

If Any Man Thirst: Part II

by James Webster

The unwillingness to come to Christ is a profound issue that requires a deep understanding of the gospel and the power of God's Spirit.

Scripture: Psalm 39:5, Psalm 110:3, Matthew 5:6, Luke 19:14, John 4:10, John 7:37

Topics: "Total Depravity", "Divine Sovereignty"

Description

James Webster preaches about the unwillingness of sinners to come to Christ, highlighting the black picture painted by Scripture of sinners in their natural state, devoid of strength and filled with a rooted hatred and rebellion against Christ. Despite the most advantageous circumstances, sinners remain unwilling to come to Christ, resisting His offers and defending their sin. However, those who thirst for Christ are allowed to come and drink from the fountain of living waters, with God the Father taking all glory for making them willing to come.

Transcript

Now for the proof of this unwillingness to come, consider first, the black picture the Scripture draws of sinners in their natural state. What is their picture? First, the father of all sinners is represented as an abstract vanity: Every man in his best state is altogether vanity. The word in the original will read, All Adam is all vanity. The whole tribe of Adam, and every branch of him, every bit of him, he lost his strength, he forfeited his power, and a weak man begets a weak world. The Scripture represents us as without strength; we could do nothing for ourselves. Had God said to the tribe of Adam, I will give you heaven for one good thought, we would have fallen short of that, for we could not command this: We were without strength. That is one line and stroke of the picture. Yea, but there are blacker lines behind; we are not only without strength, but we have a rooted, fixed and habitual hatred of Christ. This is a superlative degree of malignity and wickedness; the citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. Let the devil reign over us, let lusts reign over us, let the world reign over us, let tyrants reign over us, anything but Christ: We will not have this man to reign over us. That is another black line of the picture, an utter hatred of and aversion from the Lord Jesus. But then to complete that black character, it goes to such a stoutness of hatred and rebellion against him that do what he will, if he only withhold effectual grace, they still resist, they despise his offers, they resist his Spirit, they defend their sin, they glory in it. They deforce his motions, and when he has done all, except giving them effectual grace, he is just where he was, they will not come to him. Christ preaches three years and a half, he confirms his doctrine with miracles, he seals it with his blood, yet he converts very few. I believe Peter converted more

at one sermon than we can have a warrant to think from the Bible, our Lord converted all the time of his humiliation. But that Peter had any pre-eminence, excellency or talent above his master, it were blasphemy to think that. Peter without our Lord's concurrence could not convert one person. But the grace of Christ was not put forth in efficacy till his ascension; there was not any plentiful effusion of the Spirit accompanying the word till our Lord was glorified. Therefore he takes up a lamentation after he had preached all his time and was now to die, concerning the success of his ministry: I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength in vain. The prophet Isaiah brings him in, complaining of the want of success. Yet says he, My reward is with my God. Though they have not believed, I will get a great and glorious heaven. The unwillingness, you see, is manifest.

Secondly, that folk are unwilling to come to Christ is clear from this, God the Father takes all the glory to himself of making folk willing. Seven times in a breath he takes the glory of it to himself. Ezek. 36:25, seven times he says, I will do it: I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart, and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you. He will convert the will of man, and overpower it, and subdue it unto himself, and nothing but he can do it. All the cherubs in heaven, all the seraphs in glory, let them unite all their counsels, all their force together, they could not bend one of your wills to make you come to Christ. It is a creating power: They shall be willing in the day of thy power. It is a power that made a world that must make you willing.

Thirdly, the unwillingness of sinners to come to Christ appears in this, that in the most advantageous and favorable and auspicious circumstances possible there is no prevailing with them. Nothing can be done, God entreats you, we entreat you in Christ's stead to be reconciled. No, no, entreaty will do nothing with us. He falls on importuning with them, I stand at the door, I knock. Ye shall stand long ere we open to you. Lord, thou mayest knock by thy ministers, and knock by sacraments, but we shall keep a locked door betwixt thee and us. He expostulates with them: O Jerusalem, when wilt thou be made clean, when will it once be? Never, never, Lord, do we desire or resolve on it; we were born unclean and we live so, and we will die so! O Jerusalem how often would I have gathered thee, but ye would not. A sad saying, would not, there the unwillingness, and after all. He complains it will not do, Who hath believed our report? The unwillingness is so manifest, that though Christ himself came out of heaven to preach, yet it did not overcome their unwillingness. If a saint or angel would come from heaven with all his bright shining robes, etc., and tell us of the glory that is there, the unconverted would not give him credit. Though a devil should come out of hell with all his rattling chains of darkness about him and acquaint us what the damned sons of Adam and apostate spirits are suffering, they would not believe in Christ. Nothing will bend the will of the unconverted, no means, no circumstances can do it; Christ smiles and pipes, but it will not do. He shines, yet that will not soften them. He frowns and threatens, but all is in vain to no purpose. Whatever circumstances they are in, the unwillingness remains. If the man be in outward prosperity, then with Jeshurun he kicks and grows more unwilling. When he is under affliction, he is like Ahaz; this is that Ahaz that in his affliction trespassed against the Lord. Does his conscience, the bosom deputy of God, speak to him and tell him, O wretch, thou art undone and ruined, then he smothers it and commands silence: Peace, no more of that talk. And so the unwillingness still remains.

I come to the third thing, which is that though many are unwilling, yet such as thirst may come and drink, they are allowed to drink, and they shall drink. Here I will do these three things. First let you see what this thirst is. Secondly, what the drink is they will get. Thirdly, that they are allowed to drink.

First then, what is this thirst? First, this thirst is a strong pain of soul with want of something, and feeling something! O, I want much, says the soul; there is a pain of sense, through want of somewhat. Strong pain, there are not many sensations more painful than that of thirst; when Samson had overcome his enemies, he fell a-crying, Now what avails it me, that I have overcome mine enemies, when I must die with thirst. Christ himself reckons it one part of his sufferings; it was among his last words, I thirst. There is also a feeling of some thing, Job 6:4: For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit, the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. An arrow shot by a man or angel may carry death along with it. One angel with his arrows slew in one night one hundred eighty-five thousand Assyrians, but this is nothing compared with the arrows of the Almighty, arrows framed, made and sharpened by infinite wisdom, and dipped in poison by provoked justice and the fiery indignation of heaven, and thrown and sent from the bow drawn by an omnipotent arm, by that arm that can move the globe of heaven and earth with greater ease than we can blow away a little, small dust. These arrows drink blood, not only of the heart and animal life, but of the immortal soul and spirit. They can prey upon their very vitals. But this, says Job, make but the half of my sad and miserable condition, for beside his arrows, his terrors do set themselves in array against me. Job was a magor-missabib, a terror to himself; terrors compassed and surrounded and encircled him; did he go to his closet or to the church, to bed or table, terrors bear him always company. Job 16:13: His archers compassed me round about; Hebrew: have besieged me, and they will quickly take me by storm.

Secondly, there are strong desires for a supply of these wants, and satiating their strong appetite: How long, how long, how long wilt thou forget me? I think every moment a year, an hour an age, till God come. I wait for the Lord, as they that wait for the morning, yea more than they that wait for the morning. It has a sweet allusion to the Arabian merchant, traveling through that waste, howling desert, where there was great want of springs, and here the robbers were encircling the man every night, which made him long for the break of day for his safety. Or it is an allusion to the poor mariner, under great danger and in darkness of the night? Paul says, We flung out our anchor, and wished for day, we looked wistfully out for the new-born light of an approaching day. Or it may look at the custom of the priests under the law, who were obliged to attend the tabernacle all night, and keep their candles burning till the sun rose; they waited for the day. Or it is in allusion unto the sentinel in a dangerous post, looking for day. Now, says David, I long more for God than any of these, I wait for God as they that wait for the morning. A sick man on a death bed never tossed more and desired more the new-born light than my soul does God; it is a strong desire.

Thirdly, it is a constant desire. Thirst will help your memory; there is no forgetting of it, nor of the thing we thirst for, drink. Drink is the language of the soul; bring all the gold of Ophir to a thirsty man, alas it will not do, and bring him all the honors in the world, they will not satisfy. There is a constant insatiable desire for drink: With my soul have I desired thee, in the night seasons, and with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early. Nigh and day I will desire, till God fill my desire.

But for the second thing in this third part, what is this drink that Christ promiseth you? If any thirst, let him come unto me and drink. First, God the Father is here included and understood. He is compared, and he compares himself, to a fountain of living waters, and he bids heaven and earth be astonished at the impious choice, and mad preferment of the muddy cistern, unto him the fountain: Be astonished O ye heavens, be ye horribly confounded! Let all heaven, all the fixed stars, let the very angels be astonished. What is the business, Lord, that the whole creation is summoned to wonder? It is at the distraction of men: They have done two great evils, they have dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water, and they have neglected me, the fountain of living water. God is the fountain himself, that we may

drink of, Jesus Christ is the fountain: In that day, there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David. When his side was pierced, when the eternal Rock of Ages Christ was smitten with the sword of justice, where the wound was made, out come the water that should refresh the sons of men. Says the poor man, I breathe, I pant, I languish, I gasp, I die, till I lay my mouth to the wound of the Rock, and drink of that fountain he hath opened. Where the Rock was smitten, there the eternal spring gushed out. The Holy Ghost also is compared unto water in the same chapter, verse two, after my text: He that drinks of me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters. This spoke he of the Holy Ghost that should be given them, so that you get all the blessings of a Trinity; what the Father has given you, what the Son has bought for you, and what the Spirit will apply to you, that is for drink, and ye may take a good draught. God grant that ye may go all home drunk this night with the Spirit of God, filled with the Spirit! O it would be a blessed communion! It is called the water of life, water because of its necessity. The Father made water the original of all creatures in the world. Ye see it is necessary for the generation of vegetables, without water nothing could grow. What made Egypt to be fruitful? the inundation of the Nile. What makes a soul as a watered garden, and a field the Lord has blest? a draught of this water I am speaking of, and it is water of life. Many a man has gotten death in the cup, he has drunk his own poison; yea, but here is wine, that maketh the lips of them that are asleep to speak.

But I come to the third thing in this third part of the doctrine, that they that are thirsty, they are allowed to drink, they will get a drink. First, it is certain they will. Why, this thirst is raised in them by the Spirit of God. Now will ever the Spirit create this passionate, ardent, vehement desire in them, only to starve them, only to torment them? No, He that has given the mouth, and stomach, will give meat too. Has he given you thirst, he will not let you perish, do not think it. Will the Spirit of God raise desires in you, and they never be satisfied? No, no, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst, for they shall be filled. It were a very hard thing, yea, it were to form unworthy conceptions of God, to think he will torment his people with a plentiful desire, and never satisfy them. Thou satisfiest the longing soul, and fillest the hungry with good things; they hungered, they thirsted, their hearts fainted within them, then they cried to the Lord, and he heard them.

Secondly, the thirsty folk shall have a drink. O communicants, came ye with thirst today, is it begun? I tell you in my master's name ye shall have a drink, either here or elsewhere, either now or at another time. Consider the relation that is between poor, thirsty folk and Christ. He is their Father, and they are his children: If your children ask bread, will ye give them a stone? If they ask fish, will ye give them a serpent; or an egg, will ye give them a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give to you. Will any of you, the worst of you, be so unnatural, be so inhumane, so barbarously cruel, that if your dear child, and sick child, said, Oh I am pained!, would ye torment them more? If your child came home crying, O I am dying with hunger, will ye give him a piece of earth, or a stone, and say, Chew your fill upon it, eat well, my child? Will any man mock his own child so? Even the worst of you will not do it; far less should ye think so of God your heavenly Father. Man, hast thou a thirst, a tormenting thirst after him (indeed, it is a kind of heavenly torment), God is thy Father, he will not give thee a stone, he will not give thee poison instead of meat and drink.

I thought to have given you another reason, but I come to the application. First, it serves for lamentation. First, we may mourn over that unwillingness that is in us all. Many a man is willing to come to hear a sermon, that is not willing to come to Christ. Many a man comes and gets a token, and goes to the communion table, that will no come to Christ and drink. There is unwillingness, peremptory unwillingness. I would, but ye would not; there is an universal unwillingness. There is nothing in Jesus Christ, but what

they have an aversion unto! O that is a humbling thought, that Christ who is represented as all desires (Canticles 4: He is altogether lovely; in the original: All he desires and all delights) is wholly abhorred. There is an universal unwillingness to come to him, to come to his person, to own his government; they will not let him reign. There is an aversion to his yoke, it is insupportably heavy to many. I verily believe, the unconverted man had rather undergo the greatest drudgery of a Turkish slave, than take on the yoke of Christ, to go about the performance of holy duties, or the cross of Christ! O what aversion to it, this unwillingness is to be lamented, willing to come to a communion table, and yet not come to Christ. Alas, alas, we need not inquire into the causes of it, he have often heard them, I shall but name them. A profound ignorance of Christ abounding is the cause of unwillingness. What says our Lord to the woman of Samaria, If thou hadst known me and the gift of God, you would have asked of me living water, and I should have given it? What made her so unwilling to own Christ, what made her so averse to come to Christ, to get a draught of this water? She knew him not: If thou hadst known me, thou would have asked of me living water. Secondly, the presumption of men. What talk ye unto me of coming? it is long since I came, and yet they never yet came. What talk ye of coming? it is soon enough to come to him when he comes to me by death, and by judgment and eternity; I will have time enough to come to him, when he sounds the trumpet in mine ears: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out and meet him. Thus presumption either looks backward or forward. Thirdly, discouragement keeps folk from Christ, makes them unwilling. There is a sinking of spirit, a despondency they cannot overcome, there is a mountain in the way, a lion in the street, till the power of God conquer. Says the man and woman, I believe though I would come I would not be welcome, I cannot think I would be welcome, and this keeps some folk from Christ.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-webster/if-any-man-thirst-part-ii/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net