

# Is Irresistible Grace Resistible?

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon explores the concept of Irresistible Grace, debating whether God's call to salvation is irresistible or resistible, and discussing the implications of this concept on our understanding of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.*

**Duration:** 44:46

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:18, Jeremiah 26:3, Mark 10:15, John 3:16, John 16:8, Acts 7:51, Romans 1:20, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 1:13, 2 Peter 3:9

**Topics:** "Free Will", "Irresistible Grace"

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## Description

Shane Idleman addresses the complex theological debate surrounding irresistible grace, exploring whether God's grace can be resisted. He carefully navigates the perspectives of both Calvinism and Arminianism, emphasizing the importance of free will in responding to God's call for salvation. Shane highlights the tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility, arguing that while God draws people to Himself, individuals still have the choice to accept or reject that grace. He passionately calls for a deeper understanding of God's love and justice, urging believers to share the message of hope and redemption with those who feel worthless or lost. Ultimately, Shane encourages the congregation to recognize their value in God's eyes and to actively participate in evangelism.

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## Transcript

The topic before us this morning, I will just tell you up front, is one in which I walk carefully and cautiously. I walk very carefully and cautiously because we're talking about a heavy, heavy weight in theological circles, and the study we're in is theology on fire, and this part of theology is, is irresistible grace resistible? Is irresistible grace resistible? Now, many of you might know what I'm talking about, and that's, that's one, I'll tell you, also, it's hard to prepare a sermon because you know you've got to preach to the Bible students who are, you know, going through the Greek lexicon as I'm speaking, and you also have to talk to the people who are kind of caught in the middle, and then you have to talk to people who really have no clue. Irresistible grace, what are you talking about? The concept comes from, and I'm going to go brief here, part of, with Roman Catholicism in the 14-1500s, you know, about the Protestant Reformation, people came out of that Reformation, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, John Knox, I love, I love reading this guy's biography.

It was said that the Queen of England feared, or the Queen of Scotland, I think it was, feared the prayers of John Knox more than the armies of England. That's how powerful this, these, some of these men were,

and that we, that we read. So out of that, the Roman Catholic Church was works-based, works-based, works-based, works-based, works-based.

So the, you know, the Protestants come out, protest, came out and said, no, it's not about works, sola scriptura, it's scripture only, sola fide, you know, faith only, and I might pronounce some of these Latin words wrong, I didn't brush up my Latin this week. But all the, they came out of that. So when they came out of that, one group, John Calvin, which you'll know as Calvinist, which would be Reformed theology, came up with an acronym of TULIP, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.

And from that, then, a certain form of theology came about. That would be known as Reformed theology. If you want some examples, you would have Valley Bible Fellowship in Lancaster, you'd have Faith Community, you would have John MacArthur in Sun Valley.

They would gravitate towards this type of theology. But then you have other group, another group that really splintered was Jacob Arminianist, or Arminianist, sorry, pronouncing it again. Arminianism comes from this.

And they would challenge John Calvin's points on other things. So John Calvin, Calvinist, would say Total Depravity, TULIP. This group would say, yes, but they're not totally depraved, that they still can't respond to God's offer of salvation.

And then Unconditional Election. So they would just go down the list. So that's where this comes from.

Is God's grace, is his call to people, is it irresistible? Meaning, this group, again, believes and teaches on election. That there is a group of people that are elected by God for salvation. So when the Holy Spirit calls them, that's not resistible.

You can't resist. When the Holy Spirit's saving you, it's irresistible. That's why it's called Irresistible Grace.

So this side would say that the Holy Spirit is convicting and drawing you, and it's up to you to respond or resist. So what I meant earlier by I'm walking carefully and cautiously is because we have both groups in this congregation. And I have friends that are in both groups.

I have strong feelings on what the Word of God says. So what I mean by that is I want to be gracious. I want to be loving.

I've told them too, I don't want to be condescending in this. I've been praying. It was a hard message to prepare this morning.

I was up early praying for just humility. But what I have to do as a preacher, if I'm passionate about something, I'm certain about something, according to God's Word, I preach that with passion. So I don't want people to ever confuse passion with arrogance because there's a big difference there.

So what I decide to do in reading, because I do like this side, Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, this side of George Whitefield, one of my favorites. But I also like John Wesley, A.W. Tozer, Leonard Ravenhill. See, there's good points on both sides.

However, I try to get away from sides and I just look at what the Bible says. Now granted, they'll all say that, right? We're all going to say, well, so let's just look at what the Bible says this morning. So why is there a divide? And what is sad about this is, I don't know if you need to know some of this, but I'll just tell you this.

Because of this message, I will never share probably a stage with people like John Piper, Francis Chin, Sam Storm. I won't share the stage with those in the Reformed movement. And this side does too.

We look at this as a pretty important issue. So this is a dividing line. Right now when I'm preaching, I will get emails, I will get, okay, well, he's not going to be ever a part of our group because of this stance.

And this side gets upset at me because I disagree with them on some of their points. I'll just tell you up front, there's people in this room too. Again, I'm just being honest and loving.

I believe on this side, this group would say you can lose your salvation. I believe that once a person is sealed with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee and you become born again, you're sealed. You can't undo that.

Again, just personal opinion. I know people disagree, but that's my opinion. So this side gets mad at me.

You know, no, you can walk away. You're giving people license to sin. No, I found the opposite.

Somebody who's truly saved doesn't want to sin. So if a person says, I'm just going to keep sinning, I'm saved. You're not saved because your heart's, that's not the right heart.

So see, this side doesn't like me and this side doesn't like me. So I found, well, not like me is not the right term. Disagree is probably the better term.

So that's why this is such a heated argument. Here's why there is a divide. Can man exercise his free will? That's why.

This side says, no, that there is not a free will, that the chosen will be called of God at their time. And they've got good scriptural support in some scriptures. This side says, yes, man can exercise his free will.

So what does the Bible say? Again, in my opinion, working through scripture, 18 years of studying this topic, I had Martin Luther's book, Bondage of the Will, and his debate with Erasmus, I threw against the room. I just threw it. I'm like, I can't grasp some of this.

I can't grasp how is God completely sovereign, yet he calls man to repent. And then fortunately, I stumbled on Spurgeon, and he said, man's responsibility and God's sovereignty run like two straight lines, and we don't know where they cross until eternity. And there's safety in a preacher preaching.

I preach as if God is sovereign. I pray as a Calvinist. Lord, save my children.

I pray, but I also see the other side of that. So that's what I'm hoping to share with you this morning. I just want you to walk through this with me.

So that's the divide. Can man exercise his will? Here's the other question. Is the Holy Spirit's work irresistible? Or is it resistible? Can man resist the work of the Holy Spirit? Now, this might be a surprise to some of you, and I wasn't sure if I was going to share this, but I do believe that a portion of irresistible

grace in this.

When God filled John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, he really didn't have a choice in that. When he said, Isaiah or Jeremiah, before I even formed you in your mother's womb, I called you to be a prophet. By the way, that's what you're going to be.

Paul is on his way to Damascus. I'm going to persecute the church. No, you're not.

Boom. Bright light. Jesus Christ appears and says, no, I'm calling you to the Gentiles.

So I believe that God puts people on his team. That's his good pleasure. There's nothing wrong with that.

When he does that according to his purpose, according to his sovereignty, I don't have a problem with that. Now, as we get into this a little bit more, I'll explain more. Is the Holy Spirit's work irresistible or resistible? John 16, 8 in the English Standard Version.

And when he comes, the Holy Spirit, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. So I think we all agree that the Holy Spirit convicts, right? I don't think there's any doubt in that, in anyone's mind in that area. So conviction is not conversion.

Conviction isn't always conversion. There's a conviction there. That's why the Bible, and I wrote down a lot of scriptures, but I had to end up taking some out because it was too many.

But it would say things like this. You always resist the Holy Spirit. You refuse correction.

You do not listen. You are not willing that you have a lot of these verses in there. So I've just got a few points I'm going to share with you.

Number one, salvation, we know this, is a supernatural act of God. Agreed. Nobody would disagree with that.

Jesus said, But He also encourages people to turn from sin and turn to God to repent. Jesus often marveled at the unbelief of people because of their failure to respond. So you see, that's my challenge.

I see that nobody comes unless the Spirit draws. Okay, this side. Unless the Spirit draws.

But I also see that He just marveled over their unbelief. Paul would just, I mean, they'd be like, What is wrong? Just this marveling. This is, what is wrong with you? Repent and turn back to God.

And this word is interesting. No one can come to me, he said, unless the Father who sent me draws him. And the word is helco.

It means to draw, to pull, to persuade. Some cases, strong exhaustive concordance, I believe, also adds to drag, you know. So there's, nobody can come to God unless the Holy Spirit is working in their life.

Because without that conviction, without that work, we are lost. Acts 7, 51. You stiff-necked people, you uncircumcised in hearts, you are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

So in my opinion, He's talking to unbelievers. You stiff-necked people, you prideful people, you're resisting the Holy Spirit. And then Ephesians 1, 3. And I do have these notes.

If you want them later, I can email them to you. Ephesians 1, 3. Oh, I do have them up there. Good, I'm going quick.

So it'd be hard to keep up, maybe. When you heard the word of truth, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in Him, you were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit. And I believe it goes on to say, I didn't add all that, but you can keep reading up there.

My point was this. It says, when you heard the word of truth, they responded by believing and they were sealed with the Holy Spirit. And I was instantly reminded of that scripture that says, how will they hear if no one is sent? We must send preachers to them so they can hear the gospel, they can hear the message of redemption.

I see a pattern there. Heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation is believed in, and then they're sealed with the Holy Spirit. Now, I don't want to get too technical, but there's another divide on this.

It's called the order of salvation. The order of salvation. This side would say a person hears, they believe.

Basically, I just read. They hear, they believe, and now they receive the Holy Spirit. This side says you actually receive the Holy Spirit first, and then because of the word spirit in your heart, now you're able to believe and exercise faith.

So you have the Holy Spirit before believing. Did I put the sides wrong? I did. That's going to be hard to remember.

Okay, you know I'm going out here, okay? The Calvinists will believe this, that this reform that, and I see, because if you take out that theology all the way through its course, it has to be, that has to be true, if man can't repent or believe. So this side would say the Holy Spirit comes in you first before conversion, and then because of the Spirit's work, now you can exercise faith and repent and believe. So again, personally, I don't subscribe to that order of salvation.

I don't see that in Scripture. I see hearing, believing, receiving the Holy Spirit. Again, a personal opinion.

That's why there's different churches out here. The sad thing is, this has split churches before. These people will leave because of this topic.

And to me, it's an important topic because it changes how you evangelize. It gives you different passions, different goals, different ambitions, the way you approach discipleship, the way you approach preaching. You won't see a lot of this side having altar calls.

Billy Graham's not reformed. Greg Laurie is not reformed. Charles Finney wasn't reformed.

Many of the great Methodist circuit riders weren't reformed because they, that call to people to respond. But you do have, say, a George Whitefield that would do massive types of awakenings and revivals who would still, even though you disagree with them, he would still preach that message of repentance, knowing that God will draw his people. So the question is this, did God create man to receive his offer of salvation or reject it? Did God create you to receive or reject his offer of salvation? And honestly, I don't walk, when I say I'm walking carefully and cautiously, I don't walk in a spirit of doubt.

In my mind, in what I've studied and what I've experienced, this is my firm belief. Now, when I would read other people, I would get confused. So God began to, many years, 2005, I remember God said, just stick

with my word because we're shaped, here's a big thing, we're shaped by who we read.

Most people that have strong opinions on things are shaped by who they follow, who they read. Show me your Facebook post and I'll show you who you read. Right, it goes back to that.

So we are shaped more than we think by outside influence and that is good sometimes because we need godly counsel to speak into our lives to help us. So here's my thing. If God commands it, then we can do it.

He commands all men to repent in Acts 17, 30. Norman Geisler said this, Christ's death made everyone savable but it does not mean that everyone is saved. And again, here's where the two sides depart on something called limited atonement.

Meaning that Christ's death, his blood was shed is limited only to the elect that God chooses. The reason is because Christ's blood is so powerful, if it was applied to the whole world, the whole world would be saved. So it has to be a limited, so they say.

The limited atonement. And interesting, John Calvin wasn't a five point Calvinist, he was a four point. His predecessor, Theodore Besa, B-E-Z-A, brought in limited atonement to the tulip after Calvin died, I believe.

So that's why limited Christ's blood is not shed for the whole world. It's just shed for the elect. And again, I can't, in good conscience, I couldn't tell you that.

I wouldn't, I couldn't agree with that. 1 John 2, 2. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world. And of course, we know John 3, 16.

That Christ died for the whole world. And so again, so there are scriptures on both sides, granted. But the more I tried to weigh them out, this is what I would come up with.

There is also healthy tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Listen to this. Jesus said in Mark 10, 15, assuredly I say to you, so if he's talking to a group of people, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.

So again, just a normal reading to me, he's saying if you've got to receive the kingdom of God like a little child, what does a little child do? Here, take this. Yes, daddy. They'll take it, won't they? They'll just, there's so much trust.

I felt terrible yesterday. My son had bad chap lips. So I said, I have some chapstick here.

And it was peppermint flavor. Oh my, he's screaming in the bathroom. I'm feeling terrible.

It's like, oh, I didn't give him a good gift. That was not a good gift. But he just took it.

Okay, dad, it could have been Lysol. And I'll give them stuff to eat. Okay, dad, they don't even know.

Same thing with God. Sometimes we come questioning and demanding and we take so much pride. And I know this and I know.

He just says, just come to me. Just come to me in childlike faith. And I will no way cast you out.

And then also by nature, by nature, man does not receive the things of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2.14, but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. Did you catch that? By nature, man without Christ does not receive the things of the Spirit.

The natural man does not receive them, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. So the reason I'm reading this is because this side would say that that's a proof text for man being totally depraved and dead in his trespasses. He can't grab onto God's gift of salvation.

However, reading this a dozen times this week, to me, the context is knowing spiritual things, not salvation. Context. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the hearts of man the good things that God has prepared for those who know Him.

And he goes on to say, the natural man knoweth not the things of God that the spiritual man, the Holy Spirit, knows. So then you read this in context. To me, it's dealing with you will not know the spiritual things of God.

To me, it's not a salvation verse. It's not one I could hang my hat on in regard to salvation on either side. And the word receive here is decamoy.

It's an interesting word. The natural man does not decamoy. It means he does not welcome the things of God.

He doesn't take hold of the things of God. And so I thought of this analogy a few times. You've seen this in articles and different things.

Oh, by the way, this is what I've taught for 18 years. This is nothing new. In clips of my sermons, I'll say the exact same thing.

I'm not changing any positions. I'm just reinforcing because we're on this area of theology. Decamoy means not to take hold of or not to welcome.

So he doesn't take hold of, he doesn't welcome. Well, I don't welcome visitors at 1 a.m. But it doesn't mean I can't open the door. So just because somebody doesn't welcome something does not mean that he cannot accept them.

And this is why I believe a person has to hit rock bottom before they finally cry out to Christ. This is why a person has to hit rock bottom. Because I don't welcome the things of God.

I don't want the things of God. No natural man wants the things of God, does he? No natural man wants it. I don't want the things of God.

Well, you get to rock bottom, you'll finally look at the rock at the bottom, to the rock who is at the bottom. It's often, it takes tragedy, it takes failure, it takes being sick, it takes all these things to get this pride out of us and get us to see, okay, Jesus, I need you. I'm not all that and a bag of chips.

I'm not who I thought I was. I do need you, God, I cry out. So here's a couple biggies for me as I'm gonna work my way to the end.

We are all without excuse. I think we all would agree with that. Everyone agrees we are without excuse.

Romans 1.20 says, for since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen so that they are without excuse. In other words, he's saying, if you go back to the beginning of Romans 1 and read in context, that the wrath of God is revealed to mankind. The nature of God, the character of God.

Even his attributes are clearly seen. In other words, the person in Africa who's never heard of Jesus, that's clearly a designer. No matter where you live, there's clearly a designer.

So his invisible attributes scream creator. There's a creator, there's a creator, there's a creator. How did I just get here? There's a creator.

Swahili, if you speak Swahili, you speak French, wherever you're at, there's a creator, just look at creation. And so it goes on to say, because creation screams creator, they're without excuse. If they reject that creator.

It also goes on to say that they did not glorify God. They did not glorify God. And here's where this really was transitional for me many years ago when I was reading, is on all these passages, it doesn't say they could not.

It says they did not. So to me, there's a choice there. So how can a person be without excuse if they do not have the ability to perform what is being asked? Does that make sense? If I say, listen, you're without excuse because you failed to do something.

Well, if they fail to do something, that tells me they can do it. So how can God desire that all men be saved, 2 Timothy, but not give them a choice at all? How can God say, I desire that all men can be saved? But not give them a choice and only select a certain amount of people. To me, again, just reading the Scripture.

I like what one theologian said, when the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, lest it becomes nonsense. Take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context indicate clearly otherwise. So in all these Scriptures, I'm going to read briefly.

I looked at the context over and over and over again. Jesus said in Luke 13, five, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. The responsibility for the action falls on the person, falls on the hearer.

Unless you, if I said, listen, unless you repent, you're going to die. That would, there's an action word in that. Something must happen in order for that spiritual death not to take place.

Jeremiah 11, eight, they did not obey, but they followed the dictates of their own heart. It says they did not obey. This tells me that they could have obeyed.

Again, just reading normal grammar, looking, I looked at the Greek in these, look at the structure of the sentence structure, the verb tenses. And he's saying here, Jeremiah, they did not obey. And God gets mad at them for not obeying.

So why would he get mad at them if they couldn't obey? So to me, these commands reinforce the fact that people have a choice. Jeremiah 26, God said to Jeremiah, tell them everything I command you. Do not omit one word, Jeremiah.

Why? Perhaps they will listen and each turn from their evil ways. So again, I just, I didn't graduate college. You know, again, I'm not, I'm just trying to be honest with you.

The clear reading of Scripture in its context tells me when God says perhaps each one of them will turn from their evil ways, puts it back on the hearer to take action on what God is commanding. If God commands it, you can do it. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, you can be filled.

Turn from sin, you can turn. Repent and believe. A person can repent and believe.

Now, I should probably throw this caveat in here. The reason what I'm saying is looked upon as not correct theology from one camp is because, and I don't know where they're coming from, so I'm just gonna throw it out there. They say, no, that's a good work.

But I'm saying, no, God, if God created us, his image in us is not erased, it's not gone, it's damaged. If God created man in that shaping, in that creating, if God in the DNA structure and all the, if God created us and said, I'm giving you the ability to love me or hate me, God gets all the glory. God gets all the credits.

How is that a good work? I'm simply exercising faith that God has granted. So that one really drives me nuts. That's a good work in God is what it is.

That's not a good work in me, that's a good work in God to bring that about. In Acts 2.30, they ask, what must we do to be saved? What must we do to be saved? What was the answer? Repent and believe, putting the responsibility back on the hearer. Jeremiah 13, oh, I'm sorry, Acts 17.

Some of the Jews were persuaded at Paul's teaching. What does persuaded mean? It means to cause someone to do something through reasoning or argument. So I, and I, there's other incidents of this.

Paul said, King Agrippa, I would to God that I would persuade you. Some of the Jews were persuaded at Paul's teaching. So when I read the preachers in the Bible, I read into their hearts this persuading, this come on, men, draw unto God, change your wicked ways, turn to Him, repent.

There's a persuading that can take place. In Jeremiah 13.11, it says they would not hear. They would not listen.

It doesn't say they could not. And again, that's where I come to this conclusion. Here's a biggie for me.

Jesus rebuked entire cities because they did not repent. And again, I'm, oh God, I'm trying to be so careful here. I'm not poking fun.

I'm not, but this is how it plays out in my mind. Jesus rebuked entire cities because they did not repent. If election is true, and I'm Jesus, I'd say, you know, well, of course they're not gonna repent.

They're not elect. They're not part of, God didn't chose them. I'm not gonna be frustrated.

I'm not gonna be frustrated at God's sovereign plans that they don't turn because that's His plan. But Jesus is, He's weeping over Jerusalem. You were not, so I see in Paul's preaching, I see, because I can, it resonates with me.

I see in the, oh God, turn from your wickedness. Turn to God. I persuade you, oh God.

Paul said, I would give myself to be accursed if it wasn't to save the nation of Israel. So you see this persuasion. You see this yearning for people to turn.

Why would Jesus rebuke in cities entire groups of people because they did not repent if they couldn't repent? So again, logically, I just cannot put this together with God only choosing a certain amount of people to go to heaven. Also this question, why is it hard for a rich man to get into heaven? That would have nothing to do with election. God could care less if it's rich, poor, black, white, male, female, five-year-old, a 50-year-old, doesn't matter.

But when Jesus said, oh, it's so hard for a rich man to get into heaven, look at the context. The person loved his riches more than Christ. Same thing happens today.

Same thing. That's why it's hard for many people, especially in America. They love their things and not God.

It's hard for that rich person, that person full of wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven. So in my opinion, it appears that his possessions prevented him from following Christ and turning from what he knew to be the right course. And here's where this whole point of justice, you know God's justice, right? We hear that a lot.

God's justice, it must be fulfilled. He's a just God. And what does justice means? It means to get what you deserve.

We come out of court, right? We didn't get justice. So thinking all this through, the only way to me that God's justice makes sense is if a person can respond or decline to his offer of salvation. Because if they can't, then to me, that's not justice.

That's not the God of the Bible I read about. That's not the God of love, mercy, grace and long suffering, not willing that any should perish. True justice puts it back on the person in which the justice is going to fall.

So God says, I must judge you rightly and send you to hell because you rejected me. That's the term of justice. But first, mercy and grace come into play, don't they? Mercy, not giving us what we deserve.

So coming into the world, sinners, right? We're sinners and growing up, well, you know you're a young adult by, I mean, you're a sinner by the time you're five, six, seven. I mean, you know sometimes there's something going on here. So God says, see right there, justice should be served.

Justice should be served. But God says, no, I'm long suffering, my mercy endures. So my mercy is what? What is mercy? Not giving us what we deserve.

So God is merciful, long suffering. I'm not gonna give you what you deserve. I'm going to give you time to repent and believe and then my grace can overflow and overshadow you, which is unmerited favor.

So to me, I cannot understand the concept of justice and the God I read about in the Bible and believe that he only chooses a certain amount of people to go to heaven and the rest are destined for hell. I can't get my mind around that. Trust me, I've tried.

I've thrown books, I've gotten bad moods and trying to understand. I just, but it's also very freeing knowing that God is sovereign. I trust, I will tell you right now this morning, I trust that God is going to save all my

kids.

I have no doubt in my mind. The enemy comes in, I have no doubt in my mind that God is going to save my children. I'm praying, I'm fasting, Lord, you, now he might manipulate some things, right? Get people to the rock bottom.

He might draw, I mean, the Holy Spirit might be able to draw a normal drawing. He might be able to, hey, Holy Spirit, turn up the volume on that man. Those four kids, turn up the pressure.

Turn up the pressure cooker and let's get them back to you. You remember a story I share from Jim Cimbala at the Brooklyn Tabernacle? How his daughter was lost, a prodigal daughter in New York, on the streets of New York doing Lord knows what. They had an all, I don't know, it was all night, a couple hours of prayer meeting.

He said it sounded like a birthing room. He came home, he told his wife, if there's a God in heaven, our daughter will be home. You see, what did God do? He answered the prayers of his people and he drew that girl back by a dream, a vision of her being on the edge of the abyss of hell.

God knew that would draw her back. She repented and believed and came back to Christ. So I believe that God will hear the prayers of his people.

God's in sovereign control, but I can't discount the plethora of verses I just read. As a matter of fact, there's something in the back of my Bible. Mike, you saw it before.

It's called Questions for Calvin in my big Bible at home. Questions for Calvin. And it's just four pages.

I was off, it's not more than 100. It's like 150, 150 verses just like this, just like this. Exactly the same thing.

I want to share 20 more, but I don't want to bore you. But there's just so many verses that are confirming what I feel in my heart, that God is drawing people to him, that it's finally, it's put in their court, so to speak, whether they accept or reject him. And here's a final point.

This is why I believe so strongly about this, that God's nature, God's nature reflects love and patience. I would encourage anybody, I don't know what side of this coin you're on or where you're at, but read the Bible through and through and through and through and saturate your mind on who God is. See, it ticks me off when people come and try to debate theology having read the Bible.

They listen to a good podcast, watch a bunch of videos, and then they're going to come and debate the Bible. See, that's the only way to get the heart of God, is to read and meditate and read and meditate. I try to get through it once a year in the New Testament, twice a year.

I've been doing that for 18 years now. And I just try to get through and see the heart of God. So I can't see.

This morning, I worked on the sermon, I put that song on, Reckless Love, and I couldn't stop crying because God's nature is reflected in his love and his patience. 2 Peter 3.9, The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. Now, that is written to the church, correct? But it's also written to unregenerated people who are sinners.

Shane, how do you know that? Well, he says, I'm patient, not wishing that any of you should perish, but that you should all repent. So yes, it's written, Peter, probably to the church, 40 years old in Asia Minor. He's writing to the church, but he's telling, hey, repent and believe in the gospel.

Psalm 86.15, O Lord, you are merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. So that's my challenge. If God is a God of love, if God is a God of mercy, if God is a God of true justice, not our justice system, true justice, the only way that makes sense to me is that man denies or accepts God's gift, and when he denies it, the justice falls, and that's a just God, because he gave the person the ability to accept or reject him.

That's the only way justice makes sense to me. I see no other way for that word justice to work if that's not how it works. But again, God gets all the credit.

He created his creation to love him or reject him, to deny him or embrace him. That's why I mentioned earlier, that is not a good work, it's a God work. In the fall, in the fall of Adam, sin entered in.

Here's something you need to take away. You need to get this CD, maybe your children or somebody who needs to hear this, but in the fall, sin entered in, but we are still made in the image of God. Let me just go off a little bit on both sides.

How dare we forget that we are made in the image of God? Because some will say, well, we're filthy animals, worms, scum of the earth. What you're made in the image of God. So give yourself the value that God gives you.

See, that'll make you think twice about suicide. That'll make you think twice about aborting your child. That'll make you think twice about saying I'm worthless, I'm useless.

Come on, we know imago Dei, right? The old Latin term, imago Dei, created in God's image. See, the image has been damaged. The image has been stained.

The image has been polluted, but the image is still there. It's still, Norman Geister said, it's been effaced, it's been damaged, but it's not erased. So all people throughout the world are created in the image of God.

What does that mean? Rational, mental capacity, the capacity to love Him, to know Him, to relate to Him, the image of God, to bear His image here in the world, to take on the likeness of Christ when we become believers and share the good news, to share the gospel. What does love look like? It looks like being slandered and not saying anything. It looks like being demeaned and not saying anything.

It looks like turning the other cheek, made in the image of God. And people need to know that. I think that's the problem with our school systems.

That's the problem with the nation. That's the problem with young adults today. They don't know that they are made in the image of God.

They did not come from a monkey. Right? I couldn't resist. I could not resist.

Sorry, Luke, edit that part out maybe. But see, why is this corrupting? Why is the nation falling apart? Why is the church falling apart? Why, why, why, why? Because they don't know they're made in the image of God. Paula, stop.

I'm going to stop laughing. I don't know whether to laugh or cry on these things. Let me read you a heartbreaking email from a mom.

Lord, help me read this. She's talking about her daughter. She said, she may never find recovery because she knows how to live on the streets.

Said Maureen, who sounds empty and hollow. She thinks she is worthless. She does not believe she deserves recovery.

She is now prostituting to support her habit. She has been evicted from her apartment She has been arrested. She has to go through detox and jail.

Her body is failing. Her kidneys are not functioning. Her face is swollen.

She's been in and out of hospitals for bodily infections. All of her belongings fit in one bag and they're usually taken by those living on the street. This is not the life I wanted for my daughter.

I prayed all morning. Lord, let me get through this. Can you imagine that being your child? And in our pride and arrogance, we want to debate sides.

We want to show how theologically astute we are. Acting as if we know everything about God. I guarantee you, we don't know a fraction.

But we do know that there is value in your life. Shane, not me. You don't know.

No, there's so much value that God gave His only Son. Man, darn it. I just saw a glimpse this morning of Christ on the cross.

Beaten. The nails driven. For me, for you, for all of us.

And for that girl, amen. Amen. How do we get the message out that they have value? Because it really hit me this morning.

In a church like this, why aren't we seeing more people come to Christ? Why don't we bring our friends that don't know the Lord or share to them? Can you list the, can you, when was the last time you led somebody to the Lord? When was the last time we shared the good news that you are? Just take time and say you are. There is value. There is worth.

And that's why it hit me. I'm going to come up here and explain salvation and like, oh yeah, here's exactly how God, I don't know how He operates. All I know is He's sovereign and He calls us to repent and believe.

All I know is you have value. Everyone out there has value. They're made in the image of God.

So much so that that's why God sent His Son. To die on that cross, to take your place, to satisfy the wrath of, there's no value, you think? That's tremendous value. You asked me to give my child for you.

I don't, let's be honest, could we do that? Probably not. Probably not. So don't forget about the love of God.

Don't get caught up in theological arguments that, and that's what hit me. I told my wife, I said, we argue these things and who's coming to the Lord? What is the point? If it's the same people Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, where are the new converts? Is that convicting or is it just me? Yeah, some people are doing, but overall, reading Acts, it's like you see this vibrant, church living, preaching the Word, people coming to faith in Christ. So that was a closing point.

There is so much value that God gave His Son. It's interesting because this mom is saying to this daughter, you don't belong here. But God is also saying to her, and maybe some of you, you don't belong here.

You don't belong there. Not meaning church. You don't belong there where you're at.

If a person's listening to this on the radio as they're driving, video later, ask yourself that same question. God would say, you don't belong here. You don't belong here.

So turn. Turn back to me. Repent and believe in the message of hope and salvation and redemption.

Don't worry about how God does it. Just thank God He does it. Thank God He does it.

Thank God He does it.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/31/SID31945.mp3>

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