



Irresistible

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By Andre Rabe

There's something which I simply find irresistible; something to which I can't help but respond. The love of God is a force to which I have no defence and neither do anyone else, I believe. That's why love never fails – it is persistent, never loses hope, and eventually, once the recipient sees it for what it is, love gets the response it always knew would come.

No person who sees and understands the love of God our Father, wilfully rejects it. It is not a will that is free that reject this love; it is a will in bondage. No person has ever out of his/her own free will rejected our Lord, rather it is because of ignorance, because of blindness that some have made uninformed choices. The good news, however, is that God, and we as his co-workers, are in the business of making the truth plainly known.

He loves to reveal Himself, so that those who do not know Him, and ignorantly rejected who they thought He was – their own ideas of Him – might see Him for who He really is, and respond with the only possible response: "...bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all ..." Phil 2:10, 11

Such an encounter with God is not far from each one of us. We do not need to search or persuade Him of our need – He is both willing and able to make Himself known to any and every man, in a way that is as unique as the individual. The good news is that He took, takes, and will take the initiative to do this! Romans 10:20: Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."



The will of man vs the will of God

A most vivid example of this is the story of Saul's conversion. I was taught, and I can confidently assume that many Christians were taught the same, that the one thing God would never violate, is man's free will. I still agree with that statement, but as you can guess, my perspective of it has drastically changed. The erroneous conclusion normally drawn from the previous statement is that a man's free will is more sacred and more powerful than God's eternal purpose. For, although God desires that "all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4), ultimately a stubborn man who refuses to accept this truth will rob God of His desire. Also, it incorrectly assumes that a person who rejects God is free, for he/she does so from a free will! Let's return to the story of Saul, who later became known as Paul, and I will refer to him as Paul from now on. You



can read about his background and encounter with Jesus yourself in Acts chapter 9 and Philippians chapter 3.

Paul was a Pharisee – the strictest religious group of his day. Self-discipline and meticulous observance of rules and regulations defined this group. His enmity against the followers on Jesus was no theoretical debate, no, he took action. He was obviously a very determined man to be described as “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord”. We are not dealing with a weak-willed, indifferent person here. He considered Jesus and Jesus’ teaching to be his enemy and did whatever possible to stop it. Later Paul described himself as the chief of sinners.

Do you think Paul’s strong opposition and determined will, was a problem for Jesus? Can you imagine the Father and Jesus conversing regarding Paul and saying: “What will we do! We can’t interfere with his ‘free will’”

Ridiculous!

Jesus knew that Paul’s enmity against Him was rooted in ignorance; He knew that if Paul saw Him for who He truly is, there would be no argument. Jesus knew that Paul did not act from his own free will, but from deception, and therefore He had no problem with interfering in his life. His stubbornness was no obstacle to the love of God.



His initiative – our response

When Paul saw Jesus, he needed no prompting to make a quality decision for God; he needed no argument to persuade him to repent and submit to Christ. No! When he encountered Jesus his first words were: “Lord, who are you”. He might not have known by what name to call this being, but he knew that this was the Lord. There was an instant recognition and an instant response. God is irresistible; God is inescapable!

He never gives up on anyone and He never fails.

No wonder that Paul’s whole testimony and message is centred around the initiative of God and not around the contribution of man. In Galatians he emphasizes that this encounter with God had nothing to do with his decision, but all to do with God’s decision! In fact he was zealously persecuting the church ...”But when it pleased God ... who called me by his grace ...to reveal his Son in me.” Gal 1:15, 16.

It was God’s initiative, God’s decision, and God’s faith in Paul that saved Paul!

Paul writes about salvation in the book of Ephesians and declares that even faith did not originate in him – faith too is a gift of God!

Eph 2:8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

Eph 2:8 (Message): Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish!

Romans 9 focuses on God’s initiative and presents some very inspiring

Love Never Fails

examples.

The example of how God determined the destinies of Esau and Jacob is striking and summed up in verse 10: “and her babies were still innocent in the womb—incapable of good or bad—she received a special assurance from God. What God did in this case made it perfectly plain that his purpose is not a hit-or-miss thing dependent on what we do or don’t do, but a sure thing determined by his decision, flowing steadily from his initiative.” Wow!



God at work within us

Phi 2:9 – 13: Therefore God has highly exalted Him, and has given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly ones, and of earthly ones, and of ones under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, cultivate your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Did you get that last part? “...it is God who works in you both to will and to do ...” I am so glad that our Father does not consider my will off limits! I’m so glad He influences my desires, my will, my everything.

Now, what I find very interesting, is the fact that this statement follows so close after the declaration that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. I used to think that God will eventually force every creature to bow their knee to him and coerce a confession out of them. One could imagine a dictator taking delight in forcing such behaviour from his enemies, but it is unimaginable that the God of truth would find any delight in an outward form of submission and ignore a will that is still at enmity against Him. The way in which Love – God is love – destroys His enemies, is by making them friends ... “while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God” He is at work within, to will and to do ... and the outcome of this work is a being that wants to acknowledge and worship Him.



A better way

So often in our desire to share the truth with others, we’ve mistakenly focussed on their acceptance, their decision, their faith. We fought intellectually, emotionally and any other way we knew to get agreement, and if all failed we blamed it on their free will!

There is a much better way! We have an irresistible product! And when we simply focus on revealing the Father, and trusting that the Father Himself is at work within all, then we can rest assured that there is only one possible outcome; only one possible response to the love of God.

It is God’s initiative that awakens our response. It is His self-disclosure that stirs faith. Seeing His face draws out our adoration. Live confidently that every man’s conscience bears witness to the truth displayed through your live.

Love desires to give ... love is not focussed on itself, but desires the benefit of others.

Love is not needy, lack-conscious or aware of what it does not have. Love is an expression of abundance; the overflow of joy and satisfaction.

Love is not obsessed with its own importance ... it does not need the recognition of others. There is no inferiority in love ... it is not dependant on affirmation, because love’s attention is not on itself but on its target.

Love is gentle, respectful, understanding, yet utterly persistent. Despite its soft and unthreatening way, it is unyielding, constant and always succeeds.

Love believes the best, for it knows the truth – love is not blind, it simply knows realities greater than that which can be seen. For this reason ‘love’ doesn’t get hung-up on mistakes, but rejoices at every success. Love is convinced that ‘evil’ is temporal and ‘good’ is eternal. This conviction puts evil in perspective and reveals its insignificance. Simultaneously, love draws the best – the truth – out of everyone.

In the end, everything and everyone will confirm what love knew since the beginning.



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