Irresistible Grace?

What would come to be known as "Irresistible Grace": we now turn our attention to the inevitable when following Calvin's line of thought. If we are corrupt, lacking the desire, will, and therefore the ability to come to God, then He must initiate everything. This describes how and why we come to the Lord. It will not be because the Lord works with our own belief; rather, He changes our heart for the better, which will lead (without fail) to faith in Jesus.

Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, chapters 2, section 6 (1559 edition).

Men's inability to do good manifests itself above all in the work of redemption, which God does quite alone

On the other hand, it behooves us to consider the sort of remedy by which divine grace corrects and cures the corruption of nature. Since the Lord in coming to our aid bestows upon us what we lack, when the nature of his work in us appears, our destitution will, on the other hand, at once be manifest. When the apostle tells the Philippians he is confident "that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" [Phil. 1:6], there is no doubt that through "the beginning of a good work" he denotes the very origin of conversion itself, which is in the will. God begins his good work in us, therefore, by arousing love and desire and zeal for righteousness in our hearts; or, to speak more correctly, by bending, forming, and directing, our hearts to righteousness. He completes his work, moreover, by confirming us to perseverance. In order that no one should make an excuse that good is initiated by the Lord to help the will which by itself is weak, the Spirit elsewhere declares what the will, left to itself, is capable of doing: "A new heart shall I give you, and will put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And I shall put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" [Ezek. 36:26–27]. Who shall say that the infirmity of the human will is strengthened by his help in order that it may aspire effectively to the choice of good, when it must rather be wholly transformed and renewed?

If in a stone there is such plasticity that, made softer by some means, it becomes somewhat bent, I will not deny that man's heart can be molded to obey the right, provided what is imperfect in him be supplied by God's grace. But if by this comparison the Lord wished to show that nothing good can ever be wrung from our heart, unless it become wholly other, let us not divide between him and us what he claims for himself alone. If, therefore, a stone is transformed into flesh when God converts us to zeal for the right, whatever is of our own will is effaced. What takes its place is wholly from God. I say that the will is effaced; not in so far as it is will, for in man's conversion what belongs to his primal nature remains entire. I also say that it is created anew; not meaning that the will now begins to exist, but that it is changed from an evil to a good will. I affirm that this is wholly God's doing, for according to the testimony of the same apostle, "we are not even capable of thinking" [2 Cor. 3:5 p.]. Therefore he states in another place that God not only assists the weak will or corrects the depraved will, but also works in us to will [Phil. 2:13]. From this, one may easily infer, as I have said, that everything good in the will is the work of grace alone.

Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, chapters 24, section 2 (1559 edition).

"This inner call, then, is a pledge of salvation that cannot deceive us. To it applies John's statement: "We recognize that we are his children from the Spirit, which he has given us" [1 John 3:24; cf. ch. 4:13]. But lest the flesh boast that it did at least answer him when he called and freely offered himself, he declares that it has no ears to hear, no eyes to see, unless he makes them. Furthermore, he makes them not according to each person's gratefulness but according to his election."

Romans 8:29-30 For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.

- **Question:**
  - Where does this teach that He changed our hearts to answer the call?

John 6:44-45 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me—

- **Question:**
  - Is this saying we literally don't want to seek Jesus or that we can't come to Jesus unless the Father draws him? How does the Father draw? Where does it say, "through the changing of your heart by the Spirit before hearing the word of God?"
    - Side note: Calvin wrote God's draw was "not violent, so as to compel men by external force," yet many today teach this draw is forceful - that God pulls or drags you. Either way, they all teach that if you're chosen, it will happen because it is God's sovereign will.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules.

- **Question:**
  - How would I harmonize this with Ezekiel 11:21? Is it possible for God to initiate everything while also giving humanity free-will? For example: Galatians 5:16, 25? Romans 8:12-14?

God's Character

We give glory to God. We must all eagerly proclaim: man CANNOT save Himself!

- Phil. 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
- Heb. 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
- 2 Cor. 5:17-19 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
- 2 Tim. 1:8-9 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,
- Rom. 5:6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
- Titus 3:4-7 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
  - 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.

But we need to acknowledge God's entire wisdom, will, order of His creation, and our part.

- Ezek. 18:30-32 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."
- 1 Sam. 10:9; 15:11 When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart . . . "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not performed My commandments."
- Rom. 10:21 But of Israel He says, "All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people."
- Acts 20:28-32 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
- John 5:40 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.
- 2 Cor. 6:1 Working together with Him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.
- Matt. 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
- Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.
- Heb. 10:29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?
- Acts 17:30-31 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead."
- John 12:31-32 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.
- Luke 7:29-30 (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)
- Rev. 22:17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.
  - These people were lost because they *wouldn't*, not *couldn't* come to Jesus.