



## An Exegetical Study of John 6:44 on the Sovereignty of God in Drawing Humanity to Christ

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### ABSTRACT

The debate over the role of human free will and the sovereignty of God in salvation has long been an ongoing issue throughout the history of Christian theology, sparking various interpretations and controversies among scholars and denominations. One central focus of this discussion is John 6:44, which serves as a key text in understanding the divine initiative in drawing humans to salvation. This study aims to examine the meaning of the word “draw” in the verse and its implications for the doctrine of salvation. The research employs a qualitative method with an exegetical approach, encompassing contextual, structural, grammatical, literary, lexical, historical, theological, textual, and exegetical analyses. The results indicate that the Father’s act of “drawing” is a divine initiative that is effective and irresistible, not the product of human free will. This finding affirms that salvation is the sovereign work of God from beginning to end. In conclusion, John 6:44 reinforces the understanding of effective grace and divine election within the framework of biblical theology.

**Keywords:** God’s Sovereignty; Divine Drawing; Salvation; Effective Grace; Divine Election.

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### INTRODUCTION

The debate over the concept of salvation has long been a central issue in Christian theological discussions. One of the most frequently debated passages is John 6:44, which states: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.” A proper understanding of this verse is crucial, as it has significant implications for various aspects of the Christian

faith. Misinterpreting this passage can lead to division within the body of Christ, weaken the unity of the church, and diminish believers’ confidence in the grace of salvation (Wati, 2022). Furthermore, in the current context of growing pluralism, uncertainty regarding the exclusivity of salvation through Christ can cause confusion in faith and foster syncretistic practices among Christians (Gunawan, 2017).

Moreover, one of the central debates concerns the role of human will in the process of salvation. Some argue that salvation depends entirely on human free choice, thereby diminishing the role of God’s grace as the primary initiative (Sabdon, 2020). However, others express concern that if salvation is seen solely as the result of divine drawing, believers may lose the zeal to evangelize, feeling that their participation has become irrelevant

(Parimpasa, 2024). On the other hand, some maintain that genuine salvation should naturally motivate believers to proclaim the gospel of Christ diligently (Saputra et al., 2025).

Several theologians have offered differing interpretations of the term “draw” in John 6:44. Barnes (1949) asserts that the Father’s drawing is a divine act that inclines the mind of a sinner toward faith, to which the person responds voluntarily and without coercion. The Cambridge Bible Commentary (1902) explains that God gently persuades with the tenderness of His love to move people to come to Christ, not through compulsion. Sproul (1996) interprets the Greek word *helkō* as an irresistible and compelling act, emphasizing divine authority in the process of drawing. A. W. Pink (1945) highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in overcoming human pride and awakening a longing for Christ. A fundamental difference also lies in the question of who is drawn. John Calvin (1998) believes that this divine drawing is reserved only for those chosen by God beforehand, while John Wesley Brill (1999) argues that God’s drawing is universal, leaving the final decision in the hands of human beings.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to conduct an in-depth exegetical analysis of John 6:44 using a comprehensive approach as proposed by John D. Grassmick. The main focus of this research is to understand the meaning of the Father’s act of “drawing” and to identify who is referred to as the one being

drawn to Christ. In addition, this study seeks to explore the theological implications of the verse concerning the concepts of salvation and God’s sovereignty in the process of human redemption. Through this, the research intends to provide a more comprehensive understanding of God’s role in drawing humanity to Christ as the center of salvation.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative exegetical method using contextual, structural, grammatical, literary, lexical, historical, textual, theological, and exegetical analyses based on the approach of John D. Grassmick. The contextual analysis is used to understand the relationship between the text and its immediate and broader context; the structural analysis maps the interconnections among the textual units; the grammatical analysis examines the function of words and Greek syntax; the literary analysis identifies the genre and characteristics of the text; the lexical analysis explores the meaning of key terms; the historical analysis investigates the background of authorship and the socio-cultural setting; the textual analysis determines the most accurate reading among textual variants; the theological analysis integrates the meaning of the passage into the overall framework of biblical doctrine; and the exegetical analysis serves as the final stage, formulating doctrinal insights based on the results of the preceding analyses.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Contextual Analysis**

#### ***Immediate Context***

The narrative of John 6:44 emphasizes that salvation is the result of God’s sovereign initiative, in which He actively “draws” certain individuals to come to Jesus Christ. The phrase “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” indicates that faith in Christ is not merely a human ability or decision but a divine intervention rooted in the will of the Father (John 6:44). This act of drawing

is closely related to Jesus’ statement that only those whom the Father has “given” to Him will come to Him (John 6:37), and that those who come will never be cast out.

Furthermore, the immediate context reveals that believing in Jesus as the One sent by the Father (John 6:35, 47) and coming to Him (John 6:37) are marks of those who have been drawn by the Father. This divine drawing involves direct instruction from God, as reflected in the quotation from Isaiah: “They shall all be taught by God” (John 6:45; cf. Isa. 54:13). Thus, everyone who listens to and receives this divine teaching will come to Christ.

This understanding aligns with the view that salvation is not the result of human effort but entirely the work of divine grace, wherein God chooses, teaches, and gives certain individuals to Christ (Constable, 1985; Sproul, 2009). The use of the verb “come” (ἐρχόμενος) in its indirect middle form grammatically indicates that the action remains within the framework of God’s will rather than stemming from autonomous human free will (Wallace, 1996).

Therefore, the overall narrative of John 6:44 and its surrounding context supports the doctrine of divine election, affirming that salvation is purely the sovereign work of God (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 9:16), not dependent on human will or effort.

### **Wider Context**

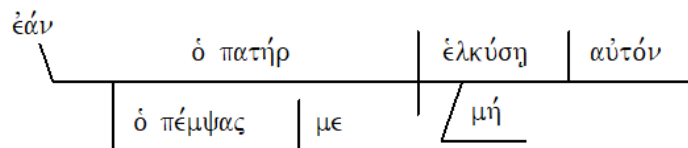
The wider context of John 6:44 encompasses the entire Gospel of John, which portrays the journey of faith and the identity of being a disciple of Christ. Throughout this narrative, the Apostle John emphasizes that those who are drawn by the Father are characterized by complete faith in Jesus as the Son of God who saves the world (John 6:29; 10:27-28), by obedience that results in eternal life (John 3:16; 15:10-14), by hearing and responding to the voice of Jesus as the Shepherd who gives life to His sheep (John 10:27-28), and by loving one another as the mark of true discipleship (John 13:34-35).

Those who are drawn also demonstrate their love for Jesus through obedience to His teachings (John 14:15), bear the fruit of good works as the

manifestation of a life intimately connected with Christ (John 15:5-8), and live in a close relationship with God as His children who have received authority from the Father to become disciples of Christ (John 1:12-13; 6:37-40). This divine drawing is not universal but limited to those given by the Father and who actively remain in Jesus’ word, revealing both God’s sovereignty in election and grace, as well as the human responsibility to respond in genuine faith (John 6:37-44; 10:26-29).

Thus, the wider context affirms that salvation is God’s initiative that effectively moves people to come to Christ, while also calling them to live in obedience and in a right relationship with God and others (Carson, 1991; Köstenberger, 2004).

### **Structural Analysis**



The use of the word ἐάν in the syntactical diagram of John 6:44 shows a strong interconnection between this verse and the preceding text, indicating that they are inseparable and mutually dependent. This word functions as a subordinating conjunction that introduces a condition or requirement and can be translated as “if” or “unless.”

In this context, the conditional clause forms a logical structure indicating that coming to Christ is possible only if a specific condition is first fulfilled, namely, being drawn by the Father.

Furthermore, the phrase ὁ πατήρ in this diagram identifies the main subject, the Father. The accompanying expression ὁ πέμψας με is an active participle that explains the Father's action as the One who sent Jesus. This participle modifies the main verb by highlighting the personal and historical relationship between the Father and the Son. Meanwhile, the word με is a first-person singular pronoun in the accusative case, functioning as the direct object of the verb, thereby emphasizing the relational aspect of the Father as the One who sent Jesus.

In addition, the verb ἐλκύση describes a conditional action determining the possibility of a person coming to Christ. Since it appears in the aorist active subjunctive mood, it grammatically indicates that the action is not only conditional but also hypothetical and entirely determined by the subject, the Father. The subjunctive form, combined with the negative particle μὴ, forms a strong negation, explicitly stating that without the Father's act of drawing, no one can come to Christ. This expresses the absolute impossibility for humanity to come to Christ independently, apart from divine intervention. The active voice of the verb underscores that God not only enables the drawing but performs it actively Himself.

Furthermore, the word αὐτόν, functioning as a direct object in the accusative case, indicates that the Father's drawing has a specific and personal target, an individual who is brought to Christ (Wallace, 1996).

Thus, the complete expression “ἐὰν μὴ ὁ πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με ἐλκύση αὐτόν” is a strong conditional statement emphasizing that only those drawn by the Father can come to Jesus. The main focus of this structure is the absolute divine initiative, not human will. Therefore, this text provides a firm basis for understanding the doctrine of irresistible grace, wherein the act of salvation originates entirely from God. Theologically, this grammatical structure also affirms the equality and harmony of will between the Father and the Son in the work of salvation. The entire sentence clearly expresses that salvation is an active and selective act of the Father, not the result of autonomous human decision.

### Grammatical Analysis

A grammatical observation reveals that John 6:44 presents a strong theological reality regarding humanity's total inability to come to Christ apart from the divine initiative of God the Father. This is explicitly demonstrated through the sentence structure and word choices employed by the Gospel writer.

First, the use of the word οὐδεὶς (no one) in the nominative masculine singular form as the subject with a negative particle emphatically expresses the total negation of human ability in itself. This is reinforced by the verb δύναται (is able/can)

in the present indicative middle, which grammatically indicates an ongoing, repeated reality that originates within the subject itself. However, since the subject has already been denied existence by οὐδεὶς, the statement underscores the complete absence of human ability to act toward Christ on one's own basis.

Furthermore, the use of ἐλθεῖν (to come) as an aorist active infinitive identifies the action of “coming” as the specific target of this inability. Grammatically, the infinitive complements the verb δύναται, clarifying that human inability specifically concerns the act of “coming to Me,” that is, to Christ (πρὸς με).

Moreover, the conditional structure formed by the conjunction ἐὰν (unless/if) and the negative particle μὴ (not), followed by the verb ἐλκύση (draws) in the aorist active subjunctive third person singular, creates an emphatic negation construction. This construction signifies an absolute assertion that admits no exception, no one

can come to Christ unless drawn by the Father. Grammatically, the use of the subjunctive mood within this conditional structure indicates the potential realization of the action, entirely dependent on God's initiative rather than human will or effort.

The verb ἐλκύση (draws) in the aorist active subjunctive emphasizes that the act of "drawing" is an active deed performed directly and initiatively by the Father, without coercion or dependence upon the one being drawn. The active voice identifies God as the primary agent, while the aorist aspect suggests that the action is determinative and appointed at a specific point in accordance with God's will.

The phrase ὁ πέμψας με (the one who sent Me) grammatically identifies the Father as the subject of the sending action, and με (Me) as the direct object, referring to Christ. This indicates that the authority to draw people to Christ belongs to the Father, while the direction of that drawing points toward the One who was sent, namely, Christ Himself.

The equality between the Father and the Son is then affirmed in the concluding clause κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν (and I will raise him up), where Christ declares His authority to resurrect those who have been drawn to Him. The verb ἀναστήσω (I will raise up), in the future active indicative form, emphasizes

eschatological certainty, that those who are drawn will indeed be raised, confirming the effectiveness and perfection of God's salvific initiative (Wallace, 1996; Barclay, 2001).

Thus, the grammatical analysis demonstrates that John 6:44 declares humanity's total inability to come to Christ apart from the Father's active drawing, which proceeds solely from His divine authority. The act of "drawing" is not a response to human will, but an exclusive and effective divine initiative that directs people infallibly to Christ. Within the sentence structure, the emphasis lies not only on the Father's act of drawing but also on the identity of Christ as the goal of that drawing and the executor of the final resurrection. Theologically, this underscores God's sovereignty in salvation and the unity of function and authority between the Father and the Son in the work of redemption.

### Literary Analysis

The text of John 6:44 contains a metaphorical genre within its narrative context, particularly when Jesus declares, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." The expression "draws" (*helkō*) here is metaphorical, not referring to a literal physical action, but rather describing the divine and effectual attraction initiated by God in the process of salvation. In the narrative of the Gospel of John, this metaphor does not stand alone; instead, it operates within a broader theological framework emphasizing human spiritual inability to come to Christ apart from the intervention of God's grace.

Several scholars, such as Carson (1991), emphasize that this term denotes a drawing that cannot be resisted by man, since it originates from the will of God Himself. This metaphor aligns with the overarching theme in the Gospel of John concerning the Father's initiative in saving humanity and the active role of Jesus as the manifestation of the Father's will.

Accepting John as the author of the Fourth Gospel strengthens the reliability of this message, as he had an intimate relationship with Jesus. Externally, early Church Fathers such as Irenaeus affirmed that John, the beloved disciple of

Jesus, was indeed the author of this Gospel. Irenaeus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, a direct disciple of the Apostle John, serves as a strong historical link between the Gospel writer and the early Christian community. Likewise, Clement of Alexandria and Origen explicitly identified John as the author of the Fourth Gospel.

Internally, the distinctive features of this Gospel display a deep understanding of events that could only come from someone who had firsthand experience and close intimacy with Jesus. The detailed knowledge of Palestinian geography, Jewish customs, and private conversations of Jesus, along with the author's closeness to the main characters in the narrative, all support the claim of Johannine authorship. In John 21:24, it is explicitly stated that "this is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down," and from the earliest church tradition, this disciple has been identified as John.

Thus, the recognition of John's authorship strengthens the theological authority of the message in John 6:44. The metaphorical message of divine drawing is not merely a speculative theological reflection but a direct testimony from someone who was personally close to the Savior Himself. Therefore, the understanding of divine grace that draws humanity to Christ, as affirmed in this verse, possesses a solid historical, theological, and narrative foundation (Beasley-Murray, 1999).

### **Lexical Analysis**

An examination of several key terms in John 6:44 reveals that the meaning of the Father's action of "drawing," expressed through the Greek word ἔλκω (*helkō*), does not refer to a physically coercive act, but rather depicts a spiritual and moral attraction rooted in God's love and divine initiative (Vine, 1985; BibleSoft, 2011). In this context, *helkō* is used metaphorically, both in John 6:44 and John 12:32, to describe the effective power of God's love, by which those who are drawn will indeed come to Christ (Barrett, 2013; Liddell & Scott, 1940). Thus, those who are drawn are not all people universally, but specifically those whom the Father has given to the Son.

Furthermore, the verb ἔρχομαι (*erchomai*) indicates the active human response to this divine action. However, such a response is impossible apart from the Father's prior drawing, since humanity exists in a state of total spiritual inability (Nelson, 1985; Friberg, 2000). This underscores the primacy of divine initiative in the process of salvation.

Additionally, the verb ἀναστήσω (*anastēsō*), meaning "to raise up," used in reference to the final resurrection, emphasizes the ultimate guarantee of salvation, that those who are drawn by the Father and come to Christ will be raised up by Christ Himself at the end of the age (Bauer, Danker & Gingrich, 2000; Nelson, 1985).

Theologically, this verse teaches that salvation is wholly divine in its origin, effectual in its operation, and final in its outcome: God draws, humans come, and Christ raises up. The entire process affirms the sovereignty and grace of God in the work of salvation.

### **Historical Analysis**

A historical examination shows that the Gospel of John, widely believed to have been written by the Apostle John toward the end of the first century A.D. (around 85-100 A.D.) in the city of Ephesus, emerged within the context of the early church, which was facing significant theological and social challenges. During this period, the Christian community in Asia Minor experienced external pressure from Jewish and Roman environments, as well as internal threats from heretical teachings such as Docetism, which denied the true humanity of Jesus (Brown, 1997).

These conditions prompted John to write with the purpose of affirming Jesus' identity as the Son of God, one who truly became human and simultaneously the divine Messiah (Carson, 1991). In this context, Jesus' statement in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him," serves as both a historical and theological affirmation that salvation is not the result of human effort but the absolute initiative of God.

The act of "drawing" performed by the Father in this verse must be understood within the framework of the Jewish and Hellenistic world of the first

century, in which the concepts of divine election and special fellowship with God were already well known, but redefined in light of the Christian message, which centers on the incarnational work of Christ as the foundation of salvation (Moo, 2006).

Furthermore, historical analysis highlights that the term ἔλκω (helkō) in John 6:44 carries an active and sovereign meaning, implying that salvation is the result of God's sovereign work, not merely a product of passive human effort. This reinforces the doctrine of divine election, which was already recognized in Jewish theology and later affirmed by the early Church Fathers (Kostenberger, 2004).

In this sense, John not only emphasizes God's sovereignty but also corrects the common assumption that humans can come to Christ by their own free will without divine intervention. This historical perspective is essential for understanding the close relationship between divine initiative and human response in the process of salvation, which became the foundation for the doctrine of God's sovereignty in Christian theology.

John's emphasis on the act of "drawing" thus underscores that salvation is an active and decisive work of God, rejecting dualistic notions that separate human will from divine involvement (Beasley-Murray, 1999).

Accordingly, the historical analysis not only confirms the authentic authority of John's text but also provides critical insight into the social and theological background that shaped the message of John 6:44, thereby enriching our theological understanding of salvation as the sovereign grace of God.

### **Theological Analysis**

A comprehensive examination of Scripture reveals that the theological analysis of John 6:44 affirms that the act of "drawing" performed by the Father represents God's active and absolute initiative in the process of human salvation. This action is not the result of human effort or will, but rather a unilateral and sovereign act of God, as indicated by the use of the aorist tense, which emphasizes that God's action occurs in a definite and effective manner (Grassmick, 2005).

This concept aligns with the broader biblical understanding of salvation presented throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Humanity is depicted as being born in a sinful nature, utterly unable to come to Christ apart from divine intervention (Piper, 2015). God, who remains faithful in His eternal election (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29-30), actively chooses and calls certain individuals to come to Christ, the center of salvation, not on the basis of human merit or works, but solely by His grace (Gal. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9).

This divine act of drawing humanity also fulfills God's covenantal promise and missionary mandate to proclaim the gospel of salvation to all nations (Gen. 12:3; Matt. 28:19-20). It is further reflected in Christ's redemptive work, which is universal in scope yet effectively applied only to those who are called by Him (John 12:32; 1 Cor. 1:9).

Thus, this understanding provides a comprehensive theological contribution regarding God's role in salvation, affirming that salvation is not initiated by humanity, but is entirely the result of God's active and sovereign grace.

### Textual Analysis

The text of John 6:44 contains a notable textual issue, particularly concerning the phrase *καὶ ἐγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν [ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ]*, in which there is a variant regarding the presence of the preposition *ἐν*. In the Apparatus Criticus of NA28, this variant indicates that the majority of manuscripts (Ɱ66vid Ɱ B C D L T Θ Ψ 070 0250 f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>3</sup> 33. 892. 1241. 1424. M lat sy co) contain the full reading *ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*, while a small number of manuscripts omit *ἐν* or substitute the phrase structure with *τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ* without the preposition. This difference is orthographic in nature and was likely caused by homoioteleuton (omission due to similar endings) or by the scribes' attempt to harmonize John's linguistic style, which is known for its consistency in temporal expressions.

The question arises whether *ἐν* was originally part of the text or merely a semantic clarification added by later scribes. Based on textual criticism principles such as *lectio brevior potior* (the shorter reading is usually preferred) and *lectio*

*difficilior potior* (the more difficult reading is likely original), the omission of *ἐν* may represent the earlier form that was later expanded by scribes. Nevertheless, from a theological standpoint, the presence or absence of *ἐν* does not alter the central meaning of the verse. The doctrine of resurrection remains intact since the temporal relation "on the last day" is syntactically implied; thus, this variation does not result in any significant doctrinal change.

The textual analysis of this variant contributes significantly to the purpose of this research, namely to understand the Father's act of "drawing" (*ἐλκύση*) and the eschatological implications of the resurrection promise. The scribes' diligence in preserving or clarifying John's stylistic features demonstrates that this text was widely accepted, carefully transmitted, and acknowledged as authoritative by the early Christian community. The accuracy of its meaning, despite minor variations, reinforces the reliability of the verse's message. This affirms that the entire process of salvation, from the divine initiative of drawing to the resurrection on "the last day", is fully under God's sovereignty. Therefore, this textual study not only enriches the exposition of divine action in salvation but also strengthens the understanding of those who are drawn to Christ, namely, those who will be raised by Him at the end of the age.

### Exegetical Analysis

The exegetical observation affirms the theological ideas contained in John 6:44, namely that this verse serves as a theological assertion of human inability and divine initiative in the process of salvation. The phrase *οὐδεὶς δύναται ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με* ("no one can come to Me") explicitly declares that humankind, in its sinful nature, possesses no inherent ability to come to Christ. The use of the verb *δύναται* ("can/is able") in the present active tense implies a continuous and universal incapacity that transcends both cultural and temporal contexts.

Furthermore, the clause *ἐὰν μὴ ὁ πατὴρ ὁ πέμψας με ἐλκύσῃ αὐτόν* ("unless the Father who sent Me draws him") emphasizes that the only way for a person to come to Christ is through the active work of the Father. The verb *ἐλκύσῃ*

(“draws”), which is the aorist subjunctive form of ἔλκω, in the context of the Gospel of John does not denote a gentle persuasion but rather an effective action that produces a definite result. Within the broader Johannine context (cf. John 12:32; 21:6, 11), the term is used to describe a powerful and decisive movement.

The final part of the verse, καὶ γὰρ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ (“and I will raise him up on the last day”), serves as an eschatological promise that highlights the continuity between the Father’s drawing, faith in Christ, and the certainty of resurrection unto eternal life. This indicates that God’s action not only initiates but also guarantees the ultimate completion of salvation.

Thus, John 6:44 contains a profound understanding that the act of “drawing” represents the sovereign, effective, and irresistible grace of God. The verse demonstrates that salvation does not depend on human will or effort but entirely on the divine work that calls, draws, and preserves His elect. This understanding carries significant theological implications for the doctrines of salvation and the sovereignty of God in His redemptive plan.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the exegetical study of John 6:44 using the comprehensive approach of John D. Grassmick, it can be concluded that the act of “drawing” performed by the Father represents a divine initiative that is effective, selective, and irresistible. This act demonstrates that humanity, in its sinful nature, is incapable of coming to Christ apart from the sovereign intervention of God. Those who are drawn are the ones who have been given by the Father to the Son; therefore, coming to Christ is not the result of human effort or will, but part of God’s eternal plan of salvation.

The entire process, from the Father’s drawing, to coming to Christ, and ultimately to the promise of resurrection at the end of the age, reveals the continuity and completeness of the work of salvation, which is entirely under God’s control. These findings affirm that salvation is a gift that is both effective and complete, refuting the notion that human free will is the determining factor.

The theological implications of this verse strengthen the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in salvation, the election of His chosen people, and the unity of will between the Father and the Son in the work of redemption. Thus, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of God’s active role in drawing humanity to Christ and affirms that salvation is the work of God from beginning to end, not a cooperative effort between human will and divine grace.

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