

# **The Unbelief of the Jews Announced and the Sovereign Plan of God Affirmed**

## **Pt.3**

### **John 6:30-40**

John 6:30–40 (NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, *‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’*”

<sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent

Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

## Introduction:

At the heart of Martin Luther’s theology was the conviction that human beings are totally dependent on God’s omnipotent grace to rescue us from the bondage of the will by creating and decisively fulfilling every inclination to believe and obey God. The debates of the sixteenth century about the freedom of the will versus the bondage of the will were not peripheral to the Reformation. They were at the heart of the issue. At least Luther believed they were.

His book *The Bondage of the Will* was an answer to Erasmus’s book *The Freedom of the Will*. In 1537, nine years before his death, he wrote to Wolfgang Capito, Regarding [the plan] to collect my writings in volumes, I am quite cool and not at all eager about it because, roused by a Saturnian hunger, I would rather see them all devoured. For I acknowledge none of them to be really a book of mine, except perhaps the one *On the Bondage of the Will* and the Catechism. (*Luther Werke*, 50:172–173; Luther compares himself to Saturn, a figure from Ancient Greek mythology who devoured most of his children)

It is remarkable that of all he had written, Luther saw his defense of the bondage of the will, and his demolition of Erasmus's view of free will, as so crucial he wanted it (along with his catechism) preserved more than anything he had written. Why was the issue so important for Luther?

Luther said to Erasmus,

It is in the highest degree wholesome and necessary, for a Christian to know whether or not his will has anything to do in matters pertaining to salvation. Indeed let me tell you, that is the hinge on which our discussion turns. . . .

For if I am ignorant of the nature, extent, and limits of what I can and must do with reference to God, I shall be equally ignorant and uncertain of the nature, extent, and limits of what God can and will do in me. . . . Now, if I am ignorant of God's works and power, I am ignorant of God himself; and if I do not know God, I cannot worship, praise, give thanks, or serve Him, for I do not know how much I should attribute to myself and how much to Him. (quoted in *Luther Selections*, 179)

Luther knew that Erasmus, more than any other opponent, had put his finger on the deeper issue at stake beneath the justification controversy and the controversy over the mass and indulgences and Mary and purgatory. And that issue was *whether human beings are so sinful that God's sovereign grace must create and decisively fulfill every human inclination to believe and obey God.*

Erasmus did not believe this. Luther did — so did Calvin and Zwingli. Erasmus's belief that the fallen human will contributed its own decisive self-determining power to the act of faith and the pursuit of holiness was, in Luther's mind, a perilous underestimation of the desperate condition of man without Christ. In Gordon Rupp's assessment of Luther's debate with Erasmus, he commented, "At the end of the day, Luther could maintain the great Anselmian retort: 'Thou hast not considered the gravity of sin'" (*Luther and Erasmus*, 12.).

And, Luther would add, the failure to see the gravity of our sin and the depth of our corruption and the bondage of our will, if unchecked, will become an assault on the freedom and sovereignty and the glory of God's grace in salvation, and therefore an assault on the very gospel itself. In 1528, Luther put it like this: "I condemn and reject as nothing but error all doctrines which exalt our 'free will,' as being directly opposed to [the] mediation and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 3, 1376–1377). By "free will," I think he means decisive self-determination in acts of faith and obedience.

In another place he said,

This is my absolute opinion: he that will maintain that a man's free-will is able to do or work anything in spiritual cases, be they never so small, denies Christ. This I have always maintained in my writings, especially in those against Erasmus. (*The Tabletalk of Martin Luther*, 206)

He doesn't mean that the will is inactive. He means that wherever it is active in faith and obedience, God is decisively active, creating and fulfilling the acts. For Luther, the issue of man's bondage to sin and his moral inability to believe or be holy was *the root issue of the Reformation* — and the lynchpin of Protestantism. The freedom of God, and therefore the freedom of the gospel and therefore the salvation of men, and the glory of God were at stake in this controversy. Therefore, Luther loved the message of his book *The Bondage of the Will*, ascribing all freedom and power and grace to God, and, for us, complete dependence on God for faith and holiness. "It is true," he wrote, "that the doctrine of the Gospel takes all glory, wisdom, [and] righteousness . . . from men and ascribes them to the Creator alone, who makes everything out of nothing" (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 3, 1374).

The Bondage of the Will, the Sovereignty of Grace, and the Glory of God  
John Piper  
Together for the Gospel  
Louisville, Kentucky

## Review

### I. The Unbelief of the Jews Announced

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.

## **II. The Sovereign Plan of God Affirmed**

### **A. The Plan Stated**

<sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

In this Great text we see.

1. Sovereign Election
2. Irresistible Grace
3. Perseverance of the Saints
4. Preservation of the Saints

1. Sovereign Election ===== Unconditional Election  
<sup>v37</sup> All that the Father gives Me

2. Irresistible Grace ===== Effectual Calling

v.37 will come to Me

3. Perseverance of the Saints===== Continued belief  
v. 37 and the one who comes to Me
4. Preservation of the Saints=====Eternal Security  
v.37 I will by no means cast out.

# **1. Sovereign Election =====Unconditional Election**

<sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives Me

John 6:39 (NKJV)

<sup>39</sup> 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 17:1–2 (NKJV)

**17** Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, <sup>2</sup> as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

John 17:6 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

John 17:9 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.

John 17:11 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me,

John 17:24 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

John 10:28–29 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

Ephesians 1:4–5 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before



Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

## **2. Irresistible Grace**

<sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

This verse says  
 they will come  
 and the one who comes will not be cast out.  
 So they are going to come  
 yet  
 v. 44 and 65 says

John 6:44 (NKJV)

<sup>44</sup> **No one can come to Me** unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:65 (NKJV)

<sup>65</sup> And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

So is this a contradiction. Jesus says they will come, yet he says they cant come. So which is it.  
 Its Both.

To understand this we will need to look at 2 things

**1. The Reason Men don't come**

1. Total Depravity
2. Bondage of the Will

**2. The Reason they do Come**

1. Effectual Call
2. Irresistible grace

**1. The Reason Men don't Come**

John 6:44 (NKJV)

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

John 6:65 (NKJV)

<sup>65</sup> And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

John 3:3–5 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 8:43 (NKJV)

<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

John 12:37–40 (NKJV)

<sup>37</sup> But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, <sup>38</sup> that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

“Lord, who has believed our report?  
*And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*”

<sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

<sup>40</sup> *“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,  
Lest they should see with their eyes,  
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,  
So that I should heal them.”*

Matthew 12:34 (NKJV)

<sup>34</sup> Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

### Romans 8:7–8 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. <sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

### John 1:5 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

### John 8:47 (NKJV)

<sup>47</sup> He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

### Deuteronomy 29:2–6 (NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land—<sup>3</sup> the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. <sup>4</sup> Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this *very* day. <sup>5</sup> And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. <sup>6</sup> You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or *similar* drink, that you may know that I *am* the Lord your God.

Jeremiah 5:21 (NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> ‘Hear this now, O foolish people,  
Without understanding,  
Who have eyes and see not,  
And who have ears and hear not:

Matthew 13:10–11 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

<sup>11</sup> He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

2 Corinthians 4:3–4 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Lets go back now and consider the way John refers to the reason men do not come to Christ.

Its very simple, straight forward, not heavy with theological wording.

It makes it profound, deep and irrefutable..

John 6:44 (NKJV)

<sup>44</sup> **No one can come** to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:65 (NKJV)

<sup>65</sup> And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that **no one can come** to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

John 3:3–5 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

John 8:43 (NKJV)

<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand My speech? Because **you are not able** to listen to My word.

John 12:37–40 (NKJV)

<sup>37</sup> But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, <sup>38</sup> that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

“Lord, who has believed our report?  
*And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*”

<sup>39</sup> Therefore **they could not believe**, because Isaiah said again:

<sup>40</sup> *“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,  
 Lest they should see with their eyes,  
 Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,  
 So that I should heal them.”*

Matthew 12:34 (NKJV)

<sup>34</sup> Brood of vipers! **How can you, being evil, speak good things?** For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Romans 8:7–8 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is **not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.** <sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the **flesh cannot please God.**

No one can come  
 No one can see  
 No one can enter  
 No one is able  
 No one can believe  
 No one can speak good things  
 No one can be subject  
 No one can please God

The Operative word here is **CANNOT**

All these verses use the same word translate can, cannot, or able or could not

All are **present tense verbs** with the exception of John 12 that is imperfect tense

But all mean a continuous action.

**dunamai: to be able, to have power**

**Original Word:** δύναιμι

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** dunamai

**Phonetic Spelling:** (doo'-nam-ahee)

**Short Definition:** I am powerful, am able



**Definition:** (a) I am powerful, have (the) power, (b) I am able, I can.

**Cognate:** 1410 *dýnamai* (a primitive verb) – to show *ability* (power); *able* (*enabled* by God), *empowered*. See the cognate-noun, 1411 */dýnamis* ("ability, power").

Words deriving from the stem δυνα- all have the basic meaning of “being able,” of “capacity” in virtue of an ability;

Grundmann, W. (1964–). δύναμαι, δυνατός, δυνατέω, ἀδύνατος, ἀδυνατέω, δύναμις, δυνάστης, δυναμόω, ἐνδυναμόω. G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 2, p. 284). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

The Hebrew equivalent is

“ykl” —to be able, have power, prevail, endure, to be capable of, to have the power to.

This brings us to the controversial, and much debated and greatly misunderstood doctrine of the freedom of the will or Free will

Many today hold to the doctrine of the Free will of man. in fact churches have named themselves “Freewill Baptist”

Many believe that the free will of man is sacred and untouchable and that if you take away mans free will, then God becomes a monster and man becomes a Robot.

While others believe that God would never touch the free will of man and would never make man do something he didn't want to.

Others still teach that the truth of the gospel hinges on the belief that man has a free will

or That the gospel cannot be effective if man is not free.

### **John Owen (1616-1683)**

Our next task is to take a view of **the idol himself**, of **this great deity of FREE-WILL**, whose original being not well known. **He is pretended**, like the Ephesian image of Diana,<sup>64</sup> **to have fallen down from heaven and to have his endowments from above** (Act 19:24-35). But yet considering what a **nothing he was at his first discovery in comparison of that vast giant-like hugeness to which now he is grown**,

### 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

#### Chapter 9: Of Free Will

3.\_\_\_\_\_ Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

( [Romans 5:6](#); [Romans 8:7](#); [Ephesians 2:1, 5](#); [Titus 3:3-5](#); [John 6:44](#) )

Couple of clarification of Free Will That will help guide you through the maze of arguments made for and against the idea of free will

#### What is the Will

Jonathan Edwards states IN HIS BOOK THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

“And therefore I observe, that the Will is, That by which the mind chooses any thing. The faculty of the will, is that power, or principle of mind, by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice...”

### **1. The Bible never says your will is free.**

To the contrary, it says your will is enslaved

Romans 6

Romans 6:16–22 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves **slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves** whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But God be thanked that *though* you **were slaves of sin**, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

<sup>18</sup> And having been **set free from sin**, you became **slaves of righteousness**. <sup>19</sup> I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness*, so now present your members *as slaves of righteousness* for holiness.

<sup>20</sup> For when you **were slaves of sin**, you **were free** in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. <sup>22</sup> But now having been **set free**

from sin, and having become **slaves of God**, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

## **2. We often misunderstand how the will works**

There has never been a decisions, choice or act of your will that has not been influenced by something.

“YOU ARE FREE TO CHOOSE BUT YOUR CHOICE IS NOT FREE”

**JONATHAN EDWARDS SAID IN HIS BOOK THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL**

“FREE MORAL AGENTS ALWAYS ACT ACCORDING TO THE STRONGEST INCLINATION THEY HAVE AT THE MOMENT OF CHOICE”

## **3. Our will is affected by the Fall and Salvation.**

1. Adam before fall = free to choose good or evil
2. Adam after the fall = free to choose only evil, sin
3. You before salvation = free to choose evil only
4. You after salvation = free to chose good or evil
5. You in Heaven = free to choose good only, no sin

### **JC Ryle,**

“The corrupt will--the secret disinclination--the lack of heart, are the real causes of unbelief. It is here the mischief lies. The power that we lack is a new will. It is

precisely at this point that we need the "drawing" of the Father."

"Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region: it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whoever thou art, that art not born again" (Thos. Boston, 1680).

Charles Spurgeon

"Man as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is Christ Jesus so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him?

Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God" (C.H. Spurgeon, Sermon on [John 6:44](#)).

Charles Spurgeon

"'Oh!' said the Arminian, 'men may be saved if they will.' We reply, 'My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty.' We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ Himself declares it—'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life' ([John 5:40](#)); and as long as that 'ye will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will. It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. 'Now,' says one, 'I believe men can be saved if they will.' My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare

upon scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever be constrained towards Christ" (C.H. Spurgeon).

"Now here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says the man should not stoop; and the corrupt affections rising against the Lord, in defense of the corrupt will, says, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power come, in which he is made a new creature" (T. Boston).

#### **4. The Reason Men do Come**

The Reason men come to Christ is because they are called.

Romans 8:28–30 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

<sup>30</sup> 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 the call that you read about in Romans 8. It is a call that justifies. It is a call that comes according to the divine purpose. It is a call that comes to those who are predestined, those who are elect, those who are chosen. It is a call that leads through justification to eternal glory. Theologians have called this call an effective call, an efficacious call, a determinative call, a decisive call, a conclusive call, an operative call and an irresistible call. It is the call to salvation. It is the divine summons. It is the divine subpoena, not for judgment and not for punishment, but so that you can be declared righteous, free from condemnation, forgiven. It is the call to salvation.

Romans 1:5–6 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,  
<sup>6</sup> among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

Romans 9:22–24 (NKJV)

<sup>22</sup> What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,



<sup>24</sup> *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Galatians 1:15 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup> But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace,

2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, <sup>14</sup> to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are the church    the ekklesia  
The called out ones,

## **Irresistible Grace**

by John Piper

The doctrine of irresistible grace does not mean that every influence of the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted. It means that the Holy Spirit can overcome all resistance and make his influence irresistible.

In Acts 7:51 Stephen says to the Jewish leaders, "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did." And Paul speaks of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

God gives many entreaties and promptings which are resisted. In fact the whole history of Israel in the Old Testament is one protracted story of resistance, as the parable of the wicked tenants shows (Matthew 21:33-43; cf. Romans 10:21).

The doctrine of irresistible grace means that God is sovereign and can overcome all resistance when he wills. "He does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand!" (Daniel 4:35). "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases" (Psalm 115:3). When God undertakes to fulfill his sovereign purpose, no one can successfully resist him.

This is what Paul taught in Romans 9:14-18, which caused his opponent to say, "Why then does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" To which Paul answers: "Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me thus?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?" (Romans 9:20f).

*More specifically irresistible grace refers to the sovereign work of God to overcome the rebellion of our heart and bring us to faith in Christ so that we can be saved.* If our doctrine of total depravity is true, there can be no salvation without the reality of irresistible grace. If we are dead in our sins, totally unable to submit to God, then we will never believe in Christ unless God overcomes our rebellion.

Someone may say, "Yes, the Holy Spirit must draw us to God, but we can use our freedom to resist or accept that drawing." Our answer is: except for the continual exertion of saving grace, we will always use our freedom to resist God. That is what it means to be "unable to submit to God." If a person becomes humble enough to submit to God it is because God has given that person a new, humble nature. If a person remains too hard hearted and proud to submit to God, it is because that person has not been given such a

willing spirit. But to see this most persuasively we should look at the Scriptures.

In John 6:44 Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." This drawing is the sovereign work of grace without which no one can be saved from their rebellion against God. Again some say, "He draws all men, not just some." But this simply evades the clear implication of the context that the Father's "drawing" is why some believe and not others.

Specifically, John 6:64-65 says, "'But there are some of you that do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that should betray him. And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'"

Notice two things.

First, notice that coming to Jesus is called a gift. It is not just an opportunity. Coming to Jesus is "given" to some and not to others. Second, notice that the reason Jesus says this, is to explain why "there are some who do not believe." We could paraphrase it like this: Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would not believe on him in spite of all the teaching and invitations he received. And because he knew this, he explains it with the words, No one comes to me unless it is given to him by my Father. Judas was not given to Jesus. There were many influences on his life for good. But the decisive, irresistible gift of grace was not given.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 says, "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth."

Here, as in John 6:65 repentance is called a gift of God. Notice, he is not saying merely that salvation is a gift of God. He is saying that the prerequisites of salvation are also a gift. When a person hears a preacher call for repentance he can resist that call. But if God gives him repentance he cannot resist because the gift is the

removal of resistance. Not being willing to repent is the same as resisting the Holy Spirit. So if God gives repentance it is the same as taking away the resistance. This is why we call this work of God "irresistible grace".

NOTE: It should be obvious from this that irresistible grace never implies that God forces us to believe against our will. That would even be a contradiction in terms. On the contrary, irresistible grace is compatible with preaching and witnessing that tries to persuade people to do what is reasonable and what will accord with their best interests.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 says, "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jew and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Notice the two kinds of "calls" implied in this text.

First, the preaching of Paul goes out to all, both Jews and Greeks. This is the general call of the gospel. It offers salvation to all who will believe on the crucified Christ. But by and large it falls on unreceptive ears and is called foolishness.

But then, secondly, Paul refers to another kind of call. He says that among those who hear there are some who are "called" in such a way that they no longer regard the cross as foolishness but as the wisdom and power of God. What else can this call be but the irresistible call of God out of darkness into the light of God? If ALL who are called in this sense regard the cross as the power of God, then something in the call must effect the faith. This is irresistible grace.

It is further explained in 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God...It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Since men are blinded to the worth of Christ, a miracle is needed in order for them to come to see and believe. Paul compares this miracle with the first day of creation when God said, "Let there be light." It is in fact a new creation, or a new birth. This is what is meant by the effectual call in 1 Corinthians 1:24.

Those who are called have their eyes opened by the sovereign creative power of God so that they no longer see the cross as foolishness but as the power and the wisdom of God. The effectual call is the miracle of having our blindness removed. This is irresistible grace.

Another example of it is in Acts 16:14, where Lydia is listening to the preaching of Paul. Luke says, "The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul." Unless God opens our hearts, we will not heed the message of the gospel. This heart-opening is what we mean by irresistible grace.

Another way to describe it is "new birth" or being born again. We believe that new birth is a miraculous creation of God that enables a formerly "dead" person to receive Christ and so be saved. We do not think that faith precedes and causes new birth. Faith is the evidence that God has begotten us anew. "Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God" (1 John 5:1).

When John says that God gives the right to become the children of God to all who receive Christ (John 1:12), he goes on to say that those who do receive Christ "were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." 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.

Man is dead in trespasses and sins. He cannot make himself new, or create new life in himself. He must be born of God. Then, with the new nature of God, he immediately receives Christ. The two acts (regeneration and faith) are so closely connected that in experience we cannot distinguish them. God begets us anew and the first glimmer of life in the new-born child is faith. 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."

\*\* Excerpt Taken From [What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism](#) by John Piper & Bethlehem Baptist Church Staff