

One Hope for Incapable Faith

Incapable Faith:

According to the plain statements of Holy Scripture, no one has the will or the ability to come to Christ by faith (John 5:40; 6:44). This is the real issue at hand. Modern day religion, for the most part, professes to believe in original sin and total depravity. Very few people openly teach that man can save himself by his own works. Yet, most people do teach that man by nature does have the ability to come to Christ and be saved, that he has the ability in himself, by his own free-will, to believe on Christ.

By such teachings, they make salvation to rest ultimately upon man's free-will. According to the commonly received heresy, man's free-will makes the blood of Christ effectual, man's free will controls the operations of God, and man's free-will determines who shall populate heaven.

The Scriptures declare that man is not only morally depraved and sinful, but that he is also spiritually impotent, unwilling and incapable of coming to Christ by faith. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). He also declares that if the Father draws a man, that man will come to him; and he says, "I will raise him up at the last day."

In the Scriptures the idea of "Coming to Christ," simply means believing on him. C. H. Spurgeon said, "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."

Today we are told that coming to Christ is the easiest thing in all the

world. But here our Lord himself tells us that – It is utterly and entirely impossible for any man to come to Christ, unless the Father draws him by effectual and irresistible grace. Man by nature is spiritually impotent, and helpless, utterly without strength. Indeed, man is altogether dead spiritually. Man's inability does not lie in any physical defect. Man's inability is not a lack of mental power. I am just as capable of believing on Christ mentally as I am of believing in Abraham Lincoln. The mind is just as capable of seeing the moral guilt of sin as it is of seeing the moral guilt of murder. Man's inability lies deep within his nature. A wolf cannot be domesticated and tamed into a trusted pet. A loving mother cannot stab her nursing baby to death. She has no ability to do so, because it is contrary to her nature. And no man can ever come to Christ of his own accord, because of the obstinancy of the human will.

The Arminian, the will worshipper, cries, "Any man can be saved who will." That is certainly true. But that is not the issue. The issue is this, – Are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? The Son of God answers that question with an emphatic, "No!" The human will is so desperately set on evil, so thoroughly depraved, so inclined toward evil, and so disinclined toward good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible grace and call of God the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever come to Christ by faith.

No man will ever, of his own accord, come to Christ, because his understanding is darkened (John 3:3). He cannot see the exceeding evil of his own heart. He cannot see the strict justice of God's law. He cannot see the glory of electing grace. He cannot see the glory of our Lord's incarnation. He cannot see the glory of Christ's obedience unto righteousness. He cannot see the glory of Christ's substitutionary redemption. He cannot see the glory of Christ's intercession.

No man will ever, of his own accord, come to Christ, because his affections are corrupt. We love what we ought to hate. And we hate what we ought to love. "Men love darkness rather than light."

No man will ever come to Christ of his own voluntary accord, without the power of God, because his conscience is depraved. Conscience may tell me that such and such a thing is wrong. But how wrong it is conscience does not know. The unenlightened conscience of man will never tell him that he deserves eternal damnation, that he must abhor himself, that he must have a perfect righteousness, or that he must have a perfect atonement.

It is true that men will not, and it is true that man cannot, by their own power, come to Christ – “No man can come.” Man by nature is dead, spiritually dead. Certainly, if words mean anything, that means that man is without any spiritual power or ability whatsoever. If it is true that the Holy Spirit only gives me a will to come to Christ, and that the power to come is mine, then certainly I would have a right to share in the glory of my salvation.

Because man is guilty of sin, and because he sinfully refuses to believe on Christ, he remains under the wrath of God, and eternal damnation will be his just reward. But I cannot conclude this study with such a sad and gloomy picture. It is a terribly black scene that I have set before you. Man by nature is fallen. Our hearts are evil. Our works are evil. We are spiritually impotent. And we are justly condemned. But there is a bright ray of hope for such creatures as we are.

ONE HOPE

The only hope for fallen, guilty, depraved, helpless, and vile sinners, such as we are, is the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ. If salvation depends in any measure upon you or me, all hope is gone. But since it is entirely the work of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ, there is hope even for fallen, helpless sinners. God says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:15-16).

This is what God does for sinners by his sovereign, eternal grace. He chose to save a great multitude from Adam’s fallen race. He determined to save his

elect people by the sacrifice of his Son. He sent his Son into the world to accomplish eternal redemption for us. He sends his Spirit to regenerate his chosen people and effectually call them to Christ in faith. He gives life to the dead. He convicts (convinces) chosen, redeemed sinners of sin pardoned, righteousness brought in, and judgment finished by the obedience and blood of Christ. He reveals Christ. He causes the awakened sinner, by the power of his irresistible grace, to come to Christ, saying,...

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

No man has any claim upon the grace of God. Any sinner who will come to Christ may freely come. All who come to Christ in true faith acknowledge most gladly that they were constrained to come. We who have been constrained by almighty, irresistible grace into the arms of Christ, do most gladly acknowledge and praise him for his matchless, free grace. The whole work of salvation, from start to finish, is due entirely to the grace of God.

All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death was all my own:
All that I am, I owe to Thee,
My gracious God, alone.
The evil of my former state
Was mine, and only mine:
The good in which I now rejoice
Is Thine, and only Thine.
The darkness of my former state,
The bondage – All was mine:
The light of life in which I walk,
The liberty is Thine.
The grace that made me feel my sin
It taught me to believe:
Then, in believing, peace I found,

And now I live, I live!
All that I am, even here on earth,
All that I hope to be,
When Jesus comes, and glory dawns,
I owe it, Lord, to Thee!

In the light of these things, every believer rejoices to declare, "By the grace of God I am what I am...Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Amen.

– Don Fortner