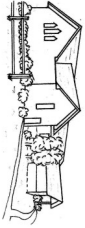


**NORTHWOODS
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



**4723 GRIFFITH AVENUE
CHEYENNE, WY 82009**

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. JOHN 4:24

This is the will of the Father who sent
Me, that of all He has given Me I should
lose nothing, but should raise it up at the
last day. John 6:39

THE NORTHWOODS NEWS

Irresistible Grace

By
Rich Cesal

If left to ourselves, we would and do reject God. Sin has made our hearts totally unwilling to accept God's offer of Jesus. We in fact hate God. Rom 8:30, "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." This is a statement of God's will and power to grant grace to each and everyone He has selected. Those He has elected are called, justified, and glorified. There is no crossing of the fingers here on God's part that someone He selects should actually accept. This is what is meant by Irresistible Grace. If God has selected (elected) you to have His unwarranted Grace, you will not be able to resist. The "I" in TULIP stands for irresistible grace.

Jacobus Arminius decided that he would believe in foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and falling away. As you can see these positions are the exact opposites of the five points of Calvinism. This is not an accident. Once you throw out the doctrine of election, you then have to throw out the other four positions. And if you believe the Bible for unconditional election you then have the other four points as well.

Irresistible Grace is really the result of man's total depravity. The five points of Calvinism are so interrelated that it is somewhat difficult to speak of any of the individual points without spilling over into one or more of the others. Total depravity will be taken up next month. But it is the total inability of man to do anything about his depravity which requires that God in His sovereignty has to choose those who will receive His grace and become His chosen people.

As Paul teaches, man is dead in his trespasses and thus is unable to change the situation without the Holy Spirit's intervention. A dead man cannot do anything. He says in Rom 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity with

God." So that mindset must be changed if man is going to be able to love God and that can only be done by God.

One must be careful to not confuse irresistible grace with resisting God. It is quite possible and does indeed happen that man resists God all the time. We resist God every time we sin. Sin is resisting God's commandments and precepts. But that is not the kind of resistible or irresistible that is being spoken of here.

There is that which comes under the title of common grace. God has issued the call to come to Christ to all who hear the gospel. This general and sometimes referred to as an external call is always resisted by depraved people. But the inner call, that which the Holy Spirit produces in a person, causing them to turn to God and to believe that which He gives freely to them cannot be resisted and indeed is irresistible. This is the salvific grace which all believers have and unbelievers do not.

This is why it is difficult to begin a discussion of the five points at any one of the five points because they are so dependent on one another. When unconditional election is fully understood, the grace that is effectually resulting from this election has to be irresistible since otherwise God's will would not be ultimate. And regardless of one's position on these points, God's will must be done.

I do not believe you can find in the Bible a definite statement to speak to the fact of Irresistible Grace. But there are many that strongly imply such and cannot be taken in any other way.

Does the Bible teach that God is all powerful? That He possesses the attribute of omnipotence? What could this mean but that if God has chosen a person to believe they could not refuse? If they could refuse and that were the case, then you could have the absurd situation of no one accepting God's offer. Is God on His knees pleading with folks to believe in His Christ? I think most people would grant that God is more powerful than that. So, is God's Grace somewhere between irresistible and "forget it I don't want it"? Do you see how illogical theology can get when you throw the baby out with the bath water?

Let's consider some of the statements made by Jesus. "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44); "no man can come unto me, except it were given to him of the Father" (John 6:65). So here are declarations of Jesus Himself telling us that God the Father must cause a person to respond to the gospel. John 6:39, "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." Jesus says if the Father has willed it, none given (the elected) to Him will be lost. How could that be taken except that those given to Jesus cannot refuse or else Jesus could not say that "none will be

lost." When conditions are placed on the effect of God's will, we enter into a no-man's land of illogical thinking.

Now, Calvinists and Arminians both agree that God must "draw" a person to Christ as it said in John 6:44. I have sat in on sermons that declared "God must draw us to Him" but those ended by saying we must choose. *Tabletalk Magazine* says this, "The debate is over whether this drawing is effectual. Arminians say the Almighty "woos" or "entices" us. By means of prevenient grace, which we all receive just by being born, the Spirit overcomes our sinfulness just enough so that we are able to pursue God, but He does not guarantee we will choose Him. We remain able to resist His call to love Him, no matter how persuasive He makes it. In addition to a lack of evidence for this kind of grace in Scripture, it is also clear that any position that says the Lord only "woos" us cannot be maintained." In other words, Arminians say our God is not powerful enough to complete the task.

But in opposition to this stand is this: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.", John 3:37. Here again Jesus says everyone He gets from the Father *will* come to Him. Sounds like they had no choice. This is irresistible grace.

Paul, in Rom 9:15-16 says, "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." Notice the lower case "*him*". This is saying it is not up to the individual but is entirely up to God.

Again, Paul says in Phil 2:12-13, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." The Reformation Study Bible comments, "This is awe and reverence rather than panic and alarm. The right emotions are stirred by the presence of God, and not by questions or doubts about eternal security." God is said to be the one working salvation in the individual, for His own pleasure not ours.

And finally, what about the Scripture written by Paul which addresses boasting?: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph 2:8-9). If we take any credit whatsoever for our salvation, we could certainly boast in some way over those who did not.

When the early church was being formed after the ascension of Jesus, there was a growth factor unequalled since which prompted the report given by Luke in the Book of Acts 13:48, "Now when the

Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Here again, it is said that *all those appointed to eternal life (election), believed (irresistible grace).*

James Montgomery Boice has said, "Left to ourselves we resist the grace of God. But when God works in our hearts, regenerating us and creating a renewed will within, then what was undesirable before becomes highly desirable, and we run to Jesus just as previously we ran away from Him. Fallen sinners do resist God's grace, but His regenerating grace is effectual. It overcomes sin and accomplishes God's purpose." This says that if God regenerates us through the exercise of His will we do in fact execute our free will and accept God's gift because He has made us to want to run to Jesus.

There are those who use an expression of "being dragged kicking and screaming to Christ." Pastor David Kniseley always said that this would be an impossibility since God changes the heart to seek and love Him *before* the person actually chooses God. And so we come to God fully desiring to be His and not kicking and screaming.

The phrase is attributed to C. S. Lewis but what Lewis actually said in *Surprised by Joy* was, "The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own two feet. But who can duly adore Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape? The words *compelle intrare*, compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation."

C. S. Lewis, in a letter to Sheldon Vanauken in *A Sever Mercy*, said to him, "But I think you are already in the meshes of the net! The Holy Spirit is after you. I doubt if you'll get away!" This is a statement in non-theological language of belief on Lewis' part that God's grace is irresistible.

R. C. Sproul Jr. said this about Lewis, "Lewis was not a Calvinist, though by God's grace he is one now. He was instead a grown child who can lead us into the maturity of childhood. He was gifted by God to gift us in this way — he teaches us to be as children, that we might enter into the kingdom of God. He reminds us that God is God and that we are not. He reminds us that our response to this truth ought not to be mere theological speculation, but mere Christianity — crying out to our Father to have mercy on us, miserable sinners, and rejoicing that He has done so in Christ. He reminds us that this is how we move further up and further in."

Here again is Paul, "[God] even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." (Eph 2:5). Even when we were dead, God made us alive. A dead person can do nothing for himself. This is reinforced by Rom 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Christ died for us *before* we were cleansed. And being dead, we had no way to reject God's grace through Christ's death.

When Jesus commanded Lazarus to come out of the tomb, Lazarus was stone dead. He could not cooperate in any way with the command of Jesus to "come forth". This is an illustration of how irresistible grace functions in the dead hearts of the recipients of God's sovereign elective call. The person responds irresistibly to the command of their God. It could be no other way.

We saw in the verse known as the Golden Chain, Rom 8:30, that God predestined those for salvation and then called them. They were then justified. There is no place in this verse to allow for the cooperation of the individual involved. The sequence predestined, called, and justified shows the power of God to be irresistible on behalf of the recipient.

In the parable of the man who gave a great supper and invited many, Jesus says that after the invited all gave excuses to not attend, then He said, "Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'" (Luke 14:23-24). This parable is a metaphor of the gospel. As in the gospel many are invited but none attend and then God must compel those He has set aside to come.

John 1:12-13 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John Piper comments on these verses, "In other words, it is necessary to receive Christ in order to become a child of God, but the birth that brings one into the family of God is not possible by the will of man." And also, "Thus new birth is the effect of irresistible grace, because it is an act of sovereign creation -- not of the will of man but of God." Ω



Biography of the composer of this month's hymn, David L. Ward

David currently lives in Nashville and works as a software developer in order to allow him to invest in writing, teaching, and serving the church through Thousand Tongues. He served as the Director of Worship Ministries for Redeemer Bible Church in Minnetonka, MN (a suburb of Minneapolis) for eight years. His role at Redeemer included planning and leading corporate worship, developing worship leaders, publishing resources for private, family, and small group worship, teaching and preaching, and pastoral care. He and his wife have been blessed with five children age fifteen and under. David has been leading worship and writing songs for congregational singing since 1994. His passion for reformed doctrine, hymn texts, and contemporary worship music led him to begin writing new tunes for old hymns in 1999 and to found ReformedPraise.org the following year to share his songs with others.

David became a Christian at age 12 through the ministry of a summer camp in North Carolina and has always loved music. His first formal training in music was a brief stint in piano lessons around age 11, but he soon moved on to the saxophone which he played in school band all the way through college. He discovered jazz at the end of high school and began practicing for hours a day as well as trying his hand at jazz composition. In high school he picked up the guitar to play for campfires, high school Christian fellowships, and youth groups. In college he started learning to play modern worship songs on the piano.

While a student at Rutgers University, David began writing songs for private reflection and worship. He continued to study jazz, taking such classes as jazz theory, but ultimately finished his degree in Mathematics. After working in the software industry for 8 years, David followed God's call to return to school to learn more musical skills that he could use to serve the church with, such as orchestration, composition, piano study, and arranging. While studying at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, KY, the Lord called David and his family to Redeemer Bible Church to serve with his long-time college friend R.W. Glenn. In 2013, the Lord threw David a curve ball and led him and his family down to Nashville, TN to be more strategically located as a songwriter and worship leader. Ω

Important Things

Men's Breakfast— July 19 at 8:00 AM the men will meet at the church for a full breakfast cooked by Dale Vosler and Rich Cesal and a continuing study in Amos.

It's getting to be that time again, Vedauwoo milk-can dinner. August 17th after church we will gather at the the Gazebo for dinner and fellowship. Dinner will be around 4:00 PM. The Voslers will again cook a scrumptious dinner of sausage, potatoes, cabbage and corn on the cob. Don't miss it.

Nursery Schedule for July

Nursery Volunteers

- 6 ESTHER DAVISON
- 13 YVONNE NEWSOM
- 20 CORY MILLER
- 27 KELLEIGH ANDERSON



Please trade with someone if you are unable to do nursery duty on the assigned day.

- Gregg & Stephanie Trujillo 2nd
- Brian & Branda Church 10th
- Ken & Dell Tunnicliffe 22nd
- Matt & Aimee Davison 29th



- Joshua Anderson 7th
- Harlan Edmonds 9th
- Susan Shockey 13th
- Laura Sackett 26th

The only thing of our very own which we contribute to our Salvation is the sin which makes it necessary.

William Temple

God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

C. S. Lewis

I sought you, Lord, but now I see
You were the one who was seeking me;
I found You, Lord, and then I knew
That I was found by You.

Refrain: *You have called me with
irresistible grace,
From before time began.
Thank You, Lord, for saving me;
On Your grace now I can stand.*

I took Your hand when I was weak:
Sinking, yet always within Your reach.
My feet were firm though on the sea
For You took hold of me.

Refrain

I sought, I walked, because Your grace
Long before had fixed my place;
And now I love-how can it be?
'T was you who first loved me.

Refrain

To hear this hymn played and sung
www.youtube.com/watch?v=n27eVx3Lrng

Monthly Session Report

The summer is in full swing. We pray you will take the opportunity to spend time with your family.

Vacation Bible School was a great success. We had 20 kids - the majority of which were not from Northwoods. We raised over \$230 for our missions project - Show Hope. The Word of God was preached and the gospel was presented over and over. Thank you to all of you that helped in setup, teardown, and during the week. Please be praying for the kids - that God would cause the seeds that were planted to grow.

Our worship schedule in July will have a few changes due to vacation time for the Norgauers. Rev. Tim Van Lant will be preaching on July 13th and 27th. Also the Lord's Supper will be on the third Sunday again (July 20th).

When Pastor Norgauer is away on vacation, Alex Ramig will be teaching the adult SS class where we will consider "The Biblical Doctrine of Vocation: A Theological way of Thinking about Work". Work concerns all of us and we spend more of our awake hours working than doing anything else. In a world that is increasingly competitive, insecure and hostile to Christianity, the need to reflect more meaningfully and Biblically make this subject of critical importance. Come and join us as we "work" our way through this topic together.

Hunter Anderson has returned from her mission trip to China. It was a great trip. All went very well. God used the team powerfully in the lives of the orphans and those that care for them. She will gladly share details if you ask. Thank you so much for praying.

The Lewis' last Sunday will be July 11th. On July 6th, we will have a church picnic after morning worship. It will be our chance to say goodbye. Be in prayer for their transition back home. They will be greatly missed. Ω

Augustine and Pelagius

(Only slightly edited for space considerations)

By R. C. Sproul

"It is Augustine who gave us the Reformation." So wrote B. B. Warfield in his assessment of the influence of Augustine on church history. It is not only that Luther was an Augustinian monk, or that Calvin quoted Augustine more than any other theologian that provoked Warfield's remark. Rather, it was that the Reformation witnessed the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over the legacy of the Pelagian view of man.

Humanism, in all its subtle forms, recapitulates the unvarnished Pelagianism against which Augustine struggled. Though Pelagius was condemned as a heretic by Rome, and its modified form, Semi-Pelagianism was likewise condemned by the Council of Orange in 529, the basic assumptions of this view persisted throughout church history to reappear in Medieval Catholicism, Renaissance Humanism, Socinianism, Arminianism, and modern Liberalism. The seminal thought of Pelagius survives today not as a trace or tangential influence but is pervasive in the modern church. Indeed, the modern church is held captive by it.

What was the core issue between Augustine and Pelagius? The heart of the debate centered on the doctrine of original sin, particularly with respect to the question of the extent to which the will of fallen man is "free."

Adolph Harnack said: There has never, perhaps, been another crisis of equal importance in church history in which the opponents have expressed the principles at issue so clearly and abstractly. The Arian dispute before the Nicene Council can alone be compared with it. (History of Agmer V/IV/3)

The controversy began when the British monk, Pelagius, opposed at Rome Augustine's famous prayer: "Grant what Thou commandest, and command what Thou dost desire." Pelagius recoiled in horror at the idea that a divine gift (grace) is necessary to perform what God commands. For Pelagius and his followers responsibility always implies ability. If man has the moral responsibility to obey the law of God, he must also have the moral ability to do it.

Harnack summarizes Pelagian thought: Nature, free-will, virtue and law, these strictly defined and made independent of the notion of God - were the catch-words of Pelagianism: self-acquired virtue is the supreme good which is followed by reward. Religion and morality lie in the sphere of the free spirit; they are at any moment by man's own effort.

Over against Pelagius, Semi-Pelagianism does have a doctrine of original sin whereby mankind is considered fallen. Consequently grace not only facilitates virtue, it is necessary for virtue to ensue. Man's nature can be changed and has been changed by the Fall.

It is not by accident that Martin Luther considered *The Bondage of*

the *Will* to be his most important book. He saw in Erasmus a man who, despite his protests to the contrary, was a Pelagian in Catholic clothing. Luther saw that lurking beneath the controversy of merit and grace, and faith and works was the issue of to what degree the human will is enslaved by sin and to what degree we are dependent upon grace for our liberation. Luther argued from the Bible that the flesh profits nothing and that this "nothing" is not a little "something."

Augustine's view of the Fall was opposed to both Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism. He said that mankind is a *massa peccati*, a "mess of sin," incapable of raising itself from spiritual death. For Augustine man can no more move or incline himself to God than an empty glass can fill itself. For Augustine the initial work of divine grace by which the soul is liberated from the bondage of sin is sovereign and operative. To be sure we cooperate with this grace, but only after the initial divine work of liberation.

Augustine did not deny that fallen man still has a will and that the will is capable of making choices. He argued that fallen man still has a free will (*liberium arbitrium*) but has lost his moral liberty (*libertas*). The state of original sin leaves us in the wretched condition of being unable to refrain from sinning. We still are able to choose what we desire, but our desires remain chained by our evil impulses. He argued that the freedom that remains in the will always leads to sin. Thus in the flesh we are free only to sin, a hollow freedom indeed. It is freedom without liberty, a real moral bondage. True liberty can only come from without, from the work of God on the soul. Therefore we are not only partly dependent upon grace for our conversion but totally dependent upon grace.

Modern Evangelicalism sprung from the Reformation whose roots were planted by Augustine. But today the Reformational and Augustinian view of grace is all but eclipsed in Evangelicalism. Where Luther triumphed in the sixteenth century, subsequent generations gave the nod to Erasmus.

Modern evangelicals repudiate unvarnished Pelagianism and frequently Semi-Pelagianism as well. It is insisted that grace is necessary for salvation and that man is fallen. The will is acknowledged to be severely weakened even to the point of being "99 percent" dependent upon grace for its liberation. But that one percent of unaffected moral ability or spiritual power which becomes the decisive difference between salvation and perdition is the link that preserves the chain to Pelagius. We have not broken free from the Pelagian captivity of the church.

That one percent is the "little something" Luther sought to demolish because it removes the *sola* from *sola gratia* and ultimately the *sola* from *sola fide*. The irony may be that though modern Evangelicalism loudly and repeatedly denounces Humanism as the mortal enemy of Christianity, it entertains a Humanistic view of man and of the will at its deepest core.

We need an Augustine or a Luther to speak to us anew lest the light of God's grace be not only over-shadowed but be obliterated in our time. Ω

Charles Spurgeon on Calvinism — Irresistible Grace

from Nathan W. Bingham

Charles Spurgeon affirmed the doctrine of irresistible grace. This is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts, calls, draws, and regenerates elect sinners. This work unfailingly results in the faith of all those chosen. All whom the Father chose in eternity past and all those for whom the Son died are those whom the Spirit brings to faith in Jesus Christ. None whom the Father elected and for whom Christ died fail to believe. The Holy Spirit grants repentance and faith to these elect sinners and ensures their conversion.

This irresistible call is distinct from the general call of the gospel. The former is extended only to the elect and cannot be resisted. The latter is extended to all who hear the gospel and is resisted apart from the Spirit's effectual call. Spurgeon explained: "The general call of the gospel is like the common 'cluck' of the hen which she is always giving when her chickens are around her. But if there is any danger impending, then she gives a very peculiar call, quite different from the ordinary one, and the little chicks come running as fast as they can, and hide for safety under her wings. That is the call we want, God's peculiar and effectual call to his own." This effectual call always secures its desired effect—the salvation of God's own.

Difficulty is not a word to be found in the dictionary of heaven. Nothing can be impossible with God. —Charles Spurgeon

God's sovereign call, Spurgeon affirmed, is far more powerful than any man's resistance: "A man is not saved against his will, but he is made willing by the operation of the Holy Ghost. A mighty grace which he does not wish to resist enters into the man, disarms him, makes a new creature of him, and he is saved." This means no one is beyond the saving power of God: "Difficulty is not a word to be found in the dictionary of heaven. Nothing can be impossible with God. The swearing reprobate, whose mouth is blackened with profanity, whose heart is a very hell, and his life like the reeking flames of the bottomless pit—such a man, if the Lord but looks on him and makes bare His arm of irresistible grace, shall yet praise God and bless His name and live to His honor." In short, no human heart is so obstinate that the Spirit cannot conquer and convert it.

Spurgeon described how the Spirit had conquered his own stubborn heart: "When He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door, and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away, and do despite to His grace? Ah! I can remember that I full often did so until, at last, by the power of His effectual grace, He said, 'I must, I will come in,' and then He turned my heart, and made me love Him." Just as the Holy Spirit turned Spurgeon's heart, so He does in all those chosen by the Father, causing them to believe in the Son.

Spurgeon gloried in this triumph of God's sovereign grace. God's immutable will, he proclaimed, is far greater than man's stubborn will:

Oh! I love God's "shalls" and "wills." There is nothing comparable to them. Let a man say "shall," what is it good for? "I will," says man, and he never performs; "I shall," says he, and he breaks his promise. But it is never so with God's "shalls." If He says "shall," it shall be; when He says "will," it will be. Now He has said here, "many shall come." The devil says, "they shall not come;" but "they shall come." You yourselves say, "we won't come;" God says, "You shall come." Yes! There are some here who are laughing at salvation, who can scoff at Christ, and mock at the gospel; but I tell you some of you shall come yet. "What!" you say, "can God make me become a Christian?" I tell you yes, for herein rests the power of the gospel. It does not ask your consent; but it gets it. It does not say, will you have it? But it makes you willing in the day of God's power.

Moreover, Spurgeon declared that irresistible grace makes even the most resistant hearts receptive to the offer of salvation. Listen to the enormous confidence in his preaching of the gospel:

If Jesus Christ were to stand on this platform tonight, what would many people do with Him? If He were to come and say, "Here I am, I love you, will you be saved by Me?" not one of you would consent if you were left to your will. He Himself said, "No man can come to Me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him." Ah! We want that; and here we have it. They shall come! They shall come! Ye may laugh, ye may despise us; but Jesus Christ shall not die for nothing. If some of you reject Him there are some that will not. If there are some that are not saved, others shall be. Christ shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. They shall come! And nought in heaven, nor on earth, nor in hell, can stop them from coming.

Spurgeon was as courageous as a lion in proclaiming the saving message of Christ. He drew that courage from his belief that the Holy Spirit will turn the hearts of those chosen to believe on Christ. Simply put, Spurgeon knew that the Spirit guarantees that God's Word will not return to Him void. Irresistible grace is triumphant grace. Ω

Have a Need? Contact one of the officers.

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If you have a request for the prayer chain contact Branda Church 221-9206 and if not available, Kelleigh Anderson 635-2578.

***He does according to his
will in the host of heaven
and among the
inhabitants of the earth;
and none can stay his
hand.
Hallelujah, Amen.***