



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 6: 34-40

Spring 2022

"Bread Of Heaven"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Joe, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in the Gospel of John. We're in chapter 6 which began with the Lord's fourth miracle in which He took a few loaves and fishes and multiplied them and fed a multitude—fed 5000+ people.

Well, it is the next day as we come to our passage in John 6, verses 34 through 40. The people have awoken the next day to find that the Lord wasn't there. They went seeking Him and found Him in the synagogue of Capernaum. Verse 34,

<sup>34</sup>Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." (*They want more of that bread that He provided the day before.*)

<sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will 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 certainly not 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.

*[Now, I'm not going to comment about this in the sermon, but there you have one of the great examples, or statements, of the Lord's deity. That's what this book is about: that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and what could be more clear of a statement, an affirmation of that, than His statement here, "I have come down from*

heaven."? And someone might say, 'Well, an angel could have come down from heaven. Maybe that's what He is.' And yet, what did He say earlier? "I am the bread of life." (vs35), And that, "I Am" statement is an affirmation of deity. It's the basis of the word 'Jehovah', 'Yahweh', which we learned of from Exodus, where Moses met the LORD in the burning bush. And there He says, "I AM that I AM," and, "I AM hath sent...to you." So, here we have just a clear statement that affirms the deity of Christ. No one of us would ever say something like that. Now verse 39],

<sup>39</sup>This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 6: 34-40

Well, who can do that? Only the Son of God can do that. Only God Himself, in whom life exists, can do that. And of course, again, it's an affirmation of His deity, and of the great hope that we have as believers in Jesus Christ. This world is not all there is, as troubled as it is, (as we learned this week), we have a glorious future: Resurrection, eternal life. So let's thank God; and in doing that let's remember those who are grieving.

*(Message)* Sports figures have given us some memorable quotes on winning and losing. Al Davis, owner of the old Oakland Raiders, told his team, "Just win, baby." Baseball manager Leo Durocher declared, "Nice guys finish last." And Vince Lombardi, legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers said, "Winning isn't everything. It's the only thing."—and sports fans agree. Really, that's the thinking of the world.

So how does that translate into the spiritual life; and to, say, evangelism? Mr. Spurgeon wrote a book on evangelism titled, *The Soul Winner*. I have it in my library. What is the Christian who gives the Gospel but doesn't convert anyone, or only rarely wins a soul? Is he a soul loser? Well, if so, (and I would say Mr. Spurgeon would not have

said that), if that is the case some might say that Jesus was a 'loser' when it comes to winning souls.

We see that, it would seem, in John 6. He miraculously fed thousands a banquet with only a few loaves and fishes. It was the height of popularity of our Lord there in Galilee. They wanted to make Him king. But He didn't win a soul. He told them, "...you have seen Me, and yet do not believe." (vs36). By the end of the chapter, the whole multitude turned away and left Him. In fact, only His 12 disciples stood with Him. And He said, "...one of you is a devil." (vs70). By the standards of the world, His ministry and mission were a failure.

But in fact, the Lord did not fail. He was right on target. He explains it all in this sixth chapter of John's Gospel. And if we want to understand the chapter, and specifically our passage in terms of winners and losers, it teaches that the only real winner in this world, in fact in all of history, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He won the victory over sin and death, the ultimate and eternal victory. And everyone who believes in Him is joined to Him and His victory. We did nothing; we receive everything.

That's divine sovereignty. It is all through this chapter, which is the reason, as bishop J. C. Ryle wrote long ago, "It has probably occasioned more controversy than any other of Christ's discourses." Even so it ought to make us happy, it ought to make us rejoice, it ought to make us shout, "Alleluia!" As Paul said, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom 8:37). He made us winners—forever!

Again, the background for everything in chapter 6 is the miracle of the loaves and fishes. It was, as I said, the fourth sign the Lord did. A 'sign' points to something beyond itself. It points to something greater than itself: and the truth to which this sign points is, 'As bread feeds our body, Christ feeds our soul'. He can do something far greater, infinitely greater, than support physical life. (Now He does that. We have our physical life because of Him. We are sustained daily by Him, whether we realize it or not.) But He does something far greater than that. He gives spiritual life; He gives eternal life—as well as temporal life.

He explained that to the crowd when they discovered Him. They had discovered that He had left them on the east side of the sea and they crossed over seeking Him. They found Him there in the synagogue in Capernaum.

And He knew why they were there—they wanted more bread. He told them, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life." (vs27). And then He told them of "the true bread out of heaven" that the Father gives. (vs32). He was speaking of Himself, of course, but the crowd thought He was speaking of the manna God gave Israel in the days of Moses, And they wanted that; "Lord" they said, "always give us this bread." (vs34).

They were like the woman at the well in chapter 4 who wanted the living water that Jesus offered. She thought it was literal water and she wanted it in order to relieve her of the drudgery of going to the well and drawing water and taking it back every day. (Well they wanted literal bread—and they wanted it permanently. Again and again, is the idea, in order to relieve them of toiling to earn their daily bread.) In the end, with more conversation, the Samaritan woman came to understand exactly what the Lord was saying, came to understand His meaning; and she became an enthusiastic soul winner.

And so, to clear up the Galilean's confusion, Jesus spoke plainly to them in verse 35. He said, "I am the bread of life..." In other words, 'I'm not speaking of literal bread or manna, but of Myself.' And that's the interpretation of the sign of the previous day, when He had fed them so well and so miraculously.

But they couldn't see beyond the material gift and their material need. He told them plainly here, (interpreting this sign for them), of their spiritual need. And He, and only He, can satisfy it. What bread did for them physically, He does for the soul, spiritually, "...he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." (vs35b).

Now in that statement, the Lord gave both the problem and the solution of the human condition. Everyone is born into this world hungering and thirsting. He or she

may not know why they hunger or what they hunger for, but everyone born into this world is unsatisfied, unfulfilled, seeking something. We are all born into this world restless.

That's how Augustine put it in his confession. It's probably his most famous quote, and I've quoted it numerous times. You're familiar with it; it's the first prayer in *The Confessions*: "You have made us for Yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in You." And we can only rest in Him by coming to Him.

That's one of the various ways Scripture describes becoming a Christian. It is moving from the old life to the new life. It is moving out of darkness into light. And that move is made by believing in Him, and only in Him, because only He can satisfy our longing, since He alone is the Son of God. That's the essential fact to believe in order to come to Him. He suggests it in that statement, "I am the bread." He is the eternal self-sufficient God. "I AM that I AM", speaks of the aseity of the Son, the aseity of God, which means the self-existence of God. He has life in and of Himself. His life comes from Him. It's perpetual. It's eternal. It's self-sufficient. He is the source of all life.

And He's saying that in that phrase, "I AM". This is the first, actually, of the seven "I AM" statements in John's Gospel, each one revealing an aspect of His person and ministry and in each one revealing the deity of Christ. Here, He is 'the food that nourishes the soul spiritually, to give life, to give eternal life.'

That crowd could have had a banquet of bread and fish every day, the very thing that they were wanting. In fact, they could have had a menu of anything in the world, and had it every day, to their complete physical satisfaction, and they would have stayed hungry and thirsty spiritually; never satisfied and always restless. But here, He gives the solution to mankind's crying need: "Come to Him".

In Isaiah 45, verse 22, it is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God." That's better translated, "*turn to me*", but that translation, "*Look*", is the very version that God used to bring young Charles Spurgeon to salvation.

The preacher told him, "Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but Look and live!" He did. He *turned*. He *looked*. He lived. That's grace.

It's a way of saying, 'Receive God's free gift of forgiveness, and life everlasting.' Not, 'Work hard' to get it. Not, 'Be baptized' to get it. Nothing but "Look. Come. Believe." That's the Gospel—and the only way to satisfy our hunger and thirst; to give rest to our restless souls. And it was His open invitation to all who were there in the synagogue; to 'Come to Him, to believe in Him'.

Now that's the lesson of our passage. Only He can satisfy. What bread did for them physically, He does spiritually. "He who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." (vs35).

But the reality was, there was no interest on their part in coming to Him. He knew that. He knows the hearts of men. But He knew it, in their case, from their materialist motive. And He exposed their unbelief. "...he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe." (vs36). They'd seen Him do miracles, healings, in Galilee the day before this one when He fed them the loaves and the fishes. In fact, if you were in Mark's class this morning, in Luke chapter 7, (verse 21), the statement is made of all the things that He was doing there in Galilee.

That was before this. This event occurs after John was executed; and the events in Luke 7 before that. So the things that He's referring to here refer to the events of Luke 7; of how "He cured many *people* of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many *who were* blind." (vs21).

That's what they had seen for some time that they knew about—and then they had this great miracle of the feeding of the multitude with the loaves and the fishes. They had seen it all, but they could only see in Him potential as a king and a perpetual bread maker. They completely misunderstood the revelation He had given.

As I was reading over this and studying it, it reminded me of the public's response to a book that we read in high school, *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair, that

exposed the shocking and unsanitary conditions of the Chicago meat packing industry in the early part of the 20th century. It was really a disturbing book. It was really creepy. (But that's what made it such a fun read back in high school.) (*Laughter*). He wrote that book in order to advance political change. It led to reforms, but not to the politics that he wanted. He was very frustrated and said, "I aimed at the public's heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach."

Well that's where the Lord's miracle of the loaves and fishes hit the crowd, in the stomach, not the heart—which might suggest the Lord's mission was a failure. No one came; no one believed. Men get frustrated and dispirited when their well laid plans go wrong. And it seems reasonable to assume that Jesus was grieved here by the people's response, by their unbelief, by their hardness of heart—He cared for them. But Christ was never surprised by events. He's never frustrated, never in despair. His hope was not in the crowd, but in His Father whose plans never fail.

So the Lord is never frustrated. He understand fully what had happened and in His next statement, in verse 37, He showed His complete confidence in what God was doing, and explained it as His sovereign work in salvation. He told the crowd, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." In other words, all of this is determined in heaven; it's not determined on earth. Everything was unfolding according to God's eternal and perfect plan: Everyone who comes to Him has already been given to Him by the Father.

There's a lot of unstated truth, or doctrine, implied in that statement: Divine election and irresistible grace, (or efficacious grace). And the Lord develops that in even more detail throughout the chapters, especially in verses 44 and 65. He speaks of God 'drawing' us to Christ, of 'bringing' people to faith. Though many people do not believe today, as then, and will not believe, refuse to believe; still God's saving purpose cannot be frustrated because He gave some, He gave many to His Son—and they will come, and they are coming, and they have come.

So Jesus was not discouraged at all. His confidence was not in the fickle emotions of men but in the eternal purpose of God—in *predestination*. That's what He's speaking

of; and now you can see why bishop Ryle described this discourse as "Controversial". It certainly was when the Lord gave it. In verse 66 John wrote that, "...many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." Now the problem wasn't that Jesus was unclear in the things that He was saying. In fact, He was very clear.

Why do people come to Christ? Why do any at all come to Christ? Because they are *given* to Him. And why must they be given? Why were you, believer, *given* to Christ? Because otherwise you would not have come.

That is another implied truth or doctrine, human inability—or what Luther called, 'The bondage of the will'. And the Lord will speak even more clearly about it later in this discourse and then later in the Gospel—in chapter 12 for example and all through chapter 17. In the Lord's high priestly prayer in verse 2 of that chapter He prayed, "You gave Him," speaking of Himself, "authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may **give** eternal life." (Jn 17:2). Eternal life is *given*. It's a *free gift*. And Christ gives it only to those whom the Father *gave* to Him.

In verse 6 of chapter 17 He repeated the point, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they've kept Your word." They've continued to be faithful.

Verse 9, "I do not ask on behalf of the world...", (in other words, I'm not praying for the world in this prayer), "...but (*only*) of those whom you have given Me." And so on, down to verse 24 where He again prayed for those whom the Father had given to Him. It's clear that those who come, come to Christ, only come because they were first given to Christ, chosen by God. "...from the beginning for salvation..." as Paul told the Thessalonians, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

It wasn't arbitrary, it was necessary because otherwise not one of us would have come on our own, regardless of the advantages that we might be given. Just consider this crowd and think of all the advantages they had. They had witnessed healings and miracles all over Galilee. Many of the blind were made to see. And they had seen the Lord multiply loaves and fishes just the day before.

As He said, "You have seen Me"—‘You've seen all that I have done!’ And they had heard what He'd said: They'd heard a glorious sermon the day before; they had heard the greatest preacher/teacher ever to speak and they still did not believe—and eventually walked away.

Do we think we're different from that; that we would have moved to Him had we been there and we had seen these things? Would we have had more insight than that crowd did? No; they are typical of all people.

And yet, you came. The only explanation for that is God gave you to the Son in eternity past. That's verse 37. This isn't ‘the gospel of John Calvin’; it can't be dismissed as the mere product of logic. This is the Gospel of John the apostle, and John the apostle is quoting Christ, the Son of God. These are the Lord's words. And the Lord is clear: ‘Those who come to Christ are those who have been given by the Father.’ They alone come—and they come without fail. That settles the issue.

These are God's words. And what great words they are. These are words about the unconditional, unfailing love of God that overcomes unbelief to make the unwilling willing and bring the undeserving to Christ. Now that should make us shout “Hallelujah!” (I heard one!) [*Laughter*] Otherwise, we'd be lost forever. If it was left to us, we'd be lost forever; we'd be content in our ignorance—but we'd be hungry and thirsty and restless. But God's grace has intervened.

So where's the controversy? Where's the controversy? Well for some, it's in the next statement that the Lord made, which is equally glorious and gracious, equally about sovereign grace. Jesus said, "...and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." (vs37b). Now that is one of the most encouraging statements in all of the Word of God! Is there a greater promise than that? —We are eternally secure in Christ. The Greek text puts it in especially strong language, (It uses a double negative, which doesn't cancel out the negative, but reinforces the negative here.) The King James Version tried to express that with, "I will in no wise cast out." More literally it would be, "I will never, no never, cast out." The promise is so important and encouraging that the Lord repeats it

in chapter 10, "I gave eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." (vs28). Well, that's the promise here; and He keeps His promises.

This is often referred to as 'the perseverance of the saints'. A better name is 'the perseverance of God with the saints', or 'the preservation of the saints', because it's all about His keeping—His keeping us and not letting us go. It's not so much what we do—for we will remain faithful if we're truly His children. But He keeps us faithful—it's His work.

However, in a world where winning is everything and so often it's all about the bottom line, we're reminded by this that God doesn't treat us the way the world does. He doesn't accept us based on our performance. He doesn't have a monthly quota for us to fill for soul winning, (like companies have for their sales personnel who then live with that threat hanging over their job and no job security.)

I'm not suggesting here that we don't need to work hard, or shouldn't strive to be the best at what we do—we should. We should want to win; there's no place for mediocrity in Christianity. We are to attempt excellence in all that we do. But our motto is not, 'Winning is everything.' It is 'soli Deo gloria'; it is 'To God alone be the glory' and that means we strive for His glory in all that we do. Not for our glory and our advancement and our advantage, but to His glory.

And Paul stated that in an understated way in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." From the mundane to the momentous, we are to do our best and seek excellence—and especially in moral excellence, honesty, holiness.

But we don't always succeed, do we? In fact, because of sin and its effects, we never achieve that completely. We, in fact, fail often. But the Lord doesn't cancel us as a consequence. And that's what the Lord was promising here.

Now that doesn't lead to indolence, not in the born again. It actually activates love; it strengthens faith; it incentivizes the desire to serve Him when you understand His unconditional love for us.

Paul ends Romans 8 with the promise that nothing at all can separate us from the love of God. He gives all kinds of examples, that nothing can "...separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (vs39). What great assurance that gives; nothing can separate you from His love. Nothing can separate you from Him. What peace and confidence that gives. What stability in life that gives. As Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2, "If we are faithless", (and we will be faithless), "He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."(vs13). He makes a promise—it's certain, He cannot deny it.

Again, that doesn't encourage faithlessness, not in the child of God. Just the opposite, love begets love, faithfulness begets faithfulness. And Christ is faithful. He won't cast us out. That is His promise.

Verse 38 gives the reason Jesus will keep that promise; it's God's will that Christ save and keep those whom the Father has given to Him. And Christ cannot fail to do that, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Their wills are one. And God's will cannot be frustrated. "...He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of the earth..." Daniel said, "...and no one can ward off His hand..." (Dan 4:35). What God planned from eternity is what He wills—and He always accomplishes His will. So the Father's and Son's unity in the work of salvation is the basis for its success—and of our assurance.

Now that has obvious implications for the atonement—the scope and the purpose of Christ's death. Since there is perfect unity of will and purpose in the Trinity, the Son would die to save those whom the Father gave Him to save, His chosen ones, and the Holy Spirit will draw them to Him. So the response of the crowd in rejecting Jesus, (while again, it no doubt grieved Him to see their hardness of heart and unbelief,

and grieved Him to know the consequences of it), still He knew the plan of salvation would succeed.

And He was telling them that here. Verses 39 and 40, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

And in that way, the Lord summed up what He had been saying by bringing together the two great fundamental truths; the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. God's will is that Christ not lose one of His people. And He will not. He cannot. God's will cannot be frustrated or defeated. "He will keep us safe from grace to glory", as bishop Ryle said, "in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are His body and He will not lose one member of His body."

So regardless of our perceived achievements, our success in evangelism, or any other spiritual responsibility we have, Christ has made us all winners. As Paul put it, "...we are more than conquerors..." (Rm 8:37).

We have real and great responsibilities in the Christian life: and we can fail to live up to them—and that's a shame. We need to think seriously about that to make God's glory our goal: To study the Word of God, and in studying the Word of God prepare ourselves for life. His Word is sufficient for life and for all of our needs.

But we do fail. Ultimately, though, God's purpose for this world, for the universe, will not fail. He even uses our failures to accomplish His will. He can even use our failures for our own personal growth. He did that with Peter. We see that at the end of this book. Things may, at times in our lives, seem to 'hang by a thread' so to speak—seem to be at the point of complete failure; but the thread never breaks and God's will prevails. And that should give us confidence and boldness in life.

But what does all this say about soul winning? Like the subject of prayer, that question comes up in a discussion of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

If there's, (and this states the problem), no contradiction within the Godhead, if God chose some and not others, gave them to the Son to save, He died for them, and the Holy Spirit brings them, and they do come, they will always come by God's power and grace, 'Then why evangelize?'

The simplest answer to that, and I think a sufficient answer is, 'Because God has commanded it.' It's the last command that Christ gave to the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, 'The Great Commission'. But having said that, we can say more than that: God is not only the God of ends, He's the God of *means*. The God who has ordained the end, has also ordained the *means* to the end. And evangelism is the *means* to bring the elect. We are to give a free offer of the Gospel.

The Lord did that there in the synagogue. We give a free offer of the Gospel because the Gospel is fashioned to meet the need of every person, everyone in the world. It's for sinners—and every one of us is a sinner. Everyone is guilty. Everyone is fallen. And it is received, this Gospel, this good news of life, in the same way by all: Through faith. Nothing could be more simple than that: 'Through faith alone.'

So the invitation and promise can be offered to all; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." The message will never fail. The message will never fail because the elect will believe.

But don't be anxious—be active. That was the message that Paul and the apostles gave all across the pagan Roman empire—and the church was established through it. He preached predestination; he preached unconditional election; and he evangelized. Where's the controversy?

James Boice illustrated it this way: "The door of salvation has two signs. On the outside is, 'Whosoever will, may come.' On the inside is, 'Chosen before the foundation of the world.' " If you desire Christ, if you want forgiveness of sins, if you want eternal life, then come to Christ, He will receive you gladly. And in coming, you will discover that you were one of the elect. What's the sign of election? The elect believe. Only they can.

And to you who have believed, we have this great promise, that Christ, that the Triune God will never reject us; "...and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." (vs37b). We are eternally secure in Christ and from love that should move us to serve Him faithfully. So may God accomplish that in our hearts and our lives.

Father, we give You praise and we give You thanks. As we just sang, 'The battle, the war, is won', You won it for us at the cross and nothing can change that. But we still face battles in life and we need the strength to carry on and do that. We are completely and every moment dependent upon You. And so LORD, we pray that You would make us men and women who, understanding Your great love for us, serve You out of appreciation for that love and out of love for You. May we be faithful to You to the end. We pray these things by Your grace in Christ's name. Amen.

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