



John 6:44

(44) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

New King James Version

We are all aware of this truth to some degree, but do we understand and appreciate the matchlessness of what we have received as thoroughly as we need to for success in our calling?

Did Jesus really mean “no one”? Was He generalizing, or did He literally mean it? Is there always “open season” in terms of salvation, that is, is it accessible to anyone who wants it?

As a point of contention, this doctrine has faded somewhat, but 400 years ago, as the Protestant Reformation ignited, it was a major issue. It is still Catholic Church teaching that from the moment of birth everybody has good within them. It just needs to be developed. So, at any time in a person's life, all he needs to do is to hear the gospel, agree with what he heard, accept it because it connects with the good already in him—and he is on his way to salvation, adding to his goodness and holiness by righteous living. The Protestant reformers did not agree, as they believed, in this case, what the Bible says.

This doctrine marks a major division of beliefs between those called “evangelicals” and other Christians. What the Bible teaches on it is mind-bending and humbling. We can see the biblical truths regarding this doctrine unfold by examining what our Savior said Himself, as well as what His apostles added.

Jesus says in Matthew 9:12-13: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (see Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31-32). Everyone—and that term is all-inclusive—whom the Father draws to Christ for

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spiritual salvation is not good but spiritually sick, a sinner. Additionally, the word “repentance” implies that those brought to Christ for forgiveness and salvation do not possess goodness but are evil, since only those spiritually enabled to see the need to repent would come to Him for spiritual healing. “Good” people would not.

In [Romans 3:10-18](#), Paul adds emphasis to the exposé of mankind's character:

There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after [God](#). They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of [peace](#) they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This passage is a major indictment of mankind. Notice the terms he uses—“none” and “all,” that is, none is good, all are evil. David, the author of Psalm 14 from which Paul drew [Romans 3:10-18](#), believed this truth a thousand years before the apostle, and in Psalm 14, David attributes this declaration to God Himself. Do we dare accuse God of lying about those He created?

[Matthew 19:17](#) is exceptionally clear: “So [Jesus] said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” Jesus is plainly stating that, since God is the only One who is good, no one among all humanity can truly claim to possess goodness. No one's goodness rises anywhere near the level of God's goodness. Jesus, however, then explained to the rich young ruler what he needed to do. As God in the flesh, He knew what the young man needed to do to get on the road to godly goodness, so He taught Him.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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