

Our TULIP series of booklets have been read by Christians around the world and have been used by missionaries and other teachers to disciple their brothers and sisters in Christ.

TULIP SERIES

Man's Sinfulness, God's Sovereignty, and the New Birth (Book T)

How sinful is mankind? Are unsaved people sick and in need of a cure? Or is their condition far worse? Can the natural, sinful man accept Jesus Christ as Savior?

What Must You Do to Be Saved? (Book U)

Is God looking for a few good men or women? Did He look ahead from eternity to see who would respond to the Gospel? What does God want you to do before He will save you?

If Jesus Died for All, Why Are Some Not Saved? (Book L)

If "God so loved the [whole] world," if He "will have all men to be saved," if He is "not willing that any should perish," why every day do people die unsaved?

Can Anyone Refuse God's Grace? (Book I)

Is God pleading with and crying over stubborn sinners who won't accept His grace? Can man thwart God's will?

Once Saved, Always Saved? (Book P)

Can you lose your salvation? Is it arrogant to think you can't? Can you have both security and assurance?

OTHER BOOKLETS

What Is the Gospel?

Paul warned the Galatians, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." But what is the Gospel? And what are some of the false gospels being promoted?

Is Salvation for You?

This Gospel tract emphasizes God's sovereignty, man's inability, and Jesus Christ's totally effectual atonement in salvation. It gives enough information to avoid the pitfall of briefer tracts of being so general they either mislead or leave the reader with more questions than answers.

WORD OF HIS GRACE

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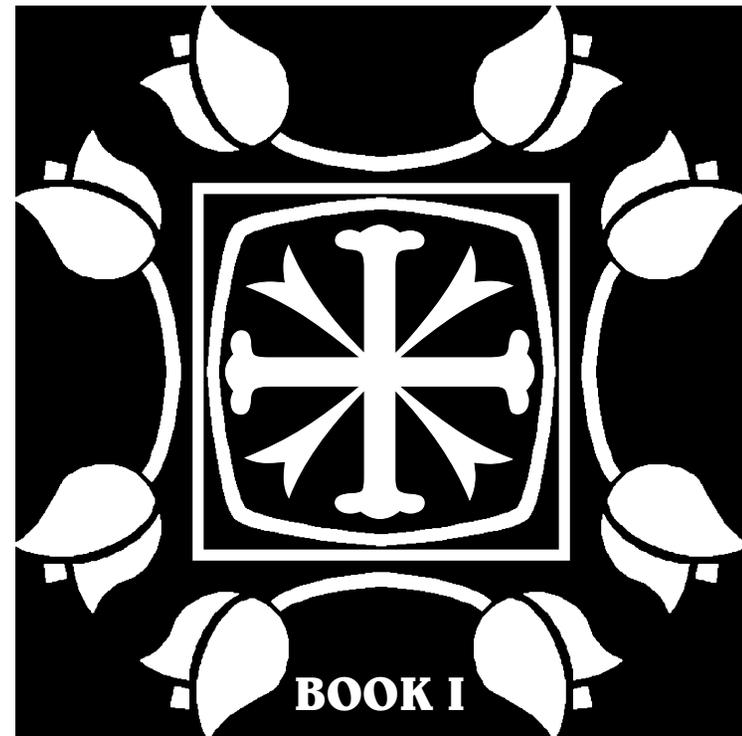
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CAN ANYONE REFUSE GOD'S GRACE?



TULIP SERIES

THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

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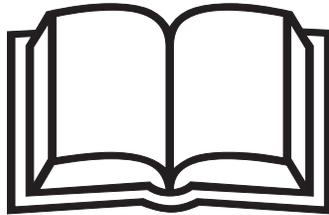
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And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

--Acts 20:32--



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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the KING JAMES VERSION of the Bible.

Who We Are

I hope this little booklet has been a blessing to you. I was a member of and writer for the Worldwide Church of God until 1991. My wife, Mary, was also a member and a production assistant in the church's television department. But then God began revealing to us the truth of His glorious Gospel of the free gift of grace by Jesus Christ. So, in 1991, we left the Worldwide Church of God, our friends, our worldview, and our employment.

In the mid-1990s, I began writing articles that exposed the heresies and spiritual abuses that were continuing in the Worldwide Church of God even after the death of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. These articles appeared in *The Quarterly Journal* of the Personal Freedom Outreach, a well-respected Christian apologetics journal. Many people who read the articles wrote asking for help for themselves or loved ones exiting Armstrongism, to ask doctrinal questions, or to share their experiences in Armstrong-type sects.

I soon came to see that cults and unbiblical teachings are flourishing because too many people are ignorant of the basics of biblical Christianity and only give lip service to following the Bible alone. Toward the end of 2000, I launched Word of His Grace to address these issues through both print and our website, wordofhisgrace.org.

The website has since grown in impact and respect. Our increasing number of articles are reproduced and favorably cited on websites around the world. We publish Gospel tracts and small books that have been widely requested and used by a number of missionaries and other Christian teachers. We also publish an email newsletter. Everything we write is centered on Jesus Christ and our commitment to take the Bible alone for our doctrine.

We are family-based. Mary and I are truly a team and always thank God for having given us to each other. We try to be good stewards of the resources God provides. To this end, we have recently put all of our literature on our website. This has enabled us to scale-back our print publishing, which had been growing increasingly expensive as costs rise. We now send printed materials only to those who do not have access to the internet.

We trust that as long as we continue to please God in what we teach, and we remain good stewards of what He supplies, He will provide everything needed to continue these activities. We do not ask humans for money, or anything, but bring our needs in prayer to God.

This does not mean that God has not used people to provide our needs. He has. It means that we make our needs known to God, and if He then makes them known to you, well, that is between you and Him. This is a lesson in faith. You can trust in God's promises found in Scripture: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). If you are like-minded with us, we would love to fellowship with you. Email us.

By His grace alone,
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Amazing Grace

John Newton
(1725 –1807)

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The LORD has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But GOD, who called me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

ALL THAT THE FATHER GIVETH ME
SHALL COME TO ME; AND HIM THAT
COMETH TO ME I WILL IN NO WISE
CAST OUT. FOR I CAME DOWN FROM
HEAVEN, NOT TO DO MINE OWN WILL,
BUT THE WILL OF HIM THAT SENT
ME. AND THIS IS THE FATHER'S WILL
WHICH HATH SENT ME, THAT OF ALL
WHICH HE HATH GIVEN ME I SHOULD
LOSE NOTHING, BUT SHOULD RAISE
IT UP AGAIN AT THE LAST DAY.

In the above Scripture passage, John 6:37–39, Jesus says that all that the Father gives Him shall come to Him. In this same chapter, Jesus says, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). Can this possibly mean that no one can become a born-again Christian (i.e., not just Christian in name only) except through the working of the Father, and that all whom the Father gives to Jesus shall, without exception, become Christians and be raised to glory on the last day? If so, it would mean that we have no choice in the matter; it would mean that if it is the Father’s will that we become a Christian, we cannot resist becoming one. If this is so, then why do so many ministers try to coax and plead and even terrify people to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior?

Grace

This book is about irresistible grace. It is the fourth book in our TULIP series covering the five points of Calvinism, also called the doctrines of grace. The five points are: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement,

2 Can Anyone Refuse God's Grace?

Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance (or Preservation) of the Saints. You will notice that the first letters of these points spell the acronym TULIP.

Before discussing the irresistibility of grace, this might be a good place to consider what grace is. By this, I don't mean an analysis of the Hebrew and Greek words translated as grace and their various linguistic forms, or any other detailed discussions. I want to give a working definition of grace as it is used in this book with support from the Bible: Grace is the 1) unmerited, 2) eternal, 3) saving favor 4) God 5) freely and 6) sovereignly bestows on 7) His people only.

Let's take these one at a time:

1) Grace is unmerited. Romans 4:4 says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." In other words, if we receive a reward because of our works, then we did not receive that reward because of grace. Verse 5 continues, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Paul expresses a similar thought in Romans 11:6: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

2) Grace is eternal. God determined to impart His grace to His people from eternity, before the world began: "[God] Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Timothy 1:9).

3) Grace is saving favor: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is a good place to emphasize that salvation by grace and salvation by works are completely incompatible. This is supported by Romans 11:6, quoted above. Also, in Galatians 5:4, we read: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Those who teach that grace and works are not mutually exclusive do not understand the nature of grace: it is either all of grace or none of grace.

4) Grace is bestowed by God. In fact, grace is one of the attributes of God. Peter calls Him "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10). Many of the Scriptures I've already quoted and will quote in this book support this point abundantly.

The Sovereignty of God in Salvation

Arthur W. Pink

(1886 -1952)

The new birth is solely the work of God the Spirit and man has no part or lot in it. This from the very nature of the case. Birth altogether excludes the idea of any effort or work on the part of the one who is born. Personally we have no more to do with our spiritual birth than we had with our natural birth. The new birth is a spiritual resurrection, a "passing from death unto life" (John 5:24) and, clearly, resurrection is altogether outside of man's province. No corpse can re-animate itself. Hence it is written, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). But the Spirit does not "quicken" everybody-why? The usual answer returned to this question is, Because everybody does not trust in Christ. It is supposed that the Holy Spirit quickens only those who believe. But this is to put the cart before the horse. Faith is not the cause of the new birth, but the consequence of it. This ought not to need arguing. Faith (in God) is an exotic, something that is not native to the human heart. If faith were a natural product of the human heart, the exercise of a principle common to human nature, it would never have been written, "All men have not faith" (2 Thess. 3:2). Faith is a spiritual grace, the fruit of the spiritual nature, and because the unregenerate are spiritually dead-"dead in trespasses and sins"-then it follows that faith from them is impossible, for a dead man cannot believe anything. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8)-but they could if it were possible for the flesh to believe. Compare with this last-quoted Scripture Hebrews 11:6-"But without faith it is impossible to please Him." Can God be "pleased" or satisfied with any thing which does not have its origin in Himself?

That the work of the Holy Spirit precedes our believing is unequivocally established by 2 Thessalonians 2:13-"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Note that "sanctification of the Spirit" comes before and makes possible "belief of the truth." What then is the "sanctification of the Spirit?" We answer, the new birth.

Excerpted from Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House) 72-73

Efficacious Grace

Lorraine Boettner
(1901–1990)

When Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," a mighty power went along with the command and gave effect to it. Lazarus, of course, was not conscious of any other than his own power working in him; but when he later understood the situation he undoubtedly saw that he had been called into life wholly by divine power. God's power was primary, his was secondary, and would never have been exerted except in response to the divine. It is in this manner that every redeemed soul is brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. And just as the dead Lazarus was first called back into life and then breathed and ate, so the soul dead in sin is first transferred to spiritual life and then exercises faith and repentance and does good works.

Paul emphasized this very point when he said that although Paul might plant and Apollos might water, it was God who gave the increase. Mere human efforts are unavailing. If a crop of wheat is to be raised, man can do only the most external and mechanical things toward that end. It is God who gives the increase through the sovereign control of forces which are entirely outside the sphere of man's influence. Likewise, in regard to the soul it matters not how eloquent the preacher may be, unless God opens the heart there will be no conversion. Here especially man does only the most external and mechanical things and it is the Holy Spirit who imparts the new principle of spiritual life.

Excerpted from *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, Chapter 13.

5) Grace is free. Again, many other Scripture passages quoted in this book support this, and Romans 3:24 specifically says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

6) Grace is a sovereign act of the sovereign God. The very fact that grace is unmerited implies that God bestows it sovereignly on whom He will. The Lord said to Moses, "I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" (Exodus 33:19). Notice that coming in prayer before God's throne from which He sovereignly rules is described as coming "unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16).

7) God bestows grace on His people only. This can be seen in Romans 9:21–24 and is thoroughly explained in Book L of this TULIP series. Grace is sometimes wrongly confused with mercy. The Bible speaks of God's "tender mercies over all his works" (Psalm 145:9; see also Matthew 5:45), but it never mentions God bestowing grace on humanity in general.

What Irresistible Grace is Not

Before showing from Scripture the irresistibility of grace, I want to explain what irresistible grace is not. God does not, through irresistible grace, force the sinner against his or her will to be saved. No one is saved who does not want to be saved. On the other hand, He does not leave the decision up to the sinner's "free will." Through irresistible grace, God creates within the sinner the desire to be saved. He softens the heart; that is, He prepares the mind to believe the Gospel. Previously, the sinner may not have cared about the Gospel or perhaps was hostile toward it. But when God works His grace in the sinner, the sinner willingly accepts it.

Irresistible Grace Implied

If you have read the previous books in this TULIP series, you might already have noticed that irresistible grace is implied by the other points of Calvinism: If a sinner is totally depraved, spiritually dead, and incapable of good, then grace must be irresistible or the sinner would surely resist it. If,

through unconditional election, God chose His people from before the foundation of the world, then grace must be irresistible so none (God's elect) to whom God gives it can resist it. To say that some of God's elect can reject grace and therefore become not elect is nonsense. If Jesus Christ died to save only His people—limited atonement—then it would make no sense for those people to be able to reject the grace by which they are saved. If the people for whom Christ died were able to reject grace, and thereby reject salvation, it would mean that Christ did not die for those for whom He died. This, once again, is nonsense.

If, therefore, the previous points of Calvinism are true, and the Scriptures as explained in the other books are sufficient proof of the truth of these points, then irresistible grace is also true. But let's examine some Scriptures that pertain specifically to irresistible grace.

Irresistible Grace in the Scriptures

Acts 13:48 is very straightforward: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Did any who were ordained to eternal life (the elect) resist? No. It would have been an impossibility for those who were ordained to eternal life to resist God's grace and thereby reject the eternal life to which God had ordained them.

John 6:44–45 is about grace and speaks of its irresistibility: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Only those whom the Father draws to Jesus come to Jesus, and Jesus will raise these people on the last day. There is no mention of anyone having a free-will choice in the matter. Jesus continues, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Again, all who hear and learn from the Father, i.e., have their minds opened to the Gospel, come to Jesus; there is no possibility of resisting.

The parable of the Good Shepherd (Jesus) in John 10 also shows irresistible grace. Notice verses 3–4: "To him the porter openeth; and the

On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished," and by that He meant that He had completely accomplished the salvation of His people (John 19:30; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 9:28; 10:10). Nothing more need ever—indeed must never—be added to what Jesus has done (Romans 11:6; Galatians 5:4). On the third day, He rose from the grave, proving Himself to be the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:6–7; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:4). Those who believe the Gospel (because they are elect and have been given saving faith through a miraculous renewing of their minds known as regeneration or being born again) and trust in Jesus Christ alone as Savior have their sins forgiven and are saved (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18). They are declared "not guilty," (justified) (Romans 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:24). The righteousness of Jesus Christ is counted as theirs, imputed to them; it is as if they wear Christ's righteousness as a robe, and when God looks on them He sees Christ's righteousness instead of their sinfulness (Romans 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 7:9, 13–14; 19:7–8). Due to what Jesus has done, the elect are saved (Romans 6:23b; 1 Thessalonians 5:9–10; 2 Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 5:8–9).

As we have seen in this book, the elect cannot frustrate God's will by rejecting salvation and making Christ's sacrifice ineffective. Likewise, Jesus Christ did not die for those who are never saved because they are not elect, for this too would make His sacrifice ineffective. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is totally effective or efficient for those for whom He died, the elect. God has set about to save His people through Jesus Christ, and He will completely succeed.

What a comfort the doctrine of irresistible grace is to all who know it! It means that no one whom God desires to save can reject His grace. There is no such thing as God crying over those who reject His offer of salvation. There is no such thing as thousands or millions of people dying unsaved who could have been saved. Not one whom God has determined to save will be lost.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

John 5:24

like water. Pray that God will feed you with His Word, and then enjoy the feast with diligent study. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Remember that Paul commended the Ephesian elders to "to God, and to the word of his grace," not to popes, presbyters, and pastors. They will not be with you when you stand before the judgment seat. Make sure you are not being led astray. Be certain you know and believe the true Gospel. Imitate the noble Bereans and search the Scriptures to see if what you hear and read are so. Do this with what you have read in this book and what I say below about the Gospel.

The Gospel

Word of His Grace Ministries publishes a book called *What Is the Gospel?* and I encourage you to read it. It has far more detail concerning the Gospel than I can give here. But I want to briefly outline the Gospel. The Gospel is not that God wants everyone to be saved. The Gospel is not that Jesus Christ died for every human, all of whom are able to resist God's grace.

Because Adam's sin is imputed to all, with their own sins adding to the offense, everyone is spiritually dead and worthy of eternity in hell (Romans 5:12; 6:23a). Because of their corrupt and sinful nature (total depravity) all are unable to make themselves righteous and save themselves from hell (Isaiah 64:6-7; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-12, 23; see also Book T of this series).

But there is Good News! God has from eternity predestinated some people, His elect, to be saved. He has also determined from eternity that He would save His people through Jesus Christ, His Son. He sent the Son of God to be made flesh and dwell among us (John 1:14; Matthew 16:16; Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus lived a perfectly righteous and sinless life (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 3:18; 1 John 3:5); and He suffered and died for the sins of His people. He took upon Him the punishment they deserved, thereby expiating their sins (extinguishing the guilt they incurred by their sins), satisfying the justice of the Father, and turning away, or propitiating, God's wrath (Isaiah 53:5-6; Matthew 20:28; Romans 3:25; 4:25; 5:6-9; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:4; 3:13; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 4:10).

sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." The Good Shepherd's sheep follow Him when they hear His voice; they do not decide for themselves whether or not to follow.

In John 3:3, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Being born again is an act of grace executed not by the will of man but by the will of God (John 1:13). Jesus uses the term "born again" for a good reason. When God gives a sinner saving faith to believe the Gospel, the person becomes a new creature spiritually (2 Corinthians 5:17). He is born again. When an infant is born, the infant has no choice whether or not to be conceived and born. So it is with the elect sinner who, by God's grace, is born again. He cannot resist.

The person who is born again has passed from death into life (1 John 3:14). Like Lazarus, whom Jesus awakened from death by His call and commanded to come out of the grave, the elect sinner responds to the call of God and is enlivened with spiritual life through no choice of his own (John 11:43-44). Notice Ephesians 2:4-5: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);"

Objections to Irresistible Grace

Of course, the opponents of the doctrines of grace raise objections to irresistible grace. Some of these objections arise out of a misunderstanding of irresistible grace and some out of a misunderstanding of Scripture.

An example of the former is the belief that the doctrine of irresistible grace teaches that God forces people against their will to accept God's grace and be saved. But as I have already explained, God does not force anyone against his or her will to be saved; irresistible grace teaches that God creates within the person through regeneration the desire to be saved. Psalm 110:3 says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." God does not force us to be saved against our will. He gives us the will to be saved.

Another objection to irresistible grace says that many, even most, people resist or reject the Gospel when they hear it. This, it is said, is proof against irresistible grace. But it is not. True, the outward call of the Gospel, which is preached to all indiscriminately, is often rejected. It is the Holy Spirit's inward working of grace, which He does only in the elect, that is never resisted. This inward grace then causes the elect to believe the Gospel. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:12, 14). As Jesus said of this difference between the outward calling of the Gospel and the inward working of grace in the elect, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

A Scripture often brought up against irresistible grace is Acts 7:51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Remember, irresistible grace teaches that God's elect cannot resist the inward working of grace by the Holy Spirit. But this verse is part of what Stephen said to the Jews who were about to stone him. The Holy Spirit was not trying to impart God's grace to these men, though He would later impart grace to one of those consenting to Stephen's death, Saul, who would at that time respond without resistance. The resistance Stephen refers to is their (and their ancestors') continual resistance of the outward message of the prophets and apostles, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The advocates of free will often point to Revelation 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." They say that this is an invitation for anyone—"whosoever will"—to accept or, if they so choose, reject salvation. But who is meant by "whosoever will" and "him that is athirst"?

As we just read in 1 Corinthians 2, the natural man does not receive "the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him." The "natural man" is the person who has not been born again, whose mind has not been renewed by regeneration. The mind of the natural man is carnal:

last, the earnestness and agony of his soul became so great that he prayed all day, till in the evening he got a restful assurance that God would carry on the work" (Samuel L. Brengle, "Soul-Winners and Their Prayers," *Herald of His Coming*, June 1993, 8). The intent of the article quoted is to show Finney's great faith and devotion, but in fact it exposes Finney's lack of faith. Anyone who had to pray all day before he could be assured that "God would carry on the work" even if the evangelist found himself unable to personally evangelize the entire world shows much regard for himself and very little regard for God.

Finney, and others like him who believed in man's free will as opposed to God's sovereignty, had a great influence. So much so that today most who call themselves evangelicals either reject the doctrines of grace or are ignorant of what they are.

Arthur W. Pink, writing in the early twentieth century, warned, "The apostles of Satan are not saloon-keepers and white-slave traffickers, but are for the most part ordained ministers. Thousands of those who occupy our modern pulpits are no longer engaged in presenting the fundamentals of the Christian Faith, but have turned aside from the Truth and have given heed unto fables" ("Another Gospel," <http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?ID=571>). The situation is far worse today. In Matthew 24:24, our Lord says, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." It will not be possible to deceive the elect because of the precious truths they believe through the grace of God. And they find these truths in the Bible.

In the above article, Pink also bemoans, "In addition to the fact that today hundreds of churches are without a leader who faithfully declares the whole counsel of God and presents His way of salvation, we also have to face the additional fact that the majority of people in these churches are very unlikely to learn the Truth themselves. The family altar, where a portion of God's Word was wont to be read daily is now, even in the homes of nominal Christians, largely a thing of the past." Again, things are even worse today. Apostasy cannot go where ignorance has not first tread. Read your Bible every day. Don't just let the words run through your head

Some even use music (all styles from “invitational hymns,” such as “Just As I Am,” to “Christian” rock have been tried), perform “healings” and “miracles,” relate sad stories or tell jokes, dance around the stage, or engage in other forms of showmanship to “get the Holy Spirit moving” (i.e., engage people’s emotions) to get their hearers to come forward and “receive Christ.”

All of this is completely unbiblical because: 1) God does not “offer” grace to everyone or anyone; He gives it to His elect only (John 15:16; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:3–7; 1 Peter 1:2–5; John 6:44). 2) It is God’s gracious act that the Holy Spirit regenerates the elect, giving them saving faith; no other persuasion is needed since the elect cannot resist God’s grace and grace is given to no one else (Ephesians 2:8–9; John 6:37–39). 3) Through the saving faith God gives them, the elect believe the Gospel message when they hear it (or read it) and are saved (1 Corinthians 2:9–16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; Romans 8:30). 4) The job of the preacher is to clearly present the Gospel (Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 9:16). 5) Anything additional that the preacher might devise to get people saved is potentially dangerous because it can distract from the Gospel message and can also result in the false “conversion” (really an emotional response) of those who are not elect (1 Corinthians 1:17–2:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:5). When non-elect converts, who are in reality still carnally minded and hostile to the truth, become a large proportion of the membership or assume leadership roles, they tend to seriously weaken the church and lead it into apostasy.

The burden that the salvation of the world depends on us humans weighs very heavily on some people. Not only is this burden unnecessary and without any foundation in the Bible, but it exalts man at God’s expense. I love doing what I can to spread the Gospel, but I know that it is God who gives the increase and will surely save His people.

On the other hand, notice how the nineteenth-century evangelist Charles Finney, often credited with inventing altar calls, showed his disbelief of irresistible grace and distrust in God by believing that people who could have been saved were dying every day unsaved: “But [Finney] was so intent upon the salvation of men that he could not rest, and, on his return, he got into an agony of soul for the evangelization of the world. At

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Romans 8:5–9

Anyone who is not born again rejects God. God must first regenerate the mind, and He does this only to His elect, then the person will desire or thirst after the things of God; in fact, he will be unable to resist. Revelation 22:17 says nothing of a choice to accept or reject salvation. The “whosoever will” can only refer to those whom God makes willing by His irresistible grace.

In Mark 16:16, Jesus says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Is the Lord here speaking of a free-will choice and the possibility of resisting grace? Not at all. The statements in this verse are straightforward: The believer (signified by baptism) is saved; the nonbeliever is damned. Neither free will nor irresistible grace are addressed. But from other Scriptures we know that only the elect can believe and be saved, and they have no choice in the matter or ability to resist (the Holy Spirit gives them saving faith and causes them to desire salvation).

What of the men in 2 Timothy 3:8 whom Paul says “resist the truth”? An examination of the context of this verse reveals that these are not elect people rejecting God’s grace, but carnally minded men who reject the truth, the Word of God (John 17:17). Rejecting the truth, which is a message, is not the same as rejecting God’s grace. There is no indication in this Scripture that God had ever extended His grace to these people.

Resort is often made to Deuteronomy 30:19, in which God addresses the children of Israel: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” This verse

comes after God lists for the children of Israel the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. If you will read the context of this verse, you will see that the blessings and curses are purely temporal or earthly; there is no mention of either eternal salvation or damnation. The Lord was simply telling these people what they could expect in the way of earthly blessings if they obeyed Him, and what they could expect in the way of earthly curses if they disobeyed Him. There is no possibility of their resisting grace, since grace was not being offered.

But, someone might say, this verse still shows in principle that someone can resist God's will. This is because God says, "choose life," and in the long run the children of Israel did not choose life and were cursed. God's exhortation to "choose life" (though it pertains only to the blessings of mortal life) might possibly be likened to the New Testament church's call to the general public to "repent and believe the gospel." But also like the exhortation in Deuteronomy 30:19, the church's preaching of the Gospel is an outward call that can be resisted. It is the inward working of grace that cannot be resisted, and nothing in Deuteronomy 30:19 can be likened to this.

Somewhat similar Scriptures are found in such places as Deuteronomy 5:29; 32:29; Psalm 81:13; and Isaiah 48:18. An examination of these passages will reveal that they concern only temporal good and do not involve Israel's rejecting grace.

What of Matthew 23:37? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Is this saying that God wanted to give grace to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but they refused it?

Notice that Jesus addresses Jerusalem, saying that He would "have gathered thy children" and "ye would not." He does not say, I would have gathered you and ye would not. He also does not say, I would have gathered thy children and they would not. He says, I would have gathered thy children and ye would not. In other words, Jerusalem was attempting to hinder Christ's gathering its children. More plainly, Christ's preaching and healing ministry attracted great multitudes, but Jerusalem—the civil and religious leaders of Jerusalem—were attempting to hinder this.

This verse does not say that the people were resisting God's grace or even that the leaders were hindering the people from receiving God's grace. It does not concern grace but only Christ's external ministry. It merely says that Christ's ministry was attracting people as chicks are gathered to a hen, but the leaders were attempting to prevent this. It does not even say that the authorities in Jerusalem were thwarting God's will by their actions, but it does perhaps show Jesus' human disappointment in them and sorrow over their impending doom (verse 38; notice Luke 19:37–44).

Isaiah 45:22: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." The argument some base on this verse is that God is commanding everyone to be saved, not everyone is saved, therefore, some must be resisting salvation against God's will. But like the Gospel's call to repentance, this verse is an outward call. This verse does not say God is extending grace to everyone so everyone might, or might not depending on their choice, be saved.

In this passage, God is commanding all the ends of the earth to look to Him and none else and be saved. But if God commands this, is this not His desire? Not necessarily. One cannot draw conclusions from commands. This might sound very curious. But, to see that what God commands is not necessarily what He wills, one need only realize that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, even though God did not will Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

Modern Evangelism

Okay, if grace cannot be resisted, then why do so many preachers, from local pastors to television evangelists, work so hard to make their evangelistic messages as persuasive as possible, even going so far as crying and pleading with people to be saved? The simple answer is that they don't believe the biblical doctrine of irresistible grace. They believe God is offering grace to all of their hearers, that many or even most will resist that grace, and that it is the preacher's job to help these people overcome their resistance through persuasion, pleading, and playing on feelings of guilt and other emotions.