

The I in Tulip, The Irresistible or Efficacious Grace of God

The Arminian View

The Calvinist View

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That the new birth (regeneration) could be resisted by man's free will; Or, The grace of God is resistible.	The new birth cannot be resisted or rejected. God's grace is irresistible, efficacious (Gill, unfrustrable), and irreversible.

Everything to the child of God, who is properly instructed in the Word of truth, is received through the grace of God. As freely as God acted to save some from sin is as freely as those same sinners may approach unto God.

Ro 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, **how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**

Re 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

This freedom that God exercises toward them is called grace. Since election, regeneration, conversion, sanctification and glorification constitute the whole work of the salvation of God for sinners, and sinners are saved by grace (Eph.2.8, 9), then the whole work of salvation results from the free grace of God. Therefore grace in all of its forms is freely given by God. If God is truly free to do as He will to save whomever He chooses then what He does by saving them must be irresistible, efficacious, and irreversible or else God is not truly free to do as He will.

Ro 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

1Sa 15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.

Is.55.11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it

shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (It is no accomplishment for the Word to go forth and not effect changes in those to whom it is sent. If that were the case it would be *ineffectual*. But, by the Word of God, vs. 7, the wicked shall forsake his way, and the unrighteous his thoughts!)

When considering the *irresistibility* of the grace of God, there are many things that we received from the Lord in our natural lives over which we had no control. We simply received our lives, our physical appearance, our blood type, the color of our skin, our gender, color of our eyes, hair, our height, our physical condition, and our parents, to name a few things. In the strictest sense of the word, it is an imagination of men's minds to think that men resist the will of God, and even more so, the grace of God. Our Lord Jesus made a very profound statement to Pilate,

Joh 19:8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying [of verse 7, The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.], he was the more afraid;
9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.
10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?
*11 Jesus answered, **Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above:** therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

Pilate was given the power from God to oppose the Lord Jesus Christ, and to deliver Him over to be crucified. Is it proper to say that Pilate was resisting the will of God? Wasn't Pilate doing the will of God by opposing His only Son? And so how do we answer this? Here are some things to consider concerning what the Bible teaches about the *will of God*.

In the Bible there is no plain statement that man in any way resists either the will of God or the grace of God. First, concerning the will of God:

Resisting the will of God *is derived* from a number of statements:

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*Ac 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye.*

*2Ti 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, **so do these also resist the truth**: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.*

Yet, the will of God is said to be sovereign, absolute, and irresistible:

*Da 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and **he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?***

*Ro 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For **who hath resisted his will?***

There are a number of ways to distinguish the will of God. Tonight let's consider the will of God as revealed and unrevealed. We know that the will of the Father in Christ Jesus is to save all of the elect (revealed), yet we do not know who all of them are at this time (unrevealed). In the will of God, we cannot comprehend how all of the most horrendous acts of wickedness by sinful man and fallen angels can praise and glorify God, but because that is the testimony of Scripture, it is true nonetheless.

Ro 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

We see that men apparently resist the will of God and God's will is sovereign. We read of both the rebellious and compliant will among men and of the sovereign will of God as being simultaneous. Based on this observation men err on either side of this issue for failing to derive the truth from the Word of God. Some elevate man's will over the will of God so that He may do nothing apart from man's willingness to *let* Him. Others seem to think that man has no will of his

own, in view of God's sovereignty, and speak of men as if they were a mindless puppet, with no will to do what he does. However, the truth is that man does what he will, but that his will is directed, not only permitted, by God's sovereign will. For example, we cited Ps. 76.10,

Ps 76:10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Whatever men may do in their wrath, whether in anger, hatred, wickedness, all of his persecution, it is governed by the will of the sovereign God. All wrath that manifests among men is directed so that its result shall praise God. In First Kings we read,

1Ki.22.19 And he said (this is Micaiah the prophet speaking), Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

*22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, **Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.***

We read that God uses an evil spirit to convince an evil king, Ahab, to go up to battle by speaking lies, so that he might be killed. The LORD could have simply taken Ahab by stopping his heart, but He didn't. What the LORD did in taking Ahab's life in this way glorified God. This provided the occasion for the people of God to learn more of the depths of the will of God at work in the seen and unseen realm. Our LORD uses false prophets, evil spirits, elect angels, holy men, kings, true prophets, good and evil intents to fulfil His purpose.

Pr 16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

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Scripture reveals to us how the LORD uses plant life (Jon.4.6-9), insects (Ex.10.4), donkeys (Nu.22.22; Mt.21.5; 2Pe.2.16), fishes of the sea (Mt.17.27; Jn.21.6), birds (1Ki.17.4), the wind, storms, earthquakes, the earth, the sun, moon and stars (Jos.10.12, 14) as He pleases and no one can stop Him.

*Isa 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: **I the LORD do all these things.***

The LORD stopped Abimelech, an heathen man, from committing adultery in ignorance with Abraham's wife, and yet not David's purposeful act with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife. He hardens the hearts of men and nations so that when He is finished with them He might bring them into judgment.

*Ex 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, **he hardened his heart, and hearkened not** unto them; as the LORD had said.*

Ex 3:19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

20 And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

Ge 15:14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

God is immutable therefore His will is inalterable.

Mal 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

*Eph 3:11 According to the **eternal purpose** which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord ... (An eternal purpose cannot be changed.)*

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

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So, while there is no plain statement in Scripture concerning men resisting the will of God, the resistance that we derive constitutes a part of the sovereign will of God. But even more clearly than this, the Scripture teaches that the grace of God is irresistible, efficacious, and irreversible.

Ro 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Jas 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (His will is certain.)

This means that should God choose to bestow grace He cannot change, vary or turn from His purpose. His *grace* He cannot be resisted, He cannot become impotent, and He cannot be forced to retract it. The truth is, that no one has ever been shown grace, has ever received grace, has ever had grace bestowed, has ever found grace, has ever been given grace *and refused it*. Why? Fundamentally, because it is not something that God offers; it is a sovereign conferral; a bestowal.

*1Jo 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father **hath bestowed** ...*

Grace is never presented and withdrawn, never given, then taken, never found, then lost, never sent, then diverted. If it were true that man could resist the grace of God then it must also be true that man cannot be saved. If man could resist what God gives, then God cannot give what man will not receive. That means, God can never do what man will not allow. So man would be utterly and hopelessly lost, because, as this man said,

‘To put it quite plainly, no unregenerate person ever wants to be born again. ...’There is none that doeth good, no not one ...’ Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination*, p.89.

And if God cannot bring any to life without their permission, then none will ever live, because Ec. 9.5 says that *‘the dead know not anything’*; they do not know their need of the new birth except that first the grace of life is bestowed.

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But grace is efficacious. For grace to be efficacious it must be of greater power or effect than something else. The grace of God by Jesus Christ is of greater power and effect than the offense of our sin is against God.

*Ro 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, **much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded** (aor. ind.) **unto many.***

The grace of God is superlatively more powerful than the abounding sin in us.

*Ro 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, **grace did much more abound** (Gr. ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν, aor. ind. of ὑπερπερισσεύω, *hath hyper-abounded, hyper-remained over; surpassed*):
21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Grace has the dominion over sin.

*Ro 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but **under grace.***

There is no sinner that grace cannot save; there is no sin that grace cannot conquer. All of the elect of God were as all men, without Christ, dead in trespasses and sins, working according to the power of the spirit of the darkness of this world. As Saul, who at one moment was on the road to Damascus filled with hatred against Jesus Christ and His people, but in the next was cast down to the ground crying out, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me do.' (Acts 9.6) And what was Paul's confession afterwards?

*1Ti.1.14 And **the grace of our Lord** (from the Father) **was exceeding abundant** (super/hyper-abundant, ὑπερεπλέονασε, aor. ind.; super-*

full) *with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.* (Grace brought faith and love to Paul for Christ.)

There is no obstacle in man so great that God by His grace cannot overcome. *And such were some of you ...* (1Co.6.11) Some of the worst, despicable, sins named among humanity was where some of us were when God bestowed the grace of life upon us through Jesus Christ. Now let's consider Noah for a moment.

*Ge 6:8 But Noah **found** grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

Noah found or discovered grace in the Lord's eyes. How are we to interpret the meaning of this verse? We have to consider the whole narrative in Genesis chapter 6. What do we know? The LORD was going to destroy from off the face of the whole earth every living creature in which was the breath of life. That meant man, beast, creeping things, and fowls of the air were doomed to die. (vss.1-7) Yet, we read, 'Noah *found* grace in the eyes of the Lord.' Attempting to answer the question *why* Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord rests with His holy prerogative. The best answer that we might give is, 'It pleased Him to do so;' or, 'It was *according to the good pleasure of his will.*' (Eph.1.5) But the question we ask is, *How* did Noah find grace? How did Noah know that God had shown *grace* to him? The only answer is that God *specially conferred* unto Noah that, where the whole world was going to be destroyed by water, he and his sons and daughters were spared.

*Ge 6:13 **And God said** unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me ...*

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood ...

...

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

*19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them **alive with thee**; they shall be male and female.*

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This is the grace that Noah discovered from the LORD. No others found this grace but Noah and his seven other family members. There was no grace from the Lord for any others. There can be no discovery of what is not there. What does grace say of Noah and his family? That these eight souls deserved the same judgment, but that they were spared/saved *for no other reason than that God showed grace* to them. The LORD did not bestow grace upon Noah because he was a just man, and neither did Noah receive grace because he was a *just man*. And his family did not receive grace because they were just persons. Ge. 6.8, 9 teaches that it was grace that made Noah a just man. It was efficacious grace that affected Noah's life, and the lives of his house. Noah and his family found the irresistible, efficacious, and irreversible grace of God. Paul said,

1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am ...

Paul attributed no other thing to the change in His life but the power of God's grace. Grace changes lives. When there is no change it is certain that there is no grace. Grace says, once I was lost but now I am found; was blind, but now I see, deaf, but now I hear, dumb, but now I speak.

Of the 159 verses where the noun *grace* is used, it is used with the verbs:

find 28 (# eternal life; Genesis 11; Exodus 6; Numbers, Judges once; Ruth 2, 1Samuel 3, 2Samuel 2, Jeremiah 1; Hebrews 4.16; **From Ge. – 2Sa. grace is only used with the verb to find.**) 1Pe.5.7 *grace of life*.

be 25 (# forgiveness); understood verb *be* 2; *should be* 3; *give* or *gift* 10; *upon* 4; *come* 2;

brought, bestowed, received, poured, obtained (LXX, εὔρεν, usually translated *found*), *shewed* once each (total 80)

Ex 33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

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The English word *favor*, (but the same underlying Greek word) is used in the same sense as *grace*: found 20, shew 4, obtain, 6, give or grant 6, procureth 1, brought 1.

Grace is always free.

*Mt 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: **freely ye have received**, freely give.*

We do not have a mental image of the apostles going about looking for and selecting only those that they thought *deserved* to receive healing, cleansing, resurrection, or the casting out of demons.

*Ro 3:24 Being justified **freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ...*

If the Lord is waiting for anything in the sinner before He bestows His grace, it doesn't matter if it is faith or works, then it is not free, it is not of His own will, and it is not upon whom He chooses.

In all of Scripture, in all of the history of mankind, we never find a lame man resisting the sufficiency of grace to walk. No blind man ever withstood the power of grace to stay God from giving Him sight. Which of the dead risen to life ever reversed the power of God's grace to remain in the tomb? There are no witnesses to the validity of the resistibility, the ineffectuality, and the reversibility of grace. None! Yet most of Christendom believes that this is the true grace of God. Quite the contrary! Grace reigns!

*Ro 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might **grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.***

To close, for a moment consider some passages of Scripture which reveal what the grace of God does.

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Grace elects, Ro.11.5, 6; We stand by grace, Ro.5.2; 1Pe.5.12; Grace called us to Christ, *Ga 1:15*; Grace saves us, *Tit 2:11; Ac 15:11; Eph 2:8*; Grace brings faith, love, everlasting consolation, and good hope, *Ac 18:27; 1Ti 1:14; 2Th 2:16, 17*; Grace frees us from condemnation before God, *Ro 3:24; Tit.3.3-7*; Grace is the only means to glorify God and Christ, *2Th 1:12*; Grace equips us to serve God, minister about spiritual things, *Heb 12:28; of Paul, Ro 15:15, 16; 1Co 3:10; Eph 3:8*; of the saints, *Ro 12:6; 1Co 1:4-8; Eph 4:7; 1Pe.4.10*; We live by grace, *2Co 1:12*; We endure trial by grace, *2Co 12:9; 1Pe.5.10*; Hearts are established by grace, *Heb 13:9*; All that we receive from the Lord is of His grace, *1Co.4.7*.

There can be no greater comfort for the Christian than knowing the true grace of God.

Php. 1.6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ ...

Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Does our theology put the word *maybe* at the end of this? It shouldn't. Not if we stand on the truth of the Word of God.

Man would sooner create a new heaven and a new earth as to resist the gracious hand of a loving, sovereign God. All who receive this grace shall come to Christ.

Joh 5:25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

I believe in the irresistible, efficacious, irreversible grace of God.