

Reformation Theology: Irresistible Grace

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Definition: God's special redemptive grace infallibly secures the salvation of those who receive it.

1. Concerns God's special redemptive grace (given only to the elect for the purpose of salvation) not his common grace. For Arminian some special redemptive grace is given to all (prevenient grace which frees up the will of men from depravity to chose but is not sufficient). Special redemptive grace is given only to the elect and is both necessary sufficient.
2. This special grace always accomplishes its purposes. Not that it always happens to work out that way, like when I put my key in my cars ignition and turn it my car always turns on, its possible that at some point it will not turn on. (God has gotten lucky so far). Not only that it always does but that it is not possible for it to fail.
3. God's special grace secures salvation as a whole. from start to finish, the initial response to the gospel- faith repentance, sanctification everything between conversion and glorification.

Election and Irresistible Grace- Unconditional Election is focused on God's ends this is focused on God's means toward those ends. God has chosen some to receive eternal life. IR tells us that God has the means at his disposal and power to secure his purposes in election. It will infallibly secure the salvation God has purposed for the elect.

A. Irresistible Grace in the Westminster Confession of Faith:

1. "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his **Word and Spirit**, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills,

and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.” (10.1) **Analogy of me pre-Mary/marriage vs. post.**

2. “This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.” (10.2)
3. “Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.” (10.3)

B. Some implications of Irresistible Grace:

1. When God determines to save someone, that person will most surely be saved. **God’s decreative will never fails. If his plan could be frustrated then God’s plan could turn out to be a complete failure...it could be that not one person would actually be saved despite all the best efforts of Christ and the HS if he was dependent on human free will.**
2. There is both an “external call” and an “internal call” to salvation in Christ.
 - a. “External call”: the outward invitation to trust in Jesus (Matthew 22:1-14; Romans 10:14) **Preaching in the gospel, witnessing. It takes place outside of us, it is general and universal in principle...it’s not just to the elect.**
 - b. “Internal call”: the inward converting work of the Spirit (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:24) **inward, specific, and directed toward particular people, to the elect and only the elect.**
 - c. Analogy: the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44) **Jesus calls Lazarus out of the grave, the call is specific “Lazarus” and it is**

effectual, when he calls Lazarus was coming out. As the sovereign Lord of life, if he had just said come out then all of the dead would have come out. The internal call brings from spiritual death to spiritual life, when he calls they come

3. Divine grace precedes the human response to the gospel (faith and repentance).
 - a. This divine grace is not merely external to us (e.g., the objective work of Christ). **God taking the initiative in sending Christ**
 - b. This divine grace must bring about substantial internal changes in us.
 - c. These internal changes secure a positive human response to the gospel. **In the Arminian position the internal grace makes it possible for someone to respond to the gospel, it is necessary but not sufficient. Calvinist say necessary and sufficient i.e. it will bring about conversion**
 - d. Analogy: the faulty compass—forced or fixed? **A compass that has gone wrong, it has become demagnetized and no longer points North. 2 ways to get it to point North. You could force it by taking the cover off and pushing it to point North. The other way is to fix it or re-magnetize it. You fix it so that it works like it was supposed to. The HS does not force us against our will but heals our minds so that we can understand the gospel and heals our wills so that we are no longer in rebellion but so that we desire to follow. In a sense we are returned to the way we were supposed to be.**
4. Human freedom is compatible with comprehensive divine sovereignty. **If God can guarantee a certain response without violating their freedom then a compatibilist view of freedom must be true. That is God's sovereignty and human freedom**

C. Some misunderstandings of Efficacious Grace:

1. “The Holy Spirit coerces people into accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord.”
The Holy Spirit in effectual calling works through the will, healing it so that it desires to follow God
2. “Divine grace cannot be resisted or rejected by human beings.” People do this all the time. They resist and reject God’s common grace everyday. They reject the external call, People resisted Paul and his message, they rejected Jesus, full of Grace and truth. They presume upon God’s grace, receiving his blessings and yet refusing to acknowledge him.

I. Irresistible Grace Demonstrated

A. Exegetical basis:

1. **Deuteronomy 30:6 (cf. Romans 2:29)** What is circumcision of the heart?
The work of the spirit that brings about conversion. The consequence of a circumcised heart is that you will love God with all your heart and soul. It is efficacious. It is not that you may, might, can love but WILL love.
2. **Ezekiel 36:26-27 (cf. 37:1-14)** Cause you to walk in my statutes. The emphasis is on God doing something i.e. people walking in his statutes.
3. **Matthew 22:1-14** illustrates the distinction between the internal and external call. Many are called (external) few are chosen (not few accept)
4. **John 6:22-65** (esp. vv. 37, 44-45) all whom the father has given to Christ WILL come. All who have heard and learned from the father does come. Hearing (hearing as in Isa 6 and Revelation .
5. Acts 16:14-15- It takes the Lord to open her heart to pay attention, and thus she paid attention and she was baptized. Could be translated take head or accept.
6. **Romans 8:28-30**- And whom he predestined those ones he also called, etc. Could this be the external call? Only if you are a universalist. Everyone who is called us justified and ultimately glorified. This tells us that for those who receive the internal call they will most certainly be glorified, therefore the call must be efficacious.

7. 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 esp 24, 26, 31- Different responses to the gospel. Those called internally respond. V 26, the calling distinguishes the church from others. Human boasting is ruled out because salvific grace is entirely a work of God.

B. Theological basis:

1. If God is sovereign over the ends, he must also be sovereign over the means. **If he is sovereign over the ends he must be sovereign to bring them about.**
 - a. God is sovereign over the ends (the doctrine of providence).
 - b. Therefore, God must also be sovereign over the means. **It must be within his power to bring it about.**
 - c. Therefore, God must have the power to ensure that his purposes do not fail.
2. God's purpose is that his chosen people will be saved (Ephesians 1:3-14).
3. Therefore, God has the power to ensure that his chosen people will be saved.
4. Therefore, God has the power to ensure that his chosen people will both hear the gospel ("external call") and accept the gospel ("internal call").

II. Irresistible Grace Defended

- A. Objection 1: "God has chosen to give us free will and not to subvert or override it." **This is a common Arminian attempt to affirm sovereignty and maintain a libertarian free will. Few want to say that God isn't sovereign. God has sovereignly chosen to give us free will and not to override it. How do you understand free will? Are they taking for granted a view of free will that can't work with God's sovereignty (incompatible). This means that either God isn't sovereign or we don't have free will. This position would have to affirm that God sovereignly choose not to be sovereign, which is a logical inconsistency. Arthur Pink, the sovereignty of God is the goodness of God, to give this up would be to give up deity.**

- B. Objection 2: “If the internal call is efficacious, the external call must be superfluous.” If the doctrine of Irresistible grace is true, why preach the gospel. This assumes that the internal call and the external call are unrelated. It is really confusing the ultimate and proximate cause. The internal call is what secures the positive response to the external call. Both are individually necessary and together sufficient for salvation. It would be like saying, if flicking the light switch always makes the light come on then the lightbulb is superfluous.
- C. Objection 3: “Acts 7:51 shows that people can resist the work of the Holy Spirit.” This is only an objection if these people were receiving an internal call to salvation. By the fact that they are uncircumcised in heart we know that this is not a work of salvation. They are resisting an external call by resisting the work of the spirit through the prophets.
- D. Objection 4: “Jesus taught that not everyone who is called will be saved (Matthew 22:1-14).” Two different calls
- E. Objection 5: John 12:32 shows that the internal call is both universal and resistable. Calvinism- Particular and irresistible. 1. All people doesn't necessarily mean every single person but people of all kinds. To take 1 verse in John 12 and use it to completely reinterpret John 6 is too much. Same word doesn't always mean same meaning. In John 6 it is the Father who does the drawing, this is Jesus. Likely different drawings.

III. Irresistible Grace and the Christian Life

- A. IG exalts the sovereignty of God in all things. This doctrine highlights the sovereignty of God in the means.
- B. IG reassures us that God's redemptive purposes never fail. This allows us to trust him unconditionally. God doesn't fumble. When the Father gives a sinner to the Son, that sinner comes infallibly and willingly.
- C. IG reinforces the gospel truth that we are saved by grace from start to finish. This is cause for worship and for confidence that it depends on God and not me.

- D. IG implies that genuine saving faith in Christ will be evidenced by a transformed life. The idea of carnal Christians (accept Jesus as Savior but not Lord) is un biblical. If God's special grace infallibly brings about conversion it can and will bring about sanctification. It starts with conversion but never stops there. It explains why good works are the necessary evidence of justifying faith.
- E. IG gives us encouragement that our evangelism will bear fruit (cf. Acts 18:9-10). If the HS can actually bring people to faith then our evangelism is never in vain, never futile. It is not a disincentive, it is an incentive. Without irresistible grace in the internal call, the external call would be so much wasted breath. There would be no point.
- F. IG means that it makes good sense to pray for the salvation of unbelievers by name. Specific prayers for specific people. It has been observed that most arminians prayer like Calvinists when praying for their loved ones. If human free will is beyond God's control, it is pointless to pray for specific people. It would be silly to pray for a friend to get a job because the interviewer's will would be outside the control of God.
- G. IG reinforces the doctrines of assurance and perseverance (Romans 8:28-30). If God's special grace can secure my conversion it can also secure my perseverance. If it can ensure I come it can ensure I stay. What God starts, God completes.