunday, a kind of hungering and a thirsting within our souls, a hungering and a thirsting that, if properly fed, will create within us even more hungering and thirsting for Christ.

The precious words of the “beatitudes” say it this way.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6)

As you and I hunger and thirst after righteousness, and then as we feast upon the words and provisions of God, His Spirit causes us to hunger even all the more. And that is a precious gift from Him.

But unfortunately, along with these generous provisions must also come a warning. We know from experience that we have a free Will, and our free Will can take us to other places and cause us to do other things. By an act of our free will, we can reject the hungering and thirsting that God puts within our souls. And we can actually turn away from Him if we want to.

And we must understand that such temptations to turn away do not always come to us in the form of openly sinful acts. More often, they can be just the ordinary habits and events of our day. But even so, our “turning away” is still “turning away”, whether it be through sinful acts or just sleeping in or mowing the grass or going fishing instead of coming to worship Him.

God’s desire is that we would allow Him to “draw” us near to Christ. And we must. My plea to you and to my own soul is that we would deliberately and intentionally begin to listen to and to hear that still small voice of God as He draws us to Christ. Think about it! Is that not the most delightful place you can

imagine being? Why would we really want to be anywhere else, but up close to Christ?

So then, let's this very day, this very moment, agree with God and surrender our souls to that special drawing power of His Holy Spirit. Let's do as these people in our scripture text did and draw so near to Jesus that He doesn't even have room to stand. That nearness won't offend Him. It is exactly what He wants us to do. That's why He tells us in Matthew 5,

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6)

May we pray.