

WHO AND HOW DOES THE FATHER DRAW?

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Soli Deo Gloria!

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw** him; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44)

It is clear from John 6:44 that no individual can "come" to Christ for salvation unless God the "Father" works to "draw" him. Strict Calvinists teach that this "draw[ing]" is a sovereign work of God that He performs for every elect person, which is irresistible and inevitably results in his salvation; in contrast, God does not "draw" the non-elect, leaving them unable to "come" to Christ for salvation, which results in their eternal damnation for unbelief. Is this the teaching of Scripture?

First, consider what "draw" means. The Greek verb translated "draw" in this passage is *ἐλκύω*. Like almost all words, this word is capable of expressing a range of meanings, from 'attract' or 'entice' to 'drag' or 'compel'. Calvinists insist that the meaning in John 6:44 should be *drag/compel*, and they point to other uses in the N.T. where this Greek verb clearly should be understood as involuntary compulsion (e.g., Acts 16:19; James 2:6). It is acknowledged that the semantic range of this Greek verb can include the idea of involuntary compulsion in some contexts, but that does not mean it has such meaning in every context. For instance, John uses this same Greek verb a few chapters later, in John 12:32, where Jesus declares regarding His upcoming crucifixion, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all men unto me". Since Scripture teaches that not all men will be saved, Jesus clearly teaches in this passage that His work of "draw[ing]" does not mean compulsion; apparently the "draw[ing]" work of God the Son can be resisted by men (cf. Matthew 23:37). Furthermore, Jesus specifically asserts that His work of "draw[ing]" will be performed for "all men". Thus, it would only be natural, in the context of John 6:44, to understand that the "draw[ing]" work of God the "Father" is: 1) an attracting or enticing influence that can be resisted by men, and 2) a work He will perform for all men.

"It is written in the prophets, And **they shall be all taught of God**. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45)

Second, how does God the "Father" perform this work of "draw[ing]"? In the very next verse, John 6:45, Jesus quotes from Isaiah 54:13 to indicate that this will be accomplished by *teaching* that comes from "God", which obviously means God's Word. Elsewhere the Apostle Paul noted that it was knowledge that was "learned" from the "holy scriptures" that was "able to make [Timothy] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). In the remainder of His discourse, ending in John 6:58, Jesus continues to **teach** His Jewish audience, attempting to persuade them to believe in Him even though He knows that some of those He is addressing will not believe (i.e., are not elect; John 6:64).

It is true that no one is able to come to Jesus for salvation unless God the Father draws him. However, God draws all through the teaching of His Word. Nonetheless, God's work of drawing men is not compulsion, and it can be resisted by rebellious creatures.