

QUESTION: What is "irresistible grace"? Who does God do it for?

ANSWER: The term "irresistible grace" is NOT a biblical term, but one made up by the followers of John Calvin, the 16th Century European preacher and theologian. Calvin's followers came up with something they called "Five Points of Calvinism" many years after Calvin himself died. They took some of his teachings to the extreme, and I do not believe they are all biblically correct or balanced. We cannot spend time to look at all five points, but the fourth "point" is this term "irresistible grace". "The Calvinists believed that the Lord possesses irresistible grace that cannot be obstructed. They taught that the free will of man is so far removed from salvation, that the elect are regenerated (made alive spiritually) by God even before expressing faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. If a totally depraved person wasn't made alive by the Holy Spirit, such a calling on God would be impossible." In other words, they teach that we have no part in accepting Christ as our Savior, not even **the FREE WILL to chose Him or reject Him**. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible does teach that those who believe are chosen by God, but since those who reject Christ are held responsible for their choice, it would not be fair and just of God to choose some to go to heaven and others to go to hell purely on the basis of His own choice, without some free will choice of their own. We cannot fully understand God's ways, because **His ways are higher than our ways** (Isaiah 55:8-9), but the following Bible study shows the balance that God's word gives to our free will and His election (choosing those He saves).

1. First of all, we must realize that **GOD is ABSOLUTELY FAIR and JUST! God chooses whom He chooses**, and we are not qualified to question His choice. It is God's MERCY that He SAVES ANYONE at ALL! We ALL deserve to go to hell, but He graciously chooses some, and then **works in their lives to DRAW THEM TO JESUS, and gives them the ability to believe**. God did not give the ANGELS who rebelled with Satan a second chance, but He gives humanity a second chance. If He saved EVERYONE, He would be just as UNFAIR and UNJUST as if He did not save anyone. **This is a PARADOX, and a question that cannot be FULLY answered** until we get to heaven, because it does seem, according to certain scriptures, that there is a certain WILLINGNESS of HEART that God sees in some, as opposed to others. Also, God holds ALL men ACCOUNTABLE for their REJECTION of Him, and it would be UNFAIR and UNJUST of God to do that if man did not have SOME CHOICE in the decision (Isaiah 30:18, "For the Lord is a God of JUSTICE; blessed are all those who wait for Him."). Romans 3:5-6 says "But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? **IS GOD UNJUST** who inflicts WRATH? (I speak as a man). **CERTAINLY NOT!** For then how will God judge the world?" Just as Paul says, "I speak as a man," we should not try to impose our imperfect HUMAN IDEAS of what is fair and just onto an infinite, omniscient and holy God!

2. GOD IS NOT WILLING FOR ANYONE TO PERISH (GO TO HELL) . God does not WANT anyone to go to hell, but many CHOOSE to go there by their REJECTION of His only way of salvation. God has given enough information and witness about Himself in nature and in the hearts of human beings for them to choose to know more about Him if they want to. God then, is responsible for getting more information to them about His Son Jesus Christ, in order for them to believe and be saved, and that is the motivation behind all of our missionary efforts.

- **II Peter 3:9** "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **NOT WILLING** THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH, but that ALL should come to repentance."
- **I Timothy 2:3-4** "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of **God our Savior, who DESIRES ALL MEN to be SAVED** and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

- **Revelation 22:17** "And the Spirit and the bride say, '**Come!**' And let him who hears say, '**Come!**' And let him who thirsts come. And **WHOEVER DESIRES, let him take the water of life freely.**"
- **John 6:40** "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."
- **Ezekiel 33:11** "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord God, '**I have NO PLEASURE in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked [should] turn from his way and live.** Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"

3. GOD'S WORD SHOWS THAT by MAN'S HARDNESS OF HEART it is possible to RESIST the Holy Spirit and the GRACE of God that is offered to him.

- **Read Romans 1:18-28** (Verse 28) "And even as **they DID NOT LIKE to RETAIN GOD** in their KNOWLEDGE, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting."
- **Romans 2:4-5** "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that **the GOODNESS of God LEADS YOU to repentance?** But in accordance with **YOUR hardness and YOUR impenitent HEART** you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."
- **John 5:40** "But **you are not WILLING** to come to Me that you may have life."
- **Acts 7:51** "You stiff-necked (stubborn) and uncircumcised **in HEART and ears! You always RESIST the Holy Spirit;** as your fathers did, so do you."
- **Romans 10:21** "But to Israel He says, 'All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'"

4. GOD DOES SHOW MERCY ON SOME AND NOT ON OTHERS. The facts are that some have **hardened hearts**, and **ears that do not hear**, and **eyes that do not see**. The question is, does God make them that way, or do they make themselves that way? Jesus said, "**to you who hear, more will be given**" so it sounds to me like they have a choice in the matter. God GIVES MORE INFORMATION and bestows MORE MERCY, GRACE and COMPASSION on those who show some sign of being open and willing to receive from Him. The Parable of the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:10-23, Mark 4:13-25, and Luke 8:9-15) also seems to indicate that there are different degrees of hardness or softness in peoples' hearts, and that there are some that are "good ground."

- **Romans 9:14-29** "What shall we say then? **Is there unrighteousness (unfairness) with God? Certainly not!** 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."
- **Matthew 13:10-23** "And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' 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.**'" (Verse 23) "But he who received seed on the good ground is **he who hears the word and understands it**, who indeed bears fruit and produces; some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."
- **Read Mark 4:13-25** "And He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?'" (Verses 23-24) "**If anyone has EARS to HEAR, let him hear.** And He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to **YOU who HEAR, MORE will be GIVEN.**'"
- **Luke 8:9-15** "Then His disciples asked Him, saying, 'What does this parable mean?' And He said, '**To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God**, but to the rest it is given in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'" (Verse 15) "But the ones that fell on the good ground are

those **who, having** heard the word **with a NOBLE and GOOD HEART**, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

- **Acts 28:17-28** "And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together.....to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. And **SOME were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and SOME disbelieved**. So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word, 'The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, "Go to this people and say: 'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see, and not perceive; for **the heart of this people has grown dull**. Their ears are hard of hearing, and **their eyes THEY have closed, lest they should see with their eyes** and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them.'" Therefore let it be known to you that **the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles**, and they will hear it!"
- **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."

5. GOD CHOOSES US IN ORDER FOR US TO HAVE NOTHING TO BOAST ABOUT. We cannot earn our salvation or **add one thing to what Christ has done on the cross**. Jesus says that we are a gift to Him from God the Father, and that He already knows who are His sheep even before we "hear His voice" and begin to follow Him. Perhaps even the openness of our hearts and the very faith to believe in Christ is given to us by God, in which case this is a question that can only be understood when we get to heaven. For now, we must just accept what God's word says, on both sides of the issue. As to WHY God does things the way He does, the key phrases in the verses below are:

"so that He might SHOW the exceeding riches of His GRACE in His kindness"
"it pleased God"
"according to His good pleasure"
"according to the good pleasure of His will"
"according to the PURPOSE of Him who WORKS ALL THINGS according to the counsel of His OWN WILL"

In other words, it is ALL ABOUT GOD and not about us!

- **I Corinthians 1:18-31** (Verse 21) "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through [*its*] wisdom did not know God, **it pleased God** through the foolishness of the message preached to SAVE those who BELIEVE." (Verse 27) "For **God has CHOSEN the foolish things** of the world to put to shame the wise, and **God has CHOSEN the weak things** of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."
- **Ephesians 2:4-9** "But God, who is rich in mercy, for **His great love with which He loved us**, even when we were DEAD in sins, has made us alive together with Christ (by grace are you saved), and has raised us up together, and has made us to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus; that **in the ages to come, He might SHOW the exceeding riches of His GRACE in His kindness towards us** in Christ Jesus. 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."
- **Ephesians 1:3-6 & 9-11** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places IN CHRIST; 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; having **PREDESTINED** us to adoption as sons (children) by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." "Having made known unto us the MYSTERY of His will, according to **His good pleasure** which He has purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth - in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance,

being **PREDESTINED according to the purpose of Him who WORKS ALL THINGS according to the counsel of His own will;**"

Definition: "CHOSE US IN HIM Before the foundation of the world" - This means God chose us and our names are written in the Book of Life of JESUS, the LAMB of GOD, before we ever accepted Christ, before we were born, and even before God created the world. In Ephesians 1:5 it is called "being **PREDESTINED**" and in **I Peter 1:2** it is called being **ELECT**. Not only has God CHOSEN US before the world existed, but He KNEW (foreknowledge) how He would save us through the death of His own Son, before He even created man or before man sinned. Notice how in I Peter 1:2 all three persons of the Godhead are involved in our salvation. The Holy Spirit seems to do the work of sanctifying, but it is by the blood of Jesus, and all according to the Father's plan from all eternity.

- **I Peter 1:2** "**ELECT** according to the **foreknowledge** of **God the Father**, in sanctification of the **Spirit**, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus Christ**."
- **Revelation 13:8** "And all who dwell on the earth will worship him (the anti-Christ), whose names have NOT been **written in the Book of Life of the Lamb** which was slain from the foundation of the world."
- **Read John 6: 44-47** (Verse 44) "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 15:16** Jesus said, "**You have NOT chosen Me, but I have CHOSEN YOU**, and ordained you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...."
- **Read John 6:63-65** (Verse 65) "And He said, 'Therefore I have said to you, that no one can come unto Me **unless IT HAS BEEN GRANTED to him BY MY FATHER**.'"
- **John 6:37** "**All that the Father GIVES ME** will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."
- **Jeremiah 1:5** "**Before** I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and **before you came forth out of the womb**, I sanctified you and **I ordained you** to be a prophet unto the nations."
- **Romans 9:11 & 23-24** "For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that **the PURPOSE of God according to ELECTION** (His choice) might stand, not of WORKS but of **Him who calls (chooses)**..." "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of MERCY, which He had PREPARED BEFOREHAND for glory, even US whom **He called**, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."
- **II Timothy 1:9** "Who has saved us and called us with a holy **CALLING**, not according to OUR WORKS, but according to **His own PURPOSE** and **grace** which was given to US in Christ Jesus BEFORE time began."

6. BECAUSE GOD DOES ALL THE WORK, WE CAN HAVE ASSURANCE. It is NOT our own goodness or works of any kind that have saved us or that KEEP us saved - it is the SAVING power of God and the KEEPING power of God. Since God chose us apart from any goodness of our own, He is able also to KEEP US FROM FALLING. Not only that, but the very purpose for which we were chosen and predestined is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and to proclaim God's glory.

- **Jude 24-25** "Now unto **Him who is able to KEEP you from stumbling (falling)**, and to present you faultless (without blame) before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior..."
- **Read John 10:27-30** "**My Sheep** hear My voice, and I know them, and they FOLLOW Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 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."
- **Romans 8:28-31** "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**. For whom He did **foreknow**, him **He also PREDESTINED to be conformed to the**

image of His Son, that He might be the FIRSTBORN among many brethren. Moreover, whom He **PREDESTINED**, these He also **CALLED**; whom He called, these He also JUSTIFIED; and whom He justified, these He also GLORIFIED. What then shall we say to these things? If God is FOR US, who can be against us? "

- **I Peter 2:9** "But you are a **CHOSEN generation**, a royal priesthood, a HOLY nation, His own SPECIAL people, that **you may PROCLAIM the PRAISES of Him who CALLED you** out of darkness into His marvelous light."