

I. Irresistible Grace

Irresistible Grace

*Grace is extended only to the elect. **The internal call** by God's grace cannot be resisted and always results in conversion. Grace is not extended to the non-elect. The grace that God extends to human beings to effect their election cannot be refused, **since it has been decreed by God.**¹*

Efficacious Grace (aka Irresistible Grace)

*God moves upon the helpless sinner before he has a single thought of responding to the good news. Grace renews the spiritually dead will, imparts a new nature and infallibly draws the sinner to Christ. **Regeneration, or the new birth, occurs before belief in Christ.** Faith, in fact, is a gift imparted to the sinner, who is entirely passive in this act.²*

Irresistible Grace

*God's absolute **sovereignty means that God's grace cannot be resisted**, and that men cannot choose or resist the efficacious grace of God.³*

The "Internal Call"

Tit 2:11 KJV For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath **appeared to all men**,

- God's grace that brings salvation **has appeared to all**

The word for *appeared* is the same used here and translated as *light*

- Luk 1:76-79 KJV And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, 79 To give **light** to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
 - This is speaking of the ministry of Jesus, to give knowledge of salvation, to give light to them that sit in darkness. This seems to be speaking universally of lost mankind, not just a group called the elect

When is a Person Born Again?

Joh 1:11-13 KJV He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

- His own received Him not (He was resisted)
- As many as received Him - became sons of God - (belief before regeneration)
 - Sounds like freedom to choose, to receive or receive not

¹ http://www.cfestus.com/books/taylor_calvinism.htm

² <http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/openhse/calvinism.html> (Calvinism Critiqued - by a Former Calvinist, Steve Jones)

³ <http://www.christianconversationsnow.com/2011/02/07/r-c-sproul-calvinism/#sthash.173pycOU.dpuf>

- Salvation is the work of God (not the work of man) yet receiving/believing is first

1 John 5:1 KJV Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

- We are not born again in order to believe
- Being born of God is a result of believing Jesus is the Christ

Act 16:30-31 KJV And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

- Believe and you will be saved...not believe BECAUSE you are saved

Additional Definitions of Irresistible Grace

Common Grace / Irresistible Grace -- “Outward Call” and “Inward Call”

*To understand the doctrine of “**irresistible grace**,” it is important to recognize that this is a special grace given only to those God has chosen for salvation (His elect) and is different from what is known as “**common grace**” which God bestows on both believer and unbeliever.*

While there are many aspects of common grace, including life and all that is necessary to sustain it, common grace is what is often referred to as the “outward call of God.” This is God’s revelation of Himself given to all men through the light of creation and their consciences. It also includes the general call of the gospel that goes out anytime the gospel message is preached. This call can be resisted and rejected by those that receive it. (Matthew 22:14; Romans 1:18-32).

*However, God also gives an “**inward call**” which always results in salvation. This is the call of God that Jesus spoke of in John 6:37-47. The certainty of this inward call is seen in John 6:37: “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” John 6:44 confirms this: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day.”⁴*

*God appears to offer salvation to all - i.e., the general and **outward call** - but only intends to save some (the elect), and insures that the some He intends to save will be saved - i.e., **the efficacious or inner call** - without regard to the faith or willingness of the elect. The elect cannot help but believe and be eventually saved, and the unelect cannot help but not believe and be ultimately damned.⁵*

We don’t really see in scripture grace defined as “outward call” or “inward call”

- We find again that because of how a Calvinist defines Sovereignty and Unconditional Election, he is left with no other choice than to say there must be two kinds of grace, one that man CAN resist, since it is clear in Scripture that man can/does resist; and one that man CAN’T resist, otherwise God’s Sovereignty is called into question. The Irresistible Grace - [the inner call] is a logical next step in Calvinism. If God has chosen some people to be saved in His Sovereignty, then the person has no other option - He MUST BE SAVED. In a sense salvation is forced upon the elect.

⁴ <http://www.gotquestions.org/irresistible-grace.html#ixzz3IpoyUIIA>

⁵ "The Lazy Man's Guide to Calvinism" by George Bryson

Effectual Grace

Most Calvinists prefer to call it [irresistible grace] “**effectual grace**.” The meaning is that saving grace extended by God to the elect cannot be resisted by them. It is always effectual.

Part and parcel of this is the idea that regeneration, being “born again,” happens before conversion. An elect person, predestined by God for salvation, will freely choose to repent and believe because he or she has already, perhaps unconsciously, been regenerated by the Spirit of God. The person is a “new creation in Christ Jesus” first and only then converted. Regeneration precedes faith.⁶

Scriptures That Show God Can Be Resisted, That Man Has a Choice and That Man is Accountable for His Decisions

2Th 2:10-14 NIV and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because **they refused to love the truth and so be saved.** 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. 13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A person’s perishing is not a matter of God’s Unconditional Election - this scripture states the reason they perish is they refused to love the truth
- All will be condemned who believed not the truth - not because they were one of the “unelect”
- God chose the Thessalonians - through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth -
- He called them (not as a sovereign random decision) but rather through the gospel - that they might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus

Joh 12:46-48 KJV I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if any man hear my words, **and believe not**, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 **He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words,** hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

- These people are accountable for hearing and NOT BELIEVING or REJECTING and NOT RECEIVING the words of Jesus. If irresistible grace were true, why would these people be accountable for something they are unable to do by God’s sovereign design. In other words. if they are not the elect, then the “inner call” [irresistible grace leading to regeneration and the gift of faith and repentance] never comes to them, and even if the truth pricked their hearts [see Acts 2:37-38] they are unable to repent and believe without this “inner call”.

Act 2:37-38 KJV Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto

⁶ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2013/03/whats-wrong-with-calvinism/>

Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

- Peter does not hesitate at all in calling the people to repent and be baptized...he was not waiting for “irresistible grace” to kick in, instead he holds the people responsible to respond to the truth they have just heard
- Peter continues - Act 2:40-41 ESV And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Joh 3:18 KJV He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, **because he hath not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

- Because He HAS NOT believed, not because he CANNOT believe

These verses show a conscious decision to resist

- Joh 5:39-40 KJV Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40 And **ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.**
- Mat 23:37 KJV 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!**
- Act 7:51 KJV Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost:** as your fathers did, so do ye.
- Luk 7:29-30 NIV (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. 30 But the Pharisees and **the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves,** because they had not been baptized by John.)

Rom 2:4-5 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?** But after thy hardness and impenitent heart **treasurest up unto thyself wrath** against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

- In this verse we see God drawing us by His goodness, leading men to repentance
- However it is the hard and impenitent heart that must experience God's wrath
 - We see nothing of unconditional election or irresistible grace here

Tit 2:11 KJV For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men

- God's saving grace has appeared to all
- Yet not all who have been shown this grace are saved - so it can be resisted

The Role of Proclaiming the Gospel

Calvinists would say

"In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be and often is rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended."⁷

The central place of preaching the gospel

If salvation is in a sense “forced”⁸ upon the elect through irresistible grace...you could almost begin to wonder what is the need for or the function of the preaching of the gospel?

First, the preaching of the gospel will have absolutely NO EFFECT on the “unelect” in terms of leading them to salvation, since in the Calvinist’s view, the unelect will never receive the “inner call” or be moved upon by God’s “irresistible grace” in order to be saved.

Second if the preaching of the gospel is the means used by God to persuade the elect of his need for salvation, then a Calvinist would have to admit that [both the preacher who is persuading] and [the unregenerate elect who is being persuaded] pay a part in the process of salvation. This is synergism.

Why am I, a Calvinist, so passionate about evangelism? Several reasons immediately spring to mind. First, my Lord Jesus Christ commands me to do so (Mark 16:15). Second, given that my chief duty (and delight) is to glorify God, I am moved by the fact that the Father is honored whenever the Son is honored. The supreme means of honoring the Father is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (John 5:22-23)! Third, I know that when the nonelect reject the gospel, as they are wont to do, preaching leaves them all the more without excuse when they receive the condemnation they justly deserve. And last, I know that God brings his elect to himself through the preaching of the gospel.⁹

2Th 2:13-14 KJV But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto ***he called you by our gospel***, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- From the beginning He has chosen

Hearing and Believing

In this class about Calvinism we have seen over and over again an emphasis upon “hearing”

⁷ <http://www.the-highway.com/compare.html>

⁸ If irresistible grace cannot be resisted [as the Calvinist would say] - and if regeneration is before faith, then salvation is forced upon the elect while he is totally depraved and has no desire or ability to serve God

⁹ http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH01/07b.html

and believing. In this classical scripture [Rom 10 below] about salvation, we see again that HEARING is a key element that plays a critical role in a person's salvation.

Rom 10:13-21 NIV 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And ***how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?*** And ***how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*** 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" 16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, ***who has believed our message?***" 17 Consequently, ***faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*** 18 But I ask: ***Did they not hear?*** Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." 19 Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." 20 And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." 21 ***But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."***

- Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved
- In order to call upon Him they must believe on Him
- In order to believe on Him they have to have heard about Him
- They could not have heard about Him unless someone preached to them
- Their faith comes by hearing, and the message heard is through the word about Christ
- The Jews have heard - but remained ***disobedient and obstinate***
 - (i.e. they have resisted)

God has chosen preaching as the means through which people would be saved

1Co 1:21 KJV For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

If irresistible grace is true, and if man has no responsibility/ability to repent, then what do we make of these scriptures?

- Acts 17:2-4 NIV As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days ***he reasoned with them from the Scriptures***, (3) ***explaining and proving*** that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. (4) ***Some of the Jews were persuaded*** and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.
 - There was reasoning, explaining and proving. As a result some were persuaded
- 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 NIV (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (11) Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, ***we try to persuade others.*** What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

- 2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. **We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**
- 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 NIV (22) To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people **so that by all possible means I might save some.** (23) I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 NIV (14) For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews (15) who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone (16) **in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.** In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.
- Act 17:11-12 NIV Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for **they received** the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures** every day to see if what Paul said was true. 12 **As a result, many of them believed,** as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

If Irresistible Grace is true, then man would not have a free will, however these Scriptures show that he does have a free will.

- Isa 1:18-20 KJV Come now, and **let us reason together,** saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19 **If ye be willing and obedient,** ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But **if ye refuse and rebel,** ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.
- Eze 18:30-32 NIV "Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! **Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.** 31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. **Why will you die, people of Israel?** 32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!
- Deu 30:15-18 KJV See, **I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;** 16 In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to **keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments,** that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. 17 But **if thine heart turn away,** so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; 18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.
- Jos 24:15-16 KJV And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **choose you this**

day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. 16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;

How are People Drawn to Him?

Calvinists would say that because of depravity and man's inability to choose salvation, God must draw him. John 6:44 is one of the scriptures most cited to support this. We also believe that God draws men.

It is clear that those who come are those who have heard

- Joh 6:44-45 KJV 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. 45 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.
- Joh 8:47 KJV **He that is of God heareth** God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Jesus said He is drawing all men to Himself

- Joh 12:32 KJV And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw **all men** unto me.
- John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Man is called [drawn] by the gospel, not a direct operation [inner call] of the Holy Spirit

- Rom 1:16-17 KJV For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The Lord Opens a Heart

Act 16:13-14 KJV And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

- She was already praying / seeking
- She HEARD Paul
- The Lord opened her heart
- She attended to the things spoken of Paul

His goodness leads us to repentance - but we must repent

Rom 2:4-5 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance**? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart **treasurest up unto thyself wrath** against the day of

wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

- The Goodness of God draws us
- Yet we have a choice to respond, or to have a hard and impenitent heart

The Holy Spirit Convicts the World of Sin Righteousness and Judgment

John 16:8 ESV And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

Summary

God desires everyone to be saved and has made his grace available to all people. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for those who believe. As the gospel is preached, those who hear must make a choice. To those who receive Him and believe in His name He gives the right to become children of God, to those who reject, the wrath of God remains on them.