

Here We Stand: Effectual Grace

INTRODUCTION

- A brief review of the first 3 letters of TULIP
- How does the sinner who is dead in sin come in saving faith to Jesus who died for them? How does any sinner, dead in sin, perform the commands of the gospel by repenting of their sin and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Sinners come to Christ by the irresistible (effectual) grace of the Holy Spirit.

Historical Basis

- The Arminians believed, that *“man is never so completely controlled by God that He cannot reject God’s grace.”*
- The Arminians believe that despite all of God’s best efforts to save sinners by His grace, His grace can ultimately be resisted.
- In the Arminian understanding, if a sinner is to be born again, then he must first believe. If he cooperates with the grace of God and believes the gospel, then he will be born again, he will be regenerated.
- The Calvinist believes that God by His grace must first sovereignly regenerate a person, and when God does that, the sinner will then willingly believe the gospel.
- In order to clarify the issue before us tonight, we want to ask a question so as to pinpoint the heart of the debate. *“When two people hear the same gospel message, why does one believe and the other does not?”* Or asked another way, *“Who is ultimately responsible for your conversion (i.e. your new birth)?”*
- The Arminians answer is man’s will, the Calvinist’s answer is God’s will. In the Arminian system faith is man’s contribution, in the Calvinistic system faith is God’s gift to man.

Defining the Term (What it is and What it isn’t)

- When the Calvinist uses the phrase irresistible grace he does not mean that God is forcing a person to do what he does not want to do. God is not dragging someone into heaven who is kicking and screaming and not wanting to go there. He is not forcing or coercing man to embrace Christ against his will.

- What the Reformed position (Calvinists) do mean by irresistible grace is that when God chooses someone to be saved in Christ, the Holy Spirit is going to change that person's heart so that they willingly come to Christ.
- By irresistible grace the Calvinist is referring to regeneration/new birth!
- The word "irresistible" can be a bit misleading, because we all resist God in many ways. *But we do not and can not resist Him in the new birth!*
- So irresistible grace, means that when the Holy Spirit acts upon a sinner and performs the miracle of the new birth, He does so sovereignly. His grace in resurrecting a spiritually dead person cannot be resisted. And once that sinner is born again he willingly exercise his will to believe on Christ!

Scriptural Passages

- John 6:37, *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." V.44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."*
- Interwoven in these verses is the reformed position of saving grace!
- *Now how can Jesus be so sure they will come, since no man can come?*
- The only way any of the elect ever come, is because the Father will "draw" him. The word "draw" here is a powerful word. It doesn't mean to woo or respectfully plead with...It means to drag, to bring to oneself by an inward power.
- No one can resist the drawing of God the Holy Spirit. When the omnipotent Spirit chooses to draw a sinner no one can resist His inward operation to bring about the new birth. The sinner will be born again and they will come to Christ!
- Romans 8:28-30, *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."*

- “The golden chain of salvation” v.30.
- There are 5 links that form this unbreakable chain of salvation. 5 links that are solely the acts of God. This first link is “foreknow”. Those whom He foreknew v.29. To foreknow is to fore-love. See it’s people God foreknows, not something about them. These are those whom God determined to love, to freely love.
- Those whom God set His love upon in eternity past; these...He also “predestined” (2nd link in chain). Once the Father chose to love certain sinners He determined their destiny in Christ. Their destiny is to be conformed to Christ and ultimately glorified in Christ.
- So all God foreknows, these He also predestines and those whom He predestines, these He also “called” (3rd link in chain)!
- The external v internal call of God in Scripture.
- This call of Romans 8 v.30 is an internal call; its an effectual call, it’s a regenerating call; its an irresistible call!
- How we can be so sure of that is because this call of v.30 is God’s! It occurs within the links of God’s activity. This call of v.30 is preceded by foreloving and predestining and this call is followed by justification and glorification.
- This “call” always results in justification! Why? Because God is the Subject of all these verbs. God is the One performing these acts!
- Many people are “called” in the external preaching of the word. Not all who hear the gospel respond when called to do so; but all will respond in repentance and faith to Christ when irresistibly and effectually called by the Spirit.
- John 3:3-8, *“Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

- Two undeniable facts...
- #1, if anyone is to see, let alone enter the kingdom of God (which requires faith), they must be born again! No exceptions! #2, the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit...alone! Man does not prepare himself for it, he does not participate in it and...he cannot hinder it from occurring.
- The 3 analogies Scripture uses to communicate the New Birth or regeneration is creation, birth and resurrection! And the reason the Lord intentionally uses these 3 analogies is because all 3 of these acts communicate the activity of God alone!
- No man contributes or helps God in creation, in their natural birth and in their resurrection.
- “Why does one person believe the gospel and another does not?” The Reformed answer is, “irresistible or effectual grace”!

Comfort and Implications

- I Peter 1:3-5, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*
- Nobody who is spiritually born again...will ever spiritually die! All who are born into this family, stay as children of this family! No children are disinherited and no children fail to reach the final destination of glorification. We by God’s power are being guarded through faith!
- All God’s children, who are born again, will most assuredly attain heaven. This is the eternal security of the believer!
- *Guess this means we can coast! Guess this means we can live any way we want!*
- All the elect *will* be guarded through faith and preserved through faith until they reach glory...however, the means by which God preserves them in faith is by their persevering in the faith. Since faith is the gift of God; then that faith is a saving faith. It is a faith that works.

- And next time we'll conclude our studies in the doctrines of grace, by examining the "P", "Perseverance of the Saints". When accurately understood, the doctrines of grace do not promote lawless living; rather, they serve as the greatest incentives and motivations for holiness.
- The Calvinist insists that although we are saved by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone; that faith will never be alone. That faith will be accompanied by all other saving graces!
- The born again children of God are eternally secure and yet they must work out their salvation with fear and trembling. They are preserved by grace but they must persevere in faith.

Addendum

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.

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 10 Section 1