

Grace and the Truth Displayed

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[0:00] I would like you to turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 4 and we are going to! in verse 41 and carry through to verse 51. Let me read just the first verse or so to set your thinking! into the text and then you join me together in the text and then you join me together in the text.

We are here in prayer asking for the Spirit of God's help, that the Word of God would be taught clearly, that it would be appreciated by God's people, and that the Spirit would work both in the life of the believer to encourage our affection for Christ and also to challenge those that are sitting here that do not know Christ, that today, today would be the day of salvation. That's our prayer, isn't it? That Jesus Christ would be lifted up, that our hearts who know Christ would be encouraged and strengthened and that those who are here that don't know Christ would be drawn to the cross and to complete forgiveness and salvation in Him. Let me read the passage.

So the Jews grumbled about Him because He said, I am the bread of life that came down from heaven. They said, Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Do not grumble among yourselves.

Father, I am so thankful for the clarity with which the Scriptures make us understand that we are dependent upon Your Spirit in every holy and godly activity. And that reflects, in particular, the inability of our own natural will and heart to glorify You or to do things that are of eternal significance.

[12:09] I'm thankful also for the reminders in Scripture such as Zechariah that not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. And so we, with all humility, ask this morning that Your people would enjoy the enabling of the Spirit of God to hear the Word of God preached in the Spirit's power to the exalting of our Savior, who we will worship in eternity forever with unending joy.

And we are also thankful that we can pray this morning for the work of the Spirit in drawing those who are here that do not know Christ, that they, by Your grace, would be drawn to see the hopelessness of their condition and call upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone is salvation. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as we pick up this passage in John chapter 6, I think it's appropriate for us to kind of frame it so that we have an understanding of the large picture of what is going on. You'll remember that the Gospel of John is different than the synoptic Gospels. And what I mean by that is that Matthew, Mark, Luke give kind of a chronological or historical overview of the things that Jesus did, the things that He taught, the various activities. They keep a focus on more of the historical pattern of Christ's ministry here on earth. John, in a different sense, puts its predominant focus on one singular issue, and that is making it clear that Jesus is the Christ so that we can come to faith and know who He is and have confidence in His ministry and His salvation. It's not that the other Gospels don't keep Christ as Savior in front, but John focuses on only a few of the incidents of Christ's life. John chapter 6, which is one of the lengthiest chapters that we are going to deal with in the book of John, begins with Jesus ministering to His disciples, taking them away to get a little bit of rest and relaxation from the heavy ministry that they'd been involved in. And as they are leaving, the crowd follows them. It ends up that Jesus feeds them. And the estimation is that that public feeding probably involved around 20,000 people. That's a crowd. That's huge. And He fed them that day, and later when He saw that they were very interested in forcing Him to become king. Why?

Not because He was the Savior of mankind, but hey, it was the first public food display, and they liked it, and they thought, why do I have to go home and cook? I can just put Jesus on the spot. And they wanted to force Him to be their king. And He did what? First, He packed off the disciples because He probably was very aware of the fact they couldn't take that kind of pressure. He sent them out of temptation. And where did they go? They went into a storm. You ever wondered how you end up where you are? I mean, the truth of the matter is, is we've been in more storms than we would have voted on if we were in charge. But those aren't accidents. We know we who are the children of God have Him governing and guiding. And when He puts us into a storm, it is in that very storm that He will show Himself to be sufficient and care for us.

Aren't you pleased with the reality that when you're in that place, He hasn't taken His eyes off of you, and He is aware, and He will provide for you, and He will strengthen you, and He will sustain you.

[5:56] And on the other side of it, one of the things you at least ought to remember is the next storm you're in, you ought to say, hey, we've been here before, Jesus. It's okay. I'm not going to fret and fume. Will you write that down? Next storm's coming. Don't be upset. Okay. Anyway, here's Jesus on the other side of that series of miracles. He has the people come back again, and they're very interested in having Jesus do another miracle. And instead of accommodating their interest, carnal and wicked as it was, He steps right in to addressing the reality of who He is and what He came to be, do. He says, I am the bread of life, and whosoever believes in me, right, he is going to have everlasting life. And as a result of this, the vast audience that was listening to Him, about 20,000 people, most of them pushed back against that. And so what we're looking at here in the 10 verses that we're going to study is Jesus kind of being very transparent and candid and not waffling on helping people see the truth. I want you to recognize as we step into the text there in verse 41, first of all, you have confrontation. Confrontation. There in verse 41, it says,

So the Jews grumbled about Him because He said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. As we take up the text, we find that instead of kind of dancing around the subject of their ill-spirited hearts, Jesus steps right into it, and He addresses the problem that they were having. You know, one of the characteristics that you see in many instances of preaching is that people are primarily, pastors often are interested in just telling people what they want to hear and what tickles the ears. That wasn't the way Jesus was. He recognized the spiritual needs of individuals, and instead of dodging the subject, He stepped right into it, and He made it clear. Was He gentle? Yes. Was He kind and forbearing with people? Yes. But nevertheless, He put the truth out where people could grab a hold of it. And I want you to understand this. The fact of the matter is, is that spiritual problems need to be dealt with, and spiritual problems will never be dealt with apart from confrontation and addressing it. Left alone, the heart will not come to the light and salvation. We have that little nursery rhyme, you know, leave them alone, they will what?

Come home. It's not the case. The heart of man, deceitful as it is, is going to continue wandering down that dark and despairing road, and it is the responsibility of those who handle the truth and hold on to the truth to put it out where people can get a hold of it. Jesus knew the hearts of His listeners, and He understood that what He had said earlier, back up just a little bit so you can see it, in verse 35 through 40, had really put their teeth on edge. Verse 35, Jesus said, I am the bread of life, and whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. The point that Jesus was making is that you have had adequate information of the reality of who I am and what I have come to do, and even in the face of all that clear information that I've provided, your heart is not connected, and you're not interested in the issues of salvation. Jesus made it clear that salvation was only in Him, and I want you to understand that the listeners were quite persuaded that more or less, they could pull it off on their own. They could bring it about by their own behavior, their own attention to a particular set of rules, and Jesus kind of bankrupt that idea and said, it's not going to work. I'm the only one who you have confidence or should have confidence in.

[10:03] So I want you to track how Jesus' listeners responded. They grumbled. Have you ever grumbled? How many of you grumbled? We grumble all the time, and we don't think grumbling is that big of a deal because we're so practiced at it. Here's Jesus. Instead of just letting it go on, He steps right into it, and He says, hey, listen, what's going on with you guys? Grumbling is, in essence, conversation that never aims at wholesome resolution. The Jews had a long history of grumbling. In fact, they had a kind of a professional development in the issue. They grumbled their way out of Egypt.

They grumbled their way across the wilderness. They grumbled their way into the land of promise, and every time you turn around, you find the Israelites grumbling. Now, here's a question for you. Do you think grumbling is something that offends God?

I want you to turn to your Bibles just for a moment. We're dealing momentarily with the subject of grumbling because, unfortunately, we find ourselves doing it when we shouldn't be. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 7-10. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 7.

Do not be idolaters as some of them were. Here is the apostle addressing the church at Corinth, and he's saying, hey, listen, guys, don't be like them. Oh, yeah. Well, I'm not an idolater. Anybody here have a brass idol sitting on the mantle of their house? No, we don't. We don't go there, right? Don't be an idolater. The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Nor we must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and 23,000 fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer. I want you to recognize this morning that when you think about the issue of grumbling, understand this, that the grumbler is in a dangerous place. The grumbler is always in a dangerous place. And so when you find yourself on occasion kind of dealing with an issue and finding yourself tempted to kind of just shoot the mouth off and talk about something without resolution and without a sincere desire to make something happen in a spiritual sense, remind yourself grumbling is not a good thing. The other thing that we want to recognize here in the passage is that the Jews were unwilling to face the convicting words of Christ, and so what they did was they attacked at where they thought the weakest link in His ministry was. Go back there, if you would, to John chapter 6, and it says here, the Jews grumbled about Him because He said, I am the bread of life that came down from heaven. Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

What were they doing? They thought they understood exactly what had happened in Christ's life. He'd been born Joseph and Mary, and here He was just an ordinary guy showing up, and here He was claiming that He was the way of life. He was the one who could save them. And here's the problem. Had they seen Him do miracles yet at this point? Undeniably so. He had done one miracle after another that was a clear indication of His divine authority and power, and yet when they were deeply convicted, instead of saying, you know what, we have a reason to listen to Him because of all that He's done, they attacked on the line where they thought they could have an edge and resist Him. I want you to understand that people try to escape conviction by trying to undermine the messengers that God brings. That's normal.

[14:01] That's understandable. And some of you here sitting this morning have found yourself on occasion in more than one instance where individuals have been appointed by God to address things going on in your life, and instead of saying, you know what, I need to focus on the truth of what my need is, we've decided that we're going to kind of nitpick the reality of the individual that God has chosen to bring it to us, and we always will find something that we can undermine the authority and significance of their ministry with. I remember as a young boy, having my father on more than one occasion convict me of certain things that I was doing and attitudes that I had, and instead of saying, you know what, Dad, what you're saying is entirely true, and I can see where this path is going to take me, I decided what I would do is attack the imperfection of his own life. And by the way, when we live together, do we end up knowing the baggage in other people's lives? What's the answer? Oh, yeah, yeah. And so here I was saying, you know what, I don't want to listen to

what my dad has to say about my own selfishness, or in my case, particularly the anger that I have, and I'm going to just focus on the fact that my dad works too long and doesn't pay attention to me. You ever done that? Instead of allowing the Spirit of God to use the instrument He's chosen, you find a means of diminishing the significance of the message that

God has for you. And as we look at this passage, here are the Jews doing that traditional thing, grumbling. Jesus confronts them, and in that confrontation, instead of saying, okay, okay, I'm willing to listen, they found a means of attacking Him, and they addressed the superficial issues that they thought they had a handle on. I want you to recognize that Christ was not the least put off by that. And it's very interesting to notice that instead of arguing with them about, well, you don't know who my dad is. I mean, you know, that's how most of us would do, right?

You know, he just steps right on, moves on. And the second thing he does is he speaks with absolute clarity about the real issues of their heart. Let's look at the passage. There in verse 43, Jesus says, do not grumble among yourselves.

Then in verse 44, remember, he's talking to people that were not interested in the issues of salvation. He'd already let them know, I am the bread of life. I am the one that can provide salvation. And they said, well, you don't want any of that. Jesus stepped right into it there in verse 44. And I want you to recognize, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, draws him.

I want you to just think for a moment here. When Jesus used that word draw, he earlier in chapter 4, and I want you to turn back there if you will just for a moment, in chapter 4, he had been speaking to a woman at the well in Samaria. And remember the little conversation they had about water? And Jesus had addressed this issue of give me water to drink, and she said, well, blah, blah, blah. And then he says, hey, if you knew who you were talking to, you would ask me for water, okay? I want you to mark what it says there in verse 15.

[17:30] Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. How many of you have ever used a bucket to get a drink? One. Raise your hand high. High.

High. You guys have got to be from southern Ohio, okay? In the good old days growing up in India, if we were going to have a drink, you had to walk down to where the pukri was or where the well was, and you had to drop a bucket. By the way, one of the things that was very, very important is when you dropped the bucket into the well, you wanted to be sure that the rope had been tied carefully by you. Double-check the knot. Does anybody know why that was important? If you hadn't checked the knot, there was a probability that that bucket would stay down where it was. You drop it down, begin to pull up on the rope, and oh, I didn't check the knot.

So anyway, you drop the bucket down, and then the only way to get the water from way down in there is to what? Draw up, draw, draw, draw. So who does the drawing in people coming to Christ? What's it say in verse 44? No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up again on the last day. So I want you to recognize here is Jesus talking to individuals about the matter of salvation, and the reality is the vast majority of them are going to turn and walk away.

A little frustrating when you stop and see here is the one who has come to save the world, the one who has demonstrated his eternal right and authority, and yet in the face of all of that evidence, these people are going to turn their backs on Christ. And what's going on here?

Why are some saved and others are not? You look here at the passage, and I want to tell you that what the Bible tells us in this case is a complex truth. How many of you prefer that things are not complex, that they stay simple, okay? I remember talking yesterday with an individual about the Lord Jesus, and he was struggling with the complexity, not of this, but of the Trinity.

[19:51] How can God, you know, there we were going, and I said, well, and he was frustrated by the reality of the Trinity, and he was frustrated by the reality of the incarnation. The incarnation is that Jesus is what?

Half man and half God. How many of you went, bam? How many of you did that? Let me say it again, so I'm just kind of testing your theological acuity here. Hello? Everybody ready? Jesus is half man and half God, and everybody said, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. That's wrong, that's wrong,

that's wrong.

Jesus is all God. Jesus is all man. How many of you can do that with math? You can't. It is a theological complexity that the human mind just can't do anything other than accept by faith. By the same token, the reality of the fact that God is sovereign in salvation and man is entirely responsible is another theological complexity, and just let it be. Accept it. We're going to find, and I'll come to that point later, we're going to find that in most cases where God addresses the issue of his sovereignty, he balances it out in the very same proximity by helping us see man's responsibility. We'll deal with that later. But I want you to recognize here is Jesus talking to these people that are spiritually brain dead. They're not getting it. They're fussing with them. They're arguing. They're grumbling. He says, hey, the reason you don't get it is because you've not been drawn.

No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. I got to tell you that that must have been extremely irritating for the Jews. Do you understand that? I mean, here they were. They were carrying on a theological discourse with Jesus, and he says to them, you don't get it.

And then he tops it off by saying, that's because the Father, and by the way, who did the Jews think they were? Beloved of the Father, the Father's people. I mean, they were in a favored class.

[21:59] And here is Jesus saying, your problem with not getting it is because he has not called you. It's very interesting when you stop and think about it that some rabbis actually taught that Moses stood at the gate of hell, and when any circumcised man kind of staggered by on his way down because of his bad behavior, Moses would grab ahold of him if he was circumcised and pull him out of line and save him. I mean, hey, does circumcision work? Answer is no.

No. The Jews thought he did. No one comes unless the Father draws him. Now, I want you to recognize the second part of the argument. You look there. You're in John chapter 44. It says, no one comes unless the Father draws. But then look at 45. It is written in the prophets, and they will all be taught by God. Hey, what did we do last Sunday here in the front, right here at the table and all that?

What did we do? We had communion. And what was the Bible message all about last Sunday? Raise your hand. Don't say it out loud. I just want to see how many of you remember last Sunday. I mean, you were here. You checked the attendance box. What was the sermon all about?

Everybody here? The new covenant, right? This is the New Testament in my blood. Oh, here we are. And Jesus is reminding his Jewish listeners of the new covenant. That's what this is. I'm not going to have you look at the passage, but if you were to go in your Bible to Isaiah chapter 54, you would find a piece of the new covenant being recited by the prophet Isaiah indicating that the day would come when God himself would be the one who was teaching the hardened hearts of the nation of Israel.

How many of you realize that apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing you to understand the absolute darkness of your soul, you would have never come to faith? And he was the one who got a hold of the hardness of your heart. He was the one that broke into that darkness. He was the one that brought you to understand the moral despair and bankruptcy of your soul was nothing other than an indication of your need for Christ. And he drew you to the cross. The new covenant was a promise, both in Isaiah chapter 54 that Jesus is reciting, they will be taught by God. And what Jesus was saying is, hey, I am not off on the far end of the world here telling you that God has to be the one who teaches if you're going to get it. Because he said, let me recite to you portions from Isaiah and also from Jeremiah in which those two Old Testament prophets indicated that the work of God in the heart of those hardened Israelites would be, you need me and I will help you get it. So we recognize this morning in this passage that Jesus was making it clear that this business of being called by grace is the work of God alone. So on a larger scale, stop with me and think of other illustrations where this issue of God being the one who does what He chooses stands clearly in the Bible. Stop and think with me. I have a couple different illustrations of this. Number one, how many of you have ever read through the book of Job? Read through the book of Job. Job goes on for 37 chapters with Job and his friends kind of having this little dispute about, hey, if you're having trouble, you brought it on yourself. That's kind of a summary. And Job is arguing and fussing and he's not real happy with listening to their argument. And finally, God shows up in chapter 38. Does anybody know what God says?

Job, let me give you an answer for why you're suffering. God never does. You know all that God does? He says, Job, let me ask you a couple questions. He says, let me start. Where were you when I hung the stars in the sky and when I taught the goats how to give birth in the mountains? You know, and blah, blah, blah. And on he goes. And after three chapters, 37, 38, 39, and 40, I think it's 38, forget that. A couple chapters. Job says, you know what? It's time for me to put my hand over my mouth.

[26:52] All this business of me, how come you're doing this to me, God? He says, the best thing I can do is just kind of be quiet. How many of you have ever been in an argument where it finally dawned on you it was wise idea to be quiet? Ever been there? Okay. I'm not looking for husband-wife interaction at this moment, but I was just like, you know, there are times where he says, stop. You're not winning. Then God goes on a little further, and here's what Job says towards the end of the book. He says, you know, I've heard of you with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees you. I get it. In Job, we never have God explaining to Job why Job suffered. God doesn't feel obligated to accommodate our sense of right and wrong and justice in a sense. You know, he's God. He's in control. In Romans chapter 9, 10, and 11, another illustration of God at work in the issue of salvation, he begins by talking about Jacob and

Esau, and he says this, and it kind of is like fingernails on the chalkboard. He says, Jacob have I, what? Loved, and Esau have I hated. It's a striking statement to me.

So I want you to understand that the Bible makes it clear that God is the one who saves, and God is the one who is at work in calling an individual. There are some of you sitting here this morning that I have no doubt that God is, well, I don't have a doubt. I have confidence. I'm praying that God is at work calling you to Christ. He is pleading with you, be saved, and he is earnest, and he's intentional in that appeal. So if God is in absolute control, how do we respond with gospel truth in ministry to other people? Here's how. With the same kind of compassion that Jesus had.

Same kind of compassion that Jesus had. Jesus was clear. People get saved by the work of God. But I want you to recognize what immediately follows on the heels of that. If you look there in the Bible, you'll mark in verse 51, or sorry, in verse 46, it says, 47, whoever believes has eternal life. And I want you to put your finger on that little word, whoever. I want you to also look, if you would, at verse 51, and it says, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And I want you to understand that when Jesus ministered to people, he reached out with an affection and an interest in their soul, and he was earnest and sincere and honest in making this appeal.

When he preached, his desire was to see people come to the Father, and yet he knew that the Father was the one who had to do the drawing. Did his confidence in his Father's sovereign will interfere in any case with the passion of Christ for unbelieving people? And the answer is, not at all. Not at all.

[29:58] So I want you to understand that Christ still reaches out with the same kind of compassion in desiring that all come to faith. And that should characterize our heart and ambition. Do you understand that? Do I know who's going to be saved here today? I don't. But I would be remiss if I didn't preach the sweetness of the gospel with the same delight and satisfaction that I have found in complete forgiveness of sin and with the same passion that I want to see other people know the Savior and be worshipers instead of idolaters. Should you preach the gospel that same way, where he puts you in your workplace and around the people that you are face-to-face with every day?

And the answer is, absolutely. Absolutely. So let me close with several thoughts that I want you to focus on. For one, admit that when we look at the subject of salvation in a kind of larger perspective, understand that it is a complex truth that puts together the sovereignty of God with the responsibility of a man to respond. In theology, it uses the term antinomy, meaning two laws that seemingly butt heads. Just get over it, move on, just accept, hey, I understand these two things are hard to put together, but I accept them. Let me give you two illustrations and leave it at that. In Acts chapter 27, verse 24 and 31, we find a very interesting case. Remember I said that often in the Bible, when you see the issue of God's sovereign activity in a situation, you'll also often find human

responsibility in the same proximity. The reason God does that is so that He forces us to see the bigger picture than we'd like to see. How many of you have ever been around people that are all over on one side or the other and their issues? Huh? It doesn't work. Acts chapter 27, verse 24 and 31, we find Paul in a horrible storm, been going on for a long time. Paul comes out on the deck and he says, guys, I have it. God's let me know that we're all going to be saved. That's pretty encouraging.

Everybody kind of sits back on the deck and says, well, let it happen. Actually then, remember, some of the sailors decide that what they're going to do is get into the little boat and slip away, and Paul says, let me tell you something. If those guys leave, we're all dying.

God's sovereignty in bringing about the rescue of that entire load of people depended also on human responsibility and response to the need of the moment. Let me enclose with just several thoughts that I want you to focus on today as you think about Christ. Number one, be overwhelmed by His grace that opened your dark heart and blind eyes to see your sin and led you to faith. So you stop and think about the fact that Jesus says what He does about, hey, listen, if you come to faith, it's because He drew you, and you're sitting here this morning, and you know Christ as your Savior. It ought to put little warm chills up and down the spine, and it ought to cause you to say, man, I can't believe He loves me like that. Let me tell you something. There is no reason for a believer to ever get over the absolute unbelievable blessing of being saved by grace. And when you do, there's something going on in your heart that's not good. Second, be like Jesus when you're ministering to people. Don't be thrown off when people try to dodge conviction. It's going to happen. It's going to happen all the time.

When you end up having an opportunity to talk to other people about the Lord Jesus, don't be surprised. It's actually an indication that you're getting close to home when they want to dodge the subject. Do you follow that? It'll happen. Don't be put off by that. Third, have absolutely humble confidence in the Father's work and calling. I don't know who's going to be saved.

[34:17] I am not God. But what I do know is that I can trust Him to do that wonderful work, and my job is just quite simple. I'm one who throws the seed. Is that what you are?

I, what's it say? One man waters, another man sows, and, hello, God gives the increase. It's his business. You might as well be throwing seed, though. And by the way, when you throw seed, how should you throw it? I got to tell you, my neighbor needed the yard reseeded. And so, I am known among some people as the king of overkill. I went and bought seed for this individual, and I literally bought twice as much seed as I figured the birds could have some, the squirrels could have some, and here we are two weeks later, and there's grass all over the place, even in the parking lot. You know, I threw it everywhere. Do that with seed. Finally, be like Jesus and have a passionate longing to see people delivered from the pit.

Let me say that slowly. Be like Jesus and have a passionate longing to see people delivered from the pit. I've watched my mom. I've watched my dad die. And I have to tell you, there is a sorrow in death in the case of a believer that is entirely different than the sorrow of person who is dying that doesn't know Christ. When I have been at the bedside of a person who does not know Christ, and I have no confidence in that person's eternal destiny, there is an anxiety in my soul, and there is a passion. I don't want that person going to hell. Are you that way?

Father, lift up Jesus, that we who know Christ might be overwhelmed by the fact that He saved us, that we who know Christ would have an affection not only for Him but for lost mankind, that we who know Christ would find our greatest satisfaction in the lover of our souls, that we who know Christ would have an affection. And in our satisfaction, we cannot but help but speak of that which we have seen and heard.

Father God, this morning I have a sense that there are some among us that do not know Christ. May this be the day of salvation for them.

[37:21] Lord, lift up Jesus. Amen. Let's stand together.