

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Human Inability (Spurgeon)

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Human Inability

A Sermon
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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."—John 6:44.

COMING to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the g all of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening; where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice man's inability, wherein it consists. Secondly, the Father's drawings—what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a sweet consolation which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the g

ospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in his nature. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it cannot do so. Can it not be tamed? cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the obstinacy of the human will. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it—"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and as long as that "ye will not come" stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this—"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the understanding is darkened. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impos-

sible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be forever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, the affections, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more—conscience, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the viceroy of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the can here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word will. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe, but you have had to pray, Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapped up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power: mi

ught not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom.

We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform, lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other. What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thumb-screw beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the minister draw him, but except the Father draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God—the First Person of the most glorious Trinity.

y sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself" I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that, he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled—"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

"Could my tears for ever flow,
 Could my zeal no respite know,
 All for sin could not atone,
 Thou must save and thou alone."

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross. that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, th

the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God. "Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say 'Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished." But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head, thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little,"

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:—Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing,

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of his Word?"

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart:—"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ—sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

Re: Human Inability (Spurgeon) - posted by LoveHim, on: 2007/8/11 15:36

come on brother abe, there is so much more to this site than debating calvinism vs arminianism. it is an interesting discussion, but there is so much more to talk of and meditate on than a certain theology. let us be convinced in our mind of either one of these, than press on to know more of Him. love you man.

Re:, on: 2007/8/12 9:18

Quote:

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Isn't it interesting that this all the OSAS crowd can speak of? How shallow an understanding must "possess" them. Sad.

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2007/8/12 12:25

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Brother Phil, I don't think that abe's intention is to start a debate.

Again I simply say that if this was a message heralding the "ability" of man to whip himself into shape, or one of those sinless perfection threads, none would have a problem with it. But since it points out man's inability, man gets riled up and wants to see it done away with.

It is interesting to watch men recoil at the thought of God's sovereign choice, and men being unable to elect themselves, or earn salvation. Every religion in the world has a series of things you "must" do in order to merit righteousness before God, yet only Biblical Christianity offers the true righteousness that God requires through faith by grace.

Men cannot work hard enough to earn it, and that is why grace is so offensive. The Jews despised the fact that they could not earn it through endless ritual, and the Greeks could not believe that through the offence of the cross, one could have righteousness with God. Here is where we are today, one group wants to earn justification through endless works, and the other are offended because someone died in their place, not just for an example but truly because someone had to pay the price for their sin.

It is nothing personal, but there should be an equal footing, especially since so many love Spurgeon and quote him for so many things. They should understand that he was a Calvinist, and as he said so wonderfully, Calvinism is a nickname given to the doctrines of God's sovereign grace.

Re:, on: 2007/8/13 7:31

Quote:

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No. It is his desire to point up his belief that all men are lost who don't see the scriptures as Calvin interpreted them, much like you are attempting to do with what follows:

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I want to see it done away with because it is a false teaching, Spurgeon notwithstanding.

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That's presumption on your part. I could say that you recoil at the thought of it being possible that you have something to do with your salvation, as in having a freewill to choose. You don't like that. You don't like the notion of freewill because it places a responsibility on you for you to be what you don't want to be, i.e., obedient. You want Christ alright but don't want to wear His "wedding garment". You still desire your own lifestyle. No, You don't want freewill because when you get goose bumps upon hearing a pretty gospel song you want to believe it is a confirmation you are ok with God, chosen of Him. Afterall, how could you possibly have goose bumps if they didn't come from Him.....Shallow elitist thinking that, like Satan or simple emotions couldn't do the same thing.

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Quote:
-----Men cannot work hard enough to earn it, and that is why grace is so offensive.

God Grace is never offensive. What is offensive is your willful ignoring of the MANY times it has been explained to you - adnausm - that we know we can't earn our salvation. It is the Blood of Jesus that accomplishes what we cannot accomplish. We understand the Grace of God in this perfectly well. We understand perfectly well that we must believe in that Grace. We do believe in that Grace. Now what is your point in posting these untoward accusing comments "shotgunned" at any who believe in the Grace of God and FULLY realize that it is appropriated by OUR faith, plus nothing?? But don't see it as Calvin does ... or Spurgeon. I dare say there are some here who see it all more richly than either of them. I certainly do.

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It is certainly "your choice" to view things as you do, however, please leave your accusations out of it. It's tiresome to have to continually re-read one's willful ignorance to bring correction that is again, ignored.

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Spurgeon was wrong and so was Calvin. You need to learn you don't put all your eggs in one basket. God never gave all His truth to one man. He gave many of His truths to many men as they were able to handle them.... And I do take this personal what you write here.... Its shallow thinking I believe intended to stir up strife.

Re: - posted by running2win (), on: 2007/8/13 8:14

I have to agree with Ormly.

Re: - posted by intrcssr83 (), on: 2007/8/13 11:05

Quote:

-----by Ormly on 2007/8/13 22:31:39

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Quote:

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To say that we are under the undeserved favour of God and cannot be made right by our works is to at once suggest at full volume that your own natural skills, talents and abilities that you may have worked so hard to train and refine mean absolutely nothing when it comes to serving God as we simply cannot meet his standard by ourselves. Instead, through grace, he must always give a helping hand because left to our own without divine intervention, man is nothing more than a monster of iniquity enslaved to his own corruption, debauchery, deceitfulness and open hostility towards anything to do with the true and living God.

For God to be gracious, man must be fully dependant and totally ineffectual by himself. Everything that must be done for Him is by the dispensation of grace, no one can truly say with regards to ministry, worship, fellowship and devotion that "it was me who did it!" Sadly, the truth of the matter is that there are a lot of "Christians" out there who while they will say and exhort with knowledge and understanding that God's grace is sufficient, they are still burdened with the fruits of Works such as stress, exhaustion, burnout and performance anxiety. At the core of performance anxiety is the belief that on one's own natural skills, talents and abilities are not going to get a person through what they have to hence they start to worry and push themselves even more.

Yet the truth is that the root cause of such thinking is really pride in the form of a desire for self-exaltation which is a complete insult to the grace that is freely available from God via Jesus Christ.

1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. 8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:1-10

To both the open and closet humanist, the concept of grace is indeed offensive. It is like telling a child 'your best is not good enough'. It slaps the face of everything that makes humans strive to excel and do well.

What is the prime reason a person should be appreciative of grace? Because he knows that it is not something optional, but mandatory in order to pull through; that rather than being left on his own, he needs the assistance of a higher power because with his own hands he just can't do anything no matter how hard he tries. While God never fully forces us to believe or act against our conscious will, the truth is that the Holy Spirit is sovereign and all-powerful, and thus can overcome any and all opposition and resistance from Satan, the World and our own sinful nature. More specifically, it is the sovereign work of God by his grace to overcome any and all rebellion in our heart and bring us to faith in Christ so that we can receive saving grace, as well as the mercy necessary to grow. If it is true that man has no spiritual merit of his own what soever, there can be no salvation without the reality of triumphant grace. If we are completely dead in our sins, totally un

able to submit to God let alone fully love each other, then we will never believe in Christ unless God overcomes our resistance.

Human response certainly is a requirement, but that in itself as our privilege can only come from God because out of his love he has chosen to give it to us, which in itself, is grace.

Since I personally don't desire to incite any unfruitful squabbling, I'd like to briefly share how I came - albeit as you'll read, with great hesitation - to lean (though not necessarily conform to) towards the monergistic view of salvation. You can make whichever word of accusation, slander or rejection you wish (I won't be surprised at all if it came to both sides of the argument), but I say before the presence of my Lord and savior that everything I am about to share is true.

Let me begin by saying that when I first heard of Calvinism as a teaching that emphasised pre-destination, I absolutely hated such an idea and wanted absolutely no part of it. The past two years however, had different ideas.

I was first introduced to Calvinism when for my 21st birthday, I received from my care-group a copy of *Desiring God* by John Piper. While the concept of "Christian Hedonism" as summed by the motto "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him" caught my attention, Piper's close intimacy with scripture in his expositions in addition to words coming from such a passionate heart left me dumbstruck. It proved to be painfully a slow, tedious read from cover to cover. Yet at the same time, there was something beautiful about it; not just because it was a gift, but it seemed to be one of those things that would be kept safe on the bookcase until later.

In late 2004, I was introduced to the teaching of Ray Comfort, which initially confirmed my discomfort towards the humanism behind prosperity preaching as well as modern gospel messages such as "4 Spiritual Laws"/"Knowing God Personally" which up until I heard Comfort's flagship message "Hell's Best Kept Secret", never quite sunk in as going well with my heart. I was fascinated by the concepts he taught regarding the spiritual purposes of the Moral Law as the means by which people got convicted of sin, while teaching of "True and False Conversion" provided a degree of counsel after the events that led up to the dissolving of one of my church's youth groups (that and my spiritual mentor at that time going "AWOL"). The issues that Ray Comfort addressed were apparent within my own experiences, and I didn't want it to affect any more than what it already did.

Yet the historical basis behind Way of the Master captured both my imagination and interest. I started to read the literature of those who brought about revival throughout church history in the form of the rich pastoral writings of Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*, Martin Luther's *Tabletalk*, Charles Finney's *Lectures on Revival*. I also listened to recordings of twentieth century heroes such as A.W. Tozer, the late Leonard Ravenhill and David Wilkerson; mighty prophets of prayer and intercession who despite having "nostalgic" views compared to their culture-savvy contemporaries, stood on the shoulders of giants.

The God that these men worshipped was one who was Holy and just, a genuine person who had feelings, emotions, desires; a God who simply felt alive. On the other hand, the God of the modern gospel felt like a slave in chains; something desired for strength, durability and endurance, yet forced into captivity by the greedy and corrupt.

Yet, even so, there was a doctrine in Spurgeon's teachings I could never fully accept: Calvinism. The concept of a God who chose some and rejected others for salvation simply felt repulsive; as though God wasn't interested in everyone, only those who were lucky enough to fit into the cosmic lottery.

At first, it felt everything in life at that moment was going good. My grades at Community College were going well, I was getting on with the members of my Small-Group; life was enjoyable.

Around August 2005, after a Sunday leaders' meeting, I turned on my phone and in one minute had my life turned upside down: my sister, who had been working as a pharmacy assistant, had been rushed to hospital after experiencing a brain haemorrhage resulting in stroke. My voicemail contained a message given at 2:00pm from my parents asking me to come home immediately. I looked at my watch and saw it was 5:15pm. From that day onward I vowed to never turn my phone off whenever I carry it, no matter who or what.

The next day I visited my sister in the intensive care ward where she was placed in induced coma. My pastor came with me and we prayed for her recovery. My heart broke because I knew as a result of having cerebral palsy for my whole life that even if she woke up, there was no way she was going to experience life the way she did before.

The rest of the year was just depressing. Both of my parents worked full time and I was still on the Dole. To make matters worse, late October, when I was hoping to have my course over and done with, I broke my right foot on the way to church, fracturing the metatarsals. I couldn't walk, and for a month and a half, had to use a wheelchair because I lacked the balance to use crutches. To make matters worse, because of my condition, I lack sufficient strength in my hands to push my own weight, so I had to ask people at college to push me. I was humiliated, because I grew up telling myself "I will never be put into a wheelchair as long as I live. Never!"

Eventually I recovered of my injury when during the Praise and Worship at a church camp, God miraculously healed my foot. However, the whole experience plus what my sister was going through left me shaken. My disdain for the modern

Prosperity/Life-enhancement "gospel" only grew more and more. I started to express my concerns to the necessary people – leaders, my mentors at the time, those of reasonable spiritual maturity – and behind my back I was called divisive, narrow minded, negative, legalistic and too "method based." For those willing to listen upfront, I presented by arguments based on scripture, and in response received replies that only reflected apathy and pride. I pointed out the principles, yet people replied by saying "it's just a method! I see no difference between the two, scriptural or otherwise."

I pointed out the need for a church to be discerning, only to be rebuffed on the grounds that "it's about building relationships! Our fellowships should be places where people can feel welcome without being worried about whether they're right or wrong."

Such words, coming from the people that I loved most broke my heart even more because what it told me was that those whom I trusted, those who I confided when it came to my personal struggles were deep down more interested in winning the praises of Man rather than in pleasing God as outlined in Scripture. There were even times in the midst of the arguments that I wasn't defending biblical principles regarding evangelism and pastoral care; I was defending the sufficiency of scripture itself.

I gave warning regarding what would happen if we clung to the "Wonderful Plan" myth while trials and tribulations came, that people would try to run away, that there will be disappointment and distrust.

For me, 2006 was its most painful season as it was just filled with hurt for my brothers and sisters in Christ. Health problems, relationship breakdowns, depression, people being mentally, physically and even sexually abused by both non-believers outside the body of Christ and fellow believers within. While this was happening, the weekly expositions came from 1 Peter, focusing mainly on perseverance in the midst of suffering.

I just couldn't comprehend how people could still cling to the false Modern Gospel despite the circumstances and what was preached each Sunday. Why wasn't the Holy Spirit that dwelled within such troubled people speaking out? There were times during the sermons on Sunday when I wanted to just jump up and shout "I TOLD YOU SO!"

As leader of an Intercession ministry, I found myself having to respond upfront to prayer requests wherein I caught glimpses into people's lives that if given the choice, I would have gladly decided to forget permanently.

While all of this was going on, I started to re-evaluate my thoughts on Calvinism, actually thinking it through with as little bias as possible. I started doing thought-experiments regarding what I thought about the five points:

Total Depravity – "Why is it that no matter how hard you try, some believe and some don't know matter how much effort you put into articulating the gospel? The reasons can't be attributed to intellectual capacity or head-knowledge."

Unconditional Election – "Dunno."

Limited Atonement – "If we are elected, then this has to be the next logical step..."

Irresistible Grace – (my experiences with intercession were already causing me to lean towards this)

Perseverance of the Saints – "It's real, albeit conditional at least one way or another. Why else do some fall away while others stick with it?"

3/5, so far, so good. Just had to tackle Predestination.

The next day (Tuesday) was peer-discipleship night. I took the train home from Brisbane City to the South-side suburbs. To my surprise, it arrived ten minutes earlier. My parents were going to pick me up from the station, so I decided to wait. I decided to pray, and out of all the hurt, heartbreak and frustration that the year had brought, I simply asked God: "Father, I've yearned, for the sake of your glory, to uphold, tell and live out the truth. I ask by your grace that you will take me deeper; and as such I ask in the name of Jesus for a revelation of your Sovereignty." I then quoted the five points of Calvinism, also being led to declare the scripture passages which were used to support them. I didn't just want an intellectual understanding, if it was real I wanted God to confirm it in my spirit. To my surprise, I felt led to read Ephesians 5, after which I heard an audible voice speak via Word of Knowledge: "My bride is not a stranger, and neither are you. For you are a part of her."

My heart was just filled with joy! Not only was I convicted by the Holy Spirit about God's amazing sovereignty, but there was also an assurance that I was indeed counted among the elect. Tears streamed down my face as I felt an immersion into God's loving presence, the likes of which I have never felt before other than when I first got saved. I wasn't simply a "Calvinist", "Augustinian" or "Monergist", I was a worshipper of a God who had foreseen me before the foundations of the Earth and laid out a plan that would lead me to his glory.

You've all probably all heard other testimonies of similar tone. You can view a whole stack of them (<http://christianforums.com/t1244067-i-just-wanted-to-share-why-i-became-a-calvinist-feel-free-to-share.html>) here I suggest everyone has a full read before letting further debate steer into blatant personal attacks.

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2007/8/13 12:37

intrcsr,
Thank you for your testimony.

I too have fought against coming to these doctrines. When I first became aware of Calvinism, it was while in school. We were to read a book comparing Calvinism to Scripture. The way the book was written was purely emotion driven, but at one point I threw the book down in disgust at what Calvin believe.

But over time, I began to read Puritan writings, and like you I started to listen to Ray Comfort. Then i really started to dig into Spurgeon, and Luther as well, as both were quoted in the Evidence Bible.

I began to go over how it was that I came to know God, what did I do to make myself believe? how is it that in a moment (so it seemed) I went from hating God, and telling people how stupid Christians were to actually wanting to serve Christ?

Then I came across the verse in John 6, "no man can come to me unless the Father which has sent me draws him" v44

Oh this began to trouble me because for the last six years, I had thought I brought myself to Christ, that I had decided. But now I was learning who chose who.

A friend of mine gave me a 15 page refutation of the Five Points of Calvinism he had written. As I began to read it, I began to research just what it was that Calvinists believed. Oh it was like dominoes, one argument after the other began to fall.

But then, the sweetest gift of all came as a fire into my heart, the complete work of Christ on my behalf, and justification!! I no longer needed to toil as a slave before his master, but rather could lovingly serve my God, and boast of Christ alone. Here I found a "mighty fortress" in which I could find shelter, and there was an end to beating myself up for not doing enough to earn acceptance.

Blessings to you brother, and thank you again.

Re: - posted by awakenwithin (), on: 2007/10/20 21:33

wow brother thanks for sharing