

Invincible Grace 1 Peter 1:1-3

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again...

Introduction

What do you think is more important to someone who has jumped off a 300 foot bridge with a bungee chord strapped to their ankle, the color of their shirt or how secure the strap is on their ankle?

Obviously, the color of their shirt has nothing to do with their “salvation” and the strength of the strap has everything to do with it.

Peter is writing to people whose lives are very difficult, they are paying a huge price for aligning themselves with Jesus Christ-*being reviled in a fiery ordeal (4:12)*- and they are wondering what will hold them as they seem to be falling face-down to the ground.

Where does Peter direct their focus? To God’s invincible grace.

He’s showing them that the experience of believing in Christ is one thing-- we often come to Christ in stages, small steps, a series of mini-commitments, and it feels like we’re in control-- but the reality behind the experience is the secure strap of grace which holds their souls forever in God’s love.

Although it may feel like you have embraced the gospel, the truth is, the grace of God in the gospel has secured you, and will never let you go. Grace is invincible, like the Eiffel Tower withstanding an attack from a butterfly, and we’re going to see why it will not and can not fail you, any of you, believer or seeker or committed unbeliever.

Yes, we’re going to explore what it means to be *chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*. (1 Peter 1:1-2)

I want first to say two things to any of you who are not sure where you stand with Christ, or you are sure you don’t stand with Christ.

First, don’t let this idea or language put you off. I can understand why it might; it can sound like the Elite Elect: “well it’s just us and no body else!”

Sometimes the word *election* or *predestination* gets bad press. It’s often misunderstood and vilified. You need to be encouraged by the idea of invincible grace because it answers the question, why in the world would you ever become a Christian?

As you look at your doubt or skepticism, you probably have reasons located in your:

1. Mind: I just can't believe it's true.
2. Will: I just don't want to give up what Christ requires of me- my autonomy.

Invincible grace is the power of God to break into your skepticism and unbelief and to convince you of the claims of Christianity, to help you make sense of it, to sort out the difference between the dumb things Christians do and the wonderful person of Jesus. Grace will make you willing to explore the claims of Christianity, give you understanding, and enable you to believe it.

Invincible grace also is powerful enough to change your heart and make you desire to follow Jesus Christ. God knows that following Jesus is threatening and cuts against your desire for autonomy. You know that you have no hope in yourself of embracing Christianity; therefore, the message of invincible grace can give you confidence in a power outside of yourself.

Second, we're all in need of the same grace!

All of us who have believed need invincible grace and are the grateful products of it. Any Christian who thinks he is better or smarter than you simply doesn't understand invincible grace.

Christians ought to know they'd never be a Christian but for God's kind choice.

Who would believe without God's prior intervention?

Who could boast that they figured out Christianity?

None of us possesses the intellectual, emotional or volitional power to become followers of Jesus.

When you get to know the God of the Bible you soon realize that He will have no human boasting in his universe. That's why we're happy to echo with the Bible, "*salvation is of the Lord*" and "*let him who boasts, boast in the Lord*".

We know our minds are naturally blind and our hearts unresponsive. If faith is present we know God created it in us.

Who would risk all to follow Jesus without the sweet work of grace in their heart?

Paul said, *the love of Christ controls us*.

How does invincible grace work? According to Peter, it breaks through and holds through.

A. Grace breaks through

God's love for sinners irresistibly breaks into our lives to transform us and save us forever. Grace can save anyone. You are never so bad as to be beyond the reach of God's grace, nor are you ever so good as to be beyond the need of God's grace.

1. Why does it break through?

Simply put, it has to. If God did not first come to us, we would never believe the gospel.

Peter says (1:3), *“he has caused us to be born again.”*

John 1:12 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

John 3:3 *Unless you are born again you can not see the kingdom.*

God must cause our regeneration, because we are naturally spiritually dead- not merely sick, impaired, or mostly broken, but dead.

Just as a physically dead person has no appetite for food, so a spiritually dead person has no appetite for God.

That explains why, therefore, we have so little natural interest in God and why His glory just doesn't concern us.

Eph.2:1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*

All of humanity is born spiritually dead since Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. God said, *In the day you eat of it (the forbidden fruit) you will die.* They died spiritually not physically, though physical death is the result of sin.

Sin not only separates us from God...

John 14:17 *... the world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth, because it does not behold Him or know Him...* (notice *cannot* expresses ability)

1 Cor. 2:14 *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.* (notice *cannot* expresses ability)

...but it also leaves us hostile toward God, at enmity with him:

Eph.2:3 *We were by nature children of wrath*

That means nothing in me disposes my heart to move toward God; and everything in me disposes me to move from God. If I happen to be interested in spirituality, it will invariably be a god of my own fashioning.

Our hearts are shut tight from God, our eyes blinded by unbelief:

Rom.3:11-12 *There is none who understands, there is none who seeks God, all have turned aside*

Rom.8:7 *The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.* (notice *not able* expresses ability)

But you may be thinking God owes everyone a chance.

The Bible says they have their chance every day. God's glory is constantly revealed in the creation, and that revelation is sufficient to leave them without excuse. Yet we suppress that truth and refuse to believe. (Romans 1:19f)

What does God owe everyone? Only a just punishment for their sins.

That's why *according to His great mercy He caused us to be born again.* Mercy is not getting what you deserve.

Eph.2:4 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.*
Do you see? When did God make you alive? *When you were dead.*

1 John 4:10 *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us...*

John 15:16 *You did not choose me, but I chose you.*

Eph.1:4 *He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.*

1 Cor.1:30 *By God's doing you are in Christ Jesus.*

Paul understood this personally:

Galatians 1:15 *But when God had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, He called me through His grace, and was pleased to reveal His Son in me...*

This answers the question, How can I believe without the natural ability to do so?

God's grace is invincible because it accomplishes what it sets out to do. It doesn't merely make salvation possible, it accomplishes it. He *caused you to be born again*. Some people think faith causes you to be born again, but this text says explicitly God causes it. The evidence you are born again or regenerated is you possess saving faith. Do you see how liberating this is? You don't have to pressure yourself to believe; God will enable you. Ask Him to give you the ability to trust Christ and to repent.

Faith is God's gift, created in our otherwise unbelieving hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Dt.29:4 *Yet to this day God has not given you a heart to know nor eyes to see nor ears to hear.*

Acts 11:18 *God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.*

13:48 *as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed*

16:14 *The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*

Why didn't the Lord open other's hearts? I don't know. But this I know, it wasn't anything in Lydia that prompted God. He simply chose to love Lydia and to grant her saving faith. I also know this. If you were in the crowd, and witnessed her faith be born in her heart, and come to expression on her lips, you have several options to respond.

1. You could say, I don't care, I'm not interested. Christianity is for women and wussies.
If you do, then you only have yourself to blame. It's your fault you don't believe.
2. You might also say, I'm not ready to commit, but I'm interested in exploring this. If you ask God for understanding, and eyes to see, you are guaranteed He'll give it. He refuses no one. God will be found by those who seek Him.
3. If you say, I too want a new heart and spiritual understanding. I too want to be saved from my sin. I want to trust Christ. I want the glorious shelter of his protection from the coming wrath and the safety of His love. Ask and it's yours. *Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* Rom.10:12

This leads to the question, why does God save me, why does God save anyone?

The bible says repeatedly we are saved by God's sovereign choice for His own glory. He saved us for Himself, therefore, He will accomplish it.:

2 Tim.1:8-9 *God saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity*

2 Thess.2:13 *God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth*

Dt.7:6-7 *The Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

Mt.11:27 *No one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*

John 5:21 *For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.*

John 6:65 *No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.*

Romans 9:16 *So then it (receiving God's compassion, salvation) does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

2. How does it break through?

The Holy Spirit quickens our hearts through the living word of God:

1 Peter 1:23 *for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but through the living and abiding word of God*

James 1:18 *In the exercise of his will He brought us forth by the word of truth,*

Rom.10:17 *faith comes through hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

It's a powerful miracle when God's word calls us to life, much as Jesus' word called Lazarus out of the tomb. This is also pictured in the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ez. 37). Israel (like all of us) is dead, but when the Spirit attends to the word of grace we come to life.

For whom in the world does the gospel of grace break through?

John 3:16 *God loved the world and gave his son that whosoever believes would not perish but have eternal life.*

The world, not just Jews, is the theater of God's invincible grace breaking through. As far as we're concerned, God desires everyone we know to be saved. May all the nations call on his name, and then he will be glorified with the glory due his name.

This frees us from the futile exercise of speculating who may or may not be elect.

Election is God's deal; He's given to us the privilege of sharing the gospel, the very means God has appointed for saving the elect.

B. Grace holds through

Grace is the everlasting bungee chord of God's love. He loved us from eternity and will never let us go. *We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.* This is not an impersonal knowledge- he merely knows ahead of time that you will decide for Christ (which is impossible anyway since you are dead in sin) but he knows you personally and wills to have you as his own

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.*

Phil.1:6 *I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.*

Rom.8:38-39 *Nothing in heaven or earth can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.*

Because God is most committed to His own glory in the universe, He will not be shown to be a God unable to save forever a people to enjoy him.

Eph.1:5-6,11 *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of his glorious grace...having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.*

Eph.2:6-7 *He raised up with him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Think how practical invincible grace is, for the way it answers so many of our human needs:

1. It answers one of our greatest hopes, that grace is stronger than human unbelief. You are now guaranteed that your efforts in evangelism are not in vain. God will use you to call His own to Himself.
2. It answers your deepest fear: you will never be abandoned because God wills your final salvation. Now you can laugh at yourself. Now you can smile a lot more. Now you have an anchor for comfort in trial. God is sovereign, God loves you.
3. It answers what we sense in our heart of hearts is right:
Grace humbles the arrogant;
grace emboldens the weak and underdog.
4. It answers your deepest longing: I am loved despite my faults.
5. It answers your deepest wonder: my life really counts for something eternally glorious, as a trophy of invincible grace.