

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me...No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.

— John 6:37a, 44

When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see Christ and God's offer of salvation in Him, we find Christ irresistible. All that the Father entrusts to Christ to save will come to Christ. The Father gives lost sinners the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes to see Christ and thereby draws us to Him. Seeing Christ and putting our faith in Him, we are saved, and Christ will raise us up on the last day.

At root, "irresistible grace" is a statement about God. God is irresistible. Jesus is irresistible, since in addition to being fully human, he is also fully God. He fills the human heart with "joy inexpressible and filled with glory" (1 Peter 1:8). In *Religious Affections*, Jonathan Edwards observed that in humans there is a twofold faculty. By one part, we know things and correctly identify them. By the other, we are drawn to or repulsed by the things under consideration. So, for instance, when someone walks into a room, we not only correctly identify who they are, but we either light up or scowl. Edwards further observed that different things have varying degrees of power to move our hearts toward or away from them. We may prefer Coke over Pepsi, but our hearts are only a little moved. We'll take the Pepsi, if that's all they have. People move our hearts far more than food or drink. Above all things, Christ has infinite power to move the human heart—simply by virtue of who He is. So when the Spirit opens our eyes to see Him, we simply must receive Him.

It is not that the Spirit so overpowers our will that we really have no choice. We do make a choice! The Spirit simply restores our hearts so that we see Christ for who He really is and desire Him above all. In accordance with the genuine desire of our hearts, we choose Christ. It may happen instantly, it may take a period of time, or it may take most of our lives. But all whom the Father gives Christ eventually come to Him. And since there is simply nothing in all creation more desirable, we feel as though there really is no other choice. Who chooses something less, when something more is offered?

The *Canons of Dort* note that the Spirit does not work in us as if we were blocks or stones. He does not coerce a reluctant will by force. Rather, the Spirit revives and heals our will and, in a manner at once pleasing and powerful, draws us to Christ. So no one is drug "kicking and screaming into heaven," as irresistible grace suggests to some. Irresistible grace is less like having our wills overpowered and more like being captivated by beauty—the majesty and beauty of Christ!

Objection: If Christ is irresistible, why doesn't everyone come to Him?

Two things keep sinners like us from finding God irresistible. First, we suppress the truth in our unrighteousness. Captivated by worldly pleasure, deceived by Satan's lies, and bent on living life on our own terms, whatever the cost, we seek to put God out of our minds. To do so takes constant effort. We deliberately ignore Him, since, in accordance with Satan's lie, we view Him as a selfish tyrant out to ruin our happiness and keep us under His thumb. Secondly, until we hear of God's offer of reconciliation in Christ, knowledge of our sin keeps us from God. The light of nature teaches us that God exists, and our conscience convicts us of sin. Only in Scriptures do we discover God's grace. So until we hear God's offer of reconciliation, we expect only judgment and wrath from God. It keeps us on the run from Him. The Holy Spirit uses us as witnesses to God's grace in Christ to remove the self-imposed blinders from the eyes of those who do not yet know Him. (Hence, the vital importance of evangelism!)

In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Paul says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." No one who sees *that* glory in the face of Jesus Christ can resist. When we discover God's grace in Christ, we behold God's glory and feel powerfully drawn to Him. We can no longer suppress the truth: we no longer want to! And knowledge of our sin no longer keeps us: God offers forgiveness in Christ! And so we come, most willingly and gladly, to Christ our Savior.