

How Do We Interpret John 6:44?

A Free Grace Review of Daniel Weierbach's Sermon "Illuminating John 6:44"

by Jonathan Perreault

"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:44

Preface

The reason I'm writing this review is because last week in the comments section for one of my blog posts, a reader linked me to the YouTube video of Pastor Weierbach's sermon and said "Let me know what you think." Here's what I think!

Introduction

Pastor Weierbach's sermon "[Illuminating John 6:44](#)" runs about 45 minutes. Though it's not a massive time commitment, the sermon is a bit technical and some might say that at times Weierbach "gets in the weeds" (so to speak) trying to explain his view. The PowerPoint overheads definitely helped to keep my attention. Yet even with the PowerPoint slides, the sermon was still somewhat tedious to watch—mainly because it was so theologically dense and also fairly complex. Many people would probably call it "boring" because it was basically a teaching lecture on a rather abstract and dry theological topic. Even as someone who is deeply passionate about theology, I found my attention drifting! If a self-proclaimed theology nerd like me struggled to stay focused, it's probably safe to say it moves a bit slow. But since I wanted to review the

sermon, I ended up watching it 2-3 times in order to make sure that I had a good grasp of the information and also so that I could better understand where Weierbach was coming from and why he said what he said. I also took about 10 pages of notes! Needless to say, it has been a time-consuming process. But I enjoy doing it, and I hope and pray that this review will be a blessing and a help to those who read it. After all, that's one of the reasons this blog exists. I say all that as background information so no one thinks I'm just "shooting from the hip" or I don't know what I'm talking about. I feel that I have a good grasp of the sermon and the main points that were made.

Pastor Weierbach (who I'll mostly refer to as "Pastor W" for the sake of brevity) begins by saying that John 6:44 is "one of the most abused texts of Scripture." But after watching the sermon, one is apt to wonder if Weierbach's *own view* also falls into this category! Weierbach is no doubt referring to the fact that John 6:44 is a favorite proof-text used by Calvinists to support their twisted theology of "meticulous determinism," i.e., that God *causes* all things to happen and that everything happens because He explicitly *makes* it happen—even all the evil that exists. For example, Calvinists say that God wanted the holocaust to happen and therefore He caused it. Calvinists teach that every evil thing that has ever been done is because God wanted it to happen and made it happen—even things like rape and incest! This is the (false) god of Calvinism, and Pastor W rightly points out how such determinism is patently unbiblical.

Strengths of Pastor W's Interpretation

I will begin by sharing what I consider to be the strengths of Pastor W's sermon and his interpretation of John 6:44. The strengths are:

Strength #1: The sermon attempts to provide a Free Grace interpretation of John 6:44 in contrast to Calvinism. Pastor W begins by giving the typical Calvinistic interpretation of the verse and showing how that view is based on philosophy, not the Bible. In other words, the Calvinist approaches and/or reads John 6:44 with a set of theological presuppositions (i.e., the five-points of Calvinism). Those presuppositions are not in the text, but rather are imposed onto the text. Pastor W does a good job pointing this out at the beginning of his sermon.

Strength #2: The sermon provides a brief explanation of how Calvinists interpret John 6:44, along with a short survey of how Free Grace expositors interpret it. Pastor W references Dr. Charlie Bing's *GraceNotes* article "How God Draws People to Salvation" (*GraceNotes*, Number 75), and Shawn Lazar's book *Chosen to Serve* (Grace Evangelical Society, 2017). Pastor W gives a brief summary of the aforementioned Free Grace interpretations of John 6:44, and says that in his view those explanations are good, "but they miss the mark a little bit." Unfortunately Pastor W does not specify exactly what he disagrees with in those Free Grace interpretations, leaving that point unsaid.

Strength #3: The sermon attempts to interpret John 6:44 contextually, historically, and grammatically. However, I would say that Pastor W goes to the extreme here, because he advises that we interpret John 6:44 exclusively in reference to Old Testament Jewish

believers, which he compares to Romans 10:9-10. While I see his point, such a ultra-narrow or limited interpretation seems to contradict the inclusive language that Jesus uses in the immediate context: "the world" (Jn. 6:33), "all" (Jn. 6:37), "all" (Jn. 6:39), "everyone" (Jn. 6:40), "no one" (Jn. 6:44), "all" (Jn. 6:45), "everyone" (Jn. 6:45), "any man" (Jn. 6:46), and "anyone" (Jn. 6:51). The fact that John 6:47 is the key verse of the Grace Evangelical Society (GES) also argues against Pastor W's view that the passage is exclusively dealing with and pertaining to only the Jews of Jesus' day. Of course, the GES could be using John 6:47 out of context. But as I pointed out, the language Jesus uses in the immediate context seems to have a broader application than one limited exclusively to the Jews of that time period. Indeed, what Jesus says in the passage is consistent with His many appeals to believe in Him that are recorded all through John's Gospel! Thus, Pastor W's view seems to be a rather forced and unnatural attempt to "pigeon hole" John 6:37-45 as exclusively "Jewish," when that could be said of almost John's entire Gospel! (Since virtually all of John's Gospel deals with the earthly ministry of Jesus prior to His death, burial, and resurrection.) And Bible-believing Christians use John's Gospel in modern-day evangelism all the time—to Jews and non-Jews alike! Of course, the same could be said in regard to Romans 10:9-10. But my point is that it seems forced (and inconsistent) to view John 6:37-45 so narrowly. To put it another way, I don't think that Pastor W is "comparing apples with apples" when he compares John 6:37-45 with Romans 10:9-10. It seems like it is somewhat of a double standard or special pleading to zero in on John 6:37-45 out of John's entire Gospel and say that this particular passage is exclusively Jewish and "has nothing to do with the church age" (so says Pastor W) when it's doubtful that he applies that same standard to the rest of John's Gospel. Indeed, one wonders how Pastor W interprets what Jesus said to the

Jewish Pharisee named Nicodemus in John 3:16?! Does that have "nothing to do with the church age" either? Granted, it occurred prior to the cross. But the one condition for salvation is, and always has been, the same: faith alone! "Look and Live"! Pastor W even uses that exact phrase to describe salvation in the present church-age! So he appears to be inconsistent in his interpretation of John's Gospel, particularly the parts of it that are supposedly strictly "Jewish". Indeed, John 1:11-12 seems to expand the invitation to those outside of the Jewish religion and culture. John 1:11-12 says of Jesus that "He came to His own, and His own people did not accept Him. But to all who did receive Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name." Amen!

Strength #4: The sermon provides a good contextual analysis and explanation of the word "draw" (Gr. *helkō*, also spelled *helkuō*), showing that it does not automatically nor necessarily mean "drag" as Calvinists teach. I would say that this is by far the strongest aspect of Pastor W's sermon. He basically does a complete word study on the Greek word *helkō*, going back even to how the word is used in the Old Testament Septuagint or LXX (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) to prove that the Greek word does not inherently mean "drag" as the Calvinists twist it to mean, but rather it simply (and predominantly) means "woo" or "draw". The context helps to determine the meaning of the word. That is, the surrounding text clarifies the specific sense in which the Greek word *helkō* is being used.

Review of Pastor W's 5 Main Points

Pastor W outlines his sermon in five basic points, which he describes as: "Five (5) main points we must realize to fully understand John 6:44" (timestamp: 21:05). He explains by saying: "There is five main points to my argument as far as to be able to prove what I believe John 6:44 is talking about." Notice here that Pastor W admits that these 5 points are necessary in order to "prove" his view of John 6:44. This will be important to keep in mind, and I will talk more about this later (see below under "Summary"). Here is my review of Pastor W's 5 main points:

Main Point #1. Pastor W's first main point is: "John 6 is about the Father drawing, not the Son or the Holy Spirit." Pastor W restates the point, saying: "John 6 is about the Father drawing, not the Spirit, not the Son." But the text doesn't say "not the Spirit, not the Son." Therefore, we must be very careful not to read into the text something that it doesn't say. For example, in Genesis 1:2 the text specifically mentions the Spirit as involved in creation (cf. Job 33:4; Psa. 104:30). Are we therefore to conclude that the Father and Son were not involved? Such a conclusion would be false, because other Scriptures reveal that the Father and the Son were also involved in the creation of the world and in the creation of the universe (cf. Isa. 64:8; Mal. 2:10; Jn. 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16-18; Heb. 1:1-2; Rev. 4:11, etc.). The same can be said in regard to Christ's resurrection. Some Bible verses say Jesus raised Himself (Jn. 2:19-21, 10:17-18). Other verses describe the Father as raising Jesus (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 1:1), and still others say the Holy Spirit raised Him (Rom. 8:11). We need to be careful not to go beyond what is written: "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). And so while Pastor W rightly points out that there is "a distinction in persons" between God the Father and God the

Son, I would say yes, but there is also a unity! All three members of the Godhead work together in perfect harmony.

Main Point #2. Pastor W's second main point is: "John 6 is present tense ministry, not a future tense." He further explains by saying, "the Father is only said to be drawing people during Jesus' [earthly] ministry." Pastor W says that the Father is not drawing people during the present ministry of Jesus. But where does the Bible say this? Pastor W says that the Father only draws people in the Gospels: "If you were to read the Scriptures and try and do a search for this phraseology as far as the Father drawing, you will only find this terminology used in the Gospels." But Pastor W's statement is not completely accurate. The truth is, in the New Testament, the Greek word *helkō* ("draw") is only used of the Father's "drawing" in John 6:44! I specified "in the New Testament" because in the Greek translation of Jeremiah 31:3 (LXX = 38:3) in the Septuagint, it uses the Greek word *helkō* to describe God the Father drawing His covenant people Israel. Pastor W's PowerPoint slide even references this when he displays a screenshot of the lexical entry of the Greek word *helkō* from Bauer's Lexicon (see timestamp 14:30, cf. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1st English edition, p. 251, s.v. ἔλκω, definition 1.b.).

But in the New Testament, that specific Greek word is not used with reference to the Father in any of the Synoptic Gospels! This highlights the fallacy of Pastor W's logic. Because Pastor W says that "you will only find this terminology [of God the Father 'drawing' people] used in the Gospels," yet the Greek word *helkō* isn't found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Yet Pastor W argues that the Father is still drawing people during that

time, based on Jesus' statement in John 6:44. Pastor W will no doubt respond by emphasizing that the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke cover the same time period as the Gospel of John in terms of Jesus' earthly ministry. But I would respond by saying that the Greek word *helkō* is nonetheless *absent* from those Gospels. So my point is that even though the word *helkō* ("draw") is absent from the Synoptics, the *concept* of God's drawing is not absent! And that's also my point in regard to the Father's "drawing" as it pertains to the rest of the New Testament. The Bible never says (!) that God *only* draws people during Jesus' earthly ministry. That is Pastor W's assumption. And that assumption is based on the flawed logic that "this phraseology as far as the Father drawing, you will only find this terminology used in the Gospels." No, you will only find that phraseology used in John 6:44! Not even "in the Gospels." The truth is: when the Greek word *helkō* is used in the theological sense of God the Father "drawing" people to salvation, that use of the word is only found in John 6:44. In other words, John 6:44 is the only verse in the entire Greek New Testament where the word *helkō* is used to describe the Father "drawing" people to salvation.

But does this mean that the concept of the Father's "drawing" is absent everywhere else? Of course not! But that is Pastor W's reasoning in regard to the Father's "drawing" outside of the Gospels. But here he is not only incorrect (see Jer. 31:3, LXX = 38:3), but also inconsistent. Because if he were consistent, he would have to say that since the specific terminology of the Father's "drawing" is not found anywhere in the Synoptic Gospels, the Father is therefore not "drawing" people in the Synoptic Gospels. But Pastor W doesn't say that. Instead, he says that God the Father *is* drawing people in the Synoptic Gospels (presumably because those books of the Bible cover the same time

period as the Gospel of John, in terms of Jesus' earthly ministry). And so Pastor W implicitly admits that although the exact phraseology of the Father's "drawing" is nowhere to be found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke (i.e., nowhere in the Synoptic Gospels), yet the *concept* of the Father's "drawing" is nonetheless present. And that is my point related to the rest of the New Testament. Although the specific word *helkō* ("draw") isn't used of the Father's "drawing" people to salvation except in John 6:44, yet the concept is still evident throughout the New Testament.

How does God the Father "draw" people to Himself? That is, to salvation? He clearly uses different means! Notice the following 7 ways that God uses to draw people to Himself. (Note: In the following list, I equate God's drawing with His calling. I believe that God's drawing/calling can be resisted. In other words, I disagree with the Calvinistic doctrine of "Irresistible Grace.")

How God Draws People to Salvation

1. Through Jesus' death on the cross (Jn. 12:32)
2. Through His love (Jer. 31:3; Hosea 11:4; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 2:4)
3. Through the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7-11)
4. Through general revelation/creation (Rom. 1:20)
5. Through His Word (Psa. 138:2; Jn. 6:45; Rom. 10:17)
6. Through internal conscience (Eccl. 3:11; Rom. 2:11-16)
7. Through people and circumstances (Acts 8:26-39, 10:1-11:18; cf. Heb. 1:14)

Main Point #3. Pastor W's third main point is: "John 6:64-65 is often overlooked regarding the present tense ministry." What does he mean by this? Pastor W says that "here Jesus tells us *why* He even said [what He did in] verse 44." Pastor W then dogmatically states: "The Father is not drawing unbelievers during the present ministry of Jesus Christ." But where does the Bible say this? Pastor W doesn't really prove this point; he merely says, "I will make that case momentarily as well." When Pastor W says that he will "make that case momentarily as well," he seems to be referring to what he says in his main point #5: specifically his view that God the Father doesn't give anything to Jesus after His earthly ministry. Pastor W's specific statement is: "after Jesus' DBR [i.e., His death, burial, and resurrection], nothing else is said to have been 'given' by the Father to the Son...this terminology is only used during this transitional period from Law to Grace (OT to NT)" (see timestamp: 35:06, ellipsis and emphasis his). But that statement is actually false in light of Revelation 1:1. See my thoughts on Main Point #5 for more information.

Is it true that "The Father is not drawing unbelievers during the present ministry of Jesus"? Jesus' own words would appear to disprove Pastor W's statement! Because in John 6:40 Jesus says: "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Notice that Jesus doesn't say "it is the will of My Father that 'the elect' who see the Son and believe in Him will have eternal life," nor does Jesus say that "it is My Father's will that 'Old Testament Jewish believers' who see the Son and believe in Him will have eternal life," but Jesus says that "*everyone*" who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life (see Jn. 6:40). Apparently Pastor W interprets John 6:40 as being in

reference to *only* Old Testament Jewish believers. But I don't see anything in the immediate context to justify such a limited interpretation. In fact, I see quite the opposite! Jesus could hardly have been clearer that there is a *universal opportunity* to be saved! Jesus' statement in John 6:40 is perfectly consistent with other Bible verses in the New Testament which describe God's invitation to salvation as universal in scope and not limited to a select few: "the world" (Jn. 3:16-17), "everyone" (Acts 10:43, 13:39), "all men" (1 Tim. 4:10), "all" (2 Pet. 3:9), "the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2), and "whosoever will" (Rev. 22:17). Incidentally, Revelation 22:17 also shows that the Son and the Spirit work together in perfect harmony specifically as it pertains to the salvation of the world (cf. Jn. 3:14-17, 12:32, 16:8-11). Obviously the same could be said of the Father and the Son (cf. Jn. 3:16-17, 6:32-33).

How then are we to interpret John 6:64-65? Not as the Calvinists in the sense of unconditional election and double predestination and irresistible grace, but rather in light of what Jesus says in John 6:40 in regard to the fact that it is the Father's will that "everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life." In other words, God chooses to save those who choose to believe. It is the Father's will to incorporate the human will in the salvation process. When I say the "salvation process," I'm referring to everything leading up to the point in time when a person trusts in Christ and receives eternal life. This pre-conversion timeline leading up to the moment of faith would include the Father's drawing them to Himself using various means (Jn. 6:44), the Son drawing them to Himself using various means (Jn. 12:32), and the Holy Spirit's ministry of convicting them "of sin, righteousness, and judgment" using various means (Jn. 16:8-11). All three members of the Holy Trinity work together in perfect harmony to

accomplish this goal of bringing lost sinners into God's family. That is how I understand John 6:64-65 as it relates to John 6:37-45. What about John 6:45? How are we to interpret it? In John 6:45 Jesus is quoting Isaiah 54:13, which says: "All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children." Everett F. Harrison insightfully observes: "Here Christ quoted Isa 54:13. If the **all** be emphasized, it removes any element of restriction that may seem to lurk in the idea of drawing as stated in Jn 6:44." (*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1087, bold his.) A good cross reference to help understand what Jesus is talking about in John 6:45 is what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:17, "So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." In other words, God uses His Word to draw people to salvation!

Main Point #4. Pastor W's fourth main point is: "John 10, 15, 17 help identify who Jesus is referring to [in John 6:44]." Pastor W asks, "how does Jesus speak about these same people?" Pastor W then hopscotches through John's Gospel to these various proof-texts, trying to illustrate/prove his point. (I picture Pastor W on a pogo stick, jumping around to these various sections of John's Gospel!) I would agree with Pastor W that in John 10:14-16, Jesus is not referring to the elect and non-elect but rather to the Jews and Gentiles. But Pastor W's point in regard to John 10:1-16 seems to be that when Jesus says "My sheep hear My voice," those sheep are Old Testament believers who (according to Pastor W) were already saved *before* coming to Christ. But such an interpretation seems forced. The text *doesn't* say the sheep were saved prior to coming to Christ. And while I don't disagree that there were Old Testament believers who were saved prior to Christ's earthly ministry and who indeed did recognize Christ as the promised Messiah when He came (e.g. Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:22-38), my point is

that John 10:1-16 should not be interpreted in such a limited sense or even in that sense at all. Personally, I wouldn't say that John 10:1-16 even refers to that. As I said, that interpretation seems forced.

In regard to John 15, I agree with Pastor W that the election in John 15:16 is to service, not salvation. But Pastor W's point in regard to John 15 is that those who reject God the Father will likewise reject His Son (see Jn. 15:23). Pastor W then flips the logic and reasons that those who believe in God the Father will likewise believe in His Son. I would ask, what Bible-believing Christian disagrees with that? That doesn't prove his point in regard to those in John 6:44 as far as when they got saved and if they were already saved prior to coming to Christ. I agree that there were Old Testament Jewish believers who were saved prior to Jesus being revealed as the Messiah. In other words, Pastor W is correct that there were indeed Old Testament Jewish believers alive during that time. (Who disputes that? As I noted, Simeon and Anna are two examples.) But that fact in no way requires the interpretation that John 6:37-45 refers to them. In light of the context, it is far more likely that John 6:37-45 refers to unbelievers (whom God in His omniscience foreknows will get saved) who respond to the Father's drawing for the first time and believe in Christ for salvation and are converted then and there. This interpretation seems much more likely in light of the specific language that Jesus uses, particularly what He says in John 6:40.

After briefly discussing a few statements by Jesus from John 15 (vv. 14-27), Pastor W next discusses several of Jesus' statements from John 17. Although Pastor W's view is interesting to consider, I would specifically disagree with his interpretation of John 17:6

in regard to the phrase "Thine they were." Pastor W interprets this phrase to mean that these people were saved *before* coming to Christ, mainly because Jesus says in his prayer to the Father, "Thine they were." Pastor W says these people are exclusively Old Testament Jewish believers whom the Father gives to Jesus. Thus, in his view these people were already saved before coming to Christ. But when Jesus says to the Father "Thine they were" (Jn. 17:6), my understanding is that it simply means in the sense that God the Father owns everything. These people are the Father's not necessarily in the sense of them already being saved and then given to Christ (as Pastor W supposes), but in the sense that God the Father created them. Just because they are owned by God doesn't necessarily mean they are saved. God owns "the cattle on a thousand hills," as the Bible says in the Psalms (Psa. 50:10). God owns everything—even unbelievers! "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it" (Psalm 24:1; cf. Exod. 19:5; Job 41:11; Psa. 89:11, 100:3). Indeed, in the Old Testament, God says: "Behold, all souls are Mine" (Ezek. 18:4). So I think Pastor W is once again reading too much into the text based on the one phrase "Thine they were" (Jn. 17:6). It doesn't necessarily refer to salvation. And even if it does, it could simply mean that God foreknows (knows ahead of time) who will trust in Christ for salvation (cf. Jn. 10:16; Rev. 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). In this sense they are thus the Father's, since He foreknows that they will one day believe in Christ and be saved (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1-2). Their names were written in the book of life (cf. Rev. 13:8, 17:8) from the foundation of the world!

Main Point #5. Pastor W's fifth main point is: "Jesus was 'given' various things by the Father during His earthly ministry" (emphasis his). Pastor W explains that some of these

"various things" include: "power" (Matt. 28:19; Jn. 17:2), "authority" (Jn. 5:27), and even "all things" (Lk. 10:22; Jn. 3:35, cf. Matt. 11:27, 28:18; Jn. 5:19-30, 13:3). As it pertains to John 6:37-45 and John 17:1-9, Pastor W reasons that the people who are given by the Father to Jesus during His earthly ministry are "in the same lane." But doesn't this argue *against* Pastor W's assumption that those who are given to Jesus by the Father are exclusively "Old Testament believers"? If indeed "all things" have been given to Jesus by the Father, why view the Father's "giving" in John 6 so narrowly? It seems incongruent. Especially because the wording in John 6:37-45 and in John 17:1-9 is much more inclusive: "all" (Jn. 6:37), "all" (Jn. 6:39), "everyone" (Jn. 6:40), and "all" (Jn. 17:2, cf. 17:21-24). Jesus could hardly have been more clear! For Pastor W to say that the word "all" in these verses refers exclusively to "Old Testament Jewish believers" smacks of Calvinism. What irony! Once again, Pastor W's interpretation of John 6:37-45 and 17:1-9 seems forced and doesn't appear to be consistent with the surrounding context.

Pastor W observes that the Greek word which is used of this giving by the Father to the Son is the word *didōmi*, which means "to entrust something to another's care." I agree with that, but then Pastor W says: "the fact these were 'given' [*didōmi*] reveals the Father previously had them. Therefore, the Father transferred them, from His authority, to the Son, during His earthly ministry." Pastor W makes two assumptions here that are incorrect: 1) that the Father's having them equates to them being previously saved, i.e. "Old Testament Jewish believers," and 2) that these people were only given by the Father during Jesus' earthly ministry. In regard to Pastor W's first assumption, I have already pointed out how when the Bible describes God as having something or owning something (or someone), it doesn't necessarily refer to salvation. It could simply mean

that God owns it by virtue of the fact that He created it and owns everything! And even if it does refer to salvation in a stricter sense, it still doesn't necessarily refer exclusively to Old Testament Jewish believers. The text does not require such a limited interpretation. Indeed, Free Grace people believe in *unlimited* atonement. Pastor W would probably say yes, but in John 6:37-45 it is the unlimited atonement of only Old Testament Jewish believers. How convenient! How Calvinistic! But such an interpretation is still *limited*, is my point. And thus such a view is inconsistent, or at least somewhat inconsistent, with the inclusive language that Jesus clearly uses in the passage: "everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life" (Jn. 6:40).

In regard to Pastor W's second assumption, that the Father only gave these people to Jesus "during His [i.e., Jesus'] earthly ministry," the Bible never says that! Thus, it is an argument from silence. And, I might add, it is quite a *complicated* argument from silence. It is an argument from silence that creates more problems than it solves! To me, the easier (and better) way to understand God's drawing is to view it as consistent with His foreknowledge (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1-2), and that "God chooses to save those who choose to believe." And to understand that the Father's will involves and factors in man's will (see John 6:40). This "unlimited atonement" interpretation is entirely consistent with the immediate context and with the rest of the New Testament. But getting back to the second assumption in Pastor W's statement that is incorrect, he says that after Jesus' earthly ministry "nothing else" is said to have been given (*didōmi*) to Jesus by the Father. Not true! I will quote Pastor W's exact statement to show that I'm not misrepresenting him. Pastor W states: "after Jesus' DBR [i.e., His death, burial, and resurrection], nothing else is said to have been 'given' by the Father to the Son...this terminology is only used

during this transitional period from Law to Grace (OT to NT)" (see timestamp: 35:06, ellipsis and emphasis his). That statement by Pastor W is incorrect. Such a conclusion is not only incorrect, it is unbiblical. Look at Revelation 1:1. It says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave [Grk. *edōken* = aorist, active, indicative of *didōmi*] Him to show His servants the things which must shortly come to pass." Here in Revelation 1:1, the Father gives Jesus the Revelation ("unveiling") of what must shortly come to pass. This *giving* appears to take place strictly after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ! Because notice that in context, Christ is specifically described as "the firstborn from the dead" (Rev. 1:5, NKJV). And even if the giving mentioned in Revelation 1:1 occurred at some previous time, the very mention of it in Rev. 1:1 still disproves Pastor W's statement, because he specifically said that "after Jesus' DBR [i.e., His death, burial, and resurrection], nothing else is said to have been 'given' by the Father to the Son...this terminology is only used during this transitional period from Law to Grace (OT to NT)" (ellipsis and emphasis his). Pastor W's statement specifically pertains to whether or not the "terminology" is used in the biblical text "after Jesus' DBR". And so my point is that the "terminology" that Pastor W says isn't used after Jesus' resurrection is indeed used! And although the timing of *when* the Father "gave" the Revelation to Christ is not essential to my point, the text of Revelation 1:1 does suggest that the Father gave the prophetic unveiling to Christ *after* His earthly ministry (compare Rev. 1:1 with Rev. 1:5, 1:7, 1:18, 2:8, 5:6-9, 5:12).

Commenting on Revelation 1:1, the New Testament scholar Henry Alford affirms: "Stern asks, 'How are we to understand this? Is not Christ very God, of one essence with the Father from eternity? Did He not, by virtue of the omniscience of His divine nature, know

as exactly as the Father, what should be the process of the world's history, what the fate of the Church? What purpose was served by a revelation from God to Jesus?' He proceeds to say that the words cannot refer merely to the revelation as made to *us*, but are clearly against such an interpretation: and gives, at some length and very well, that which in one form or other all will accept as the true explanation, in accordance with John 7.16; 14.10, 17:7, 8. **The man Christ Jesus, even in his glorified state, receives from the Father, by his hypostatic union with Him, that revelation which by His Spirit He imparts to His Church.** For, Acts 1.7, the times and seasons are kept by the Father in his own power: and of the day and the hour knoweth no man, not the angels in heaven, nor even the Son, but the Father only, Mark 13.32. I may observe, that the coincidence in statement of this deep point of doctrine between the Gospel of St. John and the Apocalypse, is at least remarkable." (Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers*, 2 Vols., Vol. II, Part II, p. 940, bold and brackets added. Note: The Roman numerals in the original have been updated to the current format.) Commenting on Revelation 1:1, Simcox similarly affirms: "Doubtless when the Son made this revelation, He had received from the Father the knowledge which in the time of His humiliation He had not (St Mark 13.32)." (William Henry Simcox, *The Revelation of S. John the Divine*, p. 1.) In other words, the Father apparently "gave" this Revelation to Jesus *after* His earthly ministry (Rev. 1:1; cf. Mark 13:32). Revelation 1:1 clearly suggests that the Father gave the Revelation to the risen and ascended Christ *after* His earthly ministry. Either way, the specific terminology of Revelation 1:1 falsifies Pastor W's statement that "after Jesus' DBR [i.e., His death, burial, and resurrection] nothing else is said to have been 'given' by the Father to the Son...this terminology is only used during this transitional period from Law to Grace (OT to NT)." My overall point is that the theological underpinnings of

Pastor W's interpretation of John 6:44 and the reasons why he holds his view, are at times not very solid; his statements don't always hold up when examined closely in the light of the whole counsel of God's Word.

Review of Pastor W's Summary

In a concluding summary at the end of his sermon, Pastor W restates his "Five (5) main points" which he says help the reader to properly or "fully" understand John 6:44. Interestingly, his "five main points" are similar to the 5 points of Calvinism (!) in that in each case the "5 points" are necessary to support and even "prove" each view. Pastor W's "5 main points" are the necessary theological underpinnings or structure which supports his view of John 6:44. Recall that at the beginning of his sermon, Pastor W stated: "There is five main points to my argument as far as to be able to prove what I believe John 6:44 is talking about." Thus it stands to reason that without his 5 points, his interpretation of John 6:44 collapses. I'm not saying that this in and of itself is necessarily wrong. Rather, I'm saying that in this regard his view is similar to the five points of Calvinism. The main problem that I have with Pastor W's view is that it is based on a number of questionable and even incorrect assumptions—and even a logical fallacy! And on more than one occasion, Pastor W's theological analysis is simply factually incorrect. And as noted, his view is also highly complex and even arcane. It seems that in order to arrive at Pastor W's view of the text, the reader must first be initiated into it and thus "Illuminated" with the deeper knowledge of Pastor W's "5 points"! In other words, the *prima facie* or "face value" reading of the text does not support Pastor W's view/interpretation of it. The reader needs his "5 main points" in order to arrive at his conclusion that John 6:44 is in reference to exclusively "Old

Testament Jewish believers" and not in reference to salvation. In other words, without Pastor W's 5 main points, the reader would probably never arrive at such an interpretation simply from taking the *prima facie* or "face value" reading of the text. There's an old saying that pertains to Bible interpretation: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes sense [as it does in John 6:44], seek no other sense." That statement is very applicable to this whole discussion and very important to keep in mind!

One of the other things that I want to point out that I maybe didn't specifically delve into earlier is that, here in the summary, Pastor W reiterates his premise that when Jesus says in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives to Me," those given by the Father to the Son were *already believers*. Pastor W argues that they are specifically Old Testament Jewish believers. But in response I would say that the verb "gives" (*didōsin*) doesn't necessitate such a conclusion. Pastor W is reading that *into* the text, not getting that meaning *out of* the text. Thus, his view is actually eisegesis, which is a flawed method of Bible interpretation. The correct method of Bible interpretation is called exegesis, that is, getting the meaning *out of* the text. What Pastor W is doing is he is using his "5 main points" as his theological construct or lens through which to interpret (or misinterpret) the text. His "5 main points" are his theological presuppositions that the reader must first understand and subscribe to in order to arrive at his desired conclusion. And as I noted above, Pastor W's 5 main points and the way he uses them to "prove" his view is also highly ironic, because Pastor W disagrees with the 5 points of Calvinism! Yet the method which he uses to interpret John 6:44 is similar to Calvinism in that the reader must first subscribe to his 5 theological presuppositions in order to "fully" understand his limited view of the text.

My Concluding Thoughts

To me, Pastor W's interpretation of John 6:44 is an overly complicated interpretation that doesn't really hold up when examined closely in the light of the whole counsel of God's Word. Furthermore, since Pastor W's interpretation is so theologically complex, it is therefore much more difficult to support biblically than to simply affirm that John 6:44 does indeed teach divine election (!), but the election is according to God's foreknowledge and thus not the "meticulous determinism" of Calvinism. Biblically, God's children are said to be "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Pet. 1:1-2). This election by God involves and is compatible with a person's free will (cf. Jn. 6:40). The point I'm making about God's foreknowledge is that He knows ahead of time who will believe in Him and who will not believe, as the Apostle John explains in John 6:64. To me, this simpler interpretation accords much more with the immediate context of John chapter 6, in that Jesus is plainly talking about those who don't have eternal life needing to receive it by believing in Him (see 6:37-45, particularly 6:40). He is not talking about those who already have it. For example, if Jesus' statement in John 6:40 refers to already saved people, then what is Jesus even talking about if He is not referring to how a person is saved? Old Testament Jewish believers believing in Christ and receiving eternal life that they already have because they are already saved? It makes no sense! Such an interpretation seems forced, to say the least. It appears to be an artificial construct imposed upon the text in order to support an arcane and highly complex interpretation, a view which is not the plain reading but rather is only arrived at if and when the reader first subscribes to Pastor W's "Five main points".

Pastor W's view—that John 6:37-45 refers exclusively to already-saved Old Testament Jewish believers—seems to create more problems than it solves. Taken at face value, it contradicts the *prima facie*, plain reading of Jesus' statements. In context, Jesus is clearly talking about the initial reception of eternal life—a life that His listeners obviously did not yet possess (see John 6:36, 53, 64). Jesus explicitly frames this reception of eternal salvation as being "for everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him" (Jn. 6:40). It seems quite a stretch to relegate "eternal life" here to a "Jewish-only" deeper fellowship, accessible only if and when Old Testament saints recognized Jesus as the Messiah during a narrow, transitional Gospel era. Not to be overly dramatic, but I've never heard of such a bizarre interpretation, and I am surprised that someone of Pastor W's caliber would subscribe to it. It strongly reminds me of Zane Hodges' reinterpretation of "repentance" (Grk. *metanoia*) as a defensive gambit during the height of the Lordship controversy, when the theological stakes were unusually high. Pastor W is employing a similar maneuver with *helkō* and *didōmi*. He isn't changing their literal lexical meaning, but he is radically narrowing their theological scope by insisting they refer to an experience of fellowship rather than initial salvation—thus recontextualizing the terms in an attempt to neutralize the Calvinistic view. The glaring problem is that this forced reinterpretation fails to harmonize both with the immediate context and with the whole counsel of God's Word. A far stronger, more sustainable argument is to simply agree that John 6:44 does indeed teach election—not in the warped Calvinistic sense of unconditional election and double predestination, but rather in the true biblical sense of being "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Pet. 1:1-2).

In terms of understanding God's foreknowledge, divine sovereignty, and how it reconciles with human responsibility, I think people tend to overcomplicate it. A helpful way that I've heard to explain it is: "God chooses to save those who choose to believe." Through the years I've heard a lot of attempts to explain God's sovereignty and human responsibility, and that is probably the best explanation I've heard. Most people don't even try to explain it. They just say, "The secret things belong to the Lord" (Deut. 29:29). Yes, but that exact same Bible verse also says: "But the things that are revealed are for us and for our children forever!" Reconciling God's sovereignty with human responsibility is not such a hard thing to understand, actually. It is only hard because most people approach the topic with Calvinistic presuppositions that are incompatible with the Bible. *Of course* that will make the subject difficult to understand! But when we let the Bible speak for itself, and approach it with the attitude of "Speak Lord, for thy servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:9), God will reveal to us His truth.

In closing, I want to say that I write this review in the spirit of Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Pastor W is a Free Grace brother in Christ and I'm sure a good and godly man. I probably agree with him on 95% of Bible doctrine, and probably 100% of salvation doctrine. Nothing I've written is meant to disparage his character or impugn his motives. I simply have a different Free Grace interpretation of John 6:44, and that is the scope of this review. My hope and prayer is that it will shed some much needed light upon this important topic. *Soli Deo Gloria!*