

CPC Winter Study Fellowship – 2012 – Doctrines of Grace – Irresistible Grace - Session 10

I. Introduction

Scripture teaches that each member of the trinity participates in, and contributes to the salvation of sinners. The Father marks out His own (unconditional election), the Son secures their salvation by his atoning sacrifice (particular redemption), and the Spirit applies Christ’s work to the elect (irresistible grace or efficacious call).

The doctrine of irresistible grace teaches that the Holy Spirit never fails to bring to salvation those sinners whom He personally calls to Christ.

The classic reformed view of the Order of Salvation (Ordo Salutis) is: Effectual Call, Regeneration, Faith & Repentance, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Perseverance, Union with Christ, and Glorification.

Our view, from scripture, of God’s working with regard to the effectual call is that the gospel invitation extends a call to all who hear its message. This call alone will not bring sinners to Christ because they are unable to respond as a result of their fallen nature. The Holy Spirit extends a special call (effectual call) to God’s elect. Through this special call the Holy Spirit does a work of regeneration, creating a new nature in the one called, resulting in faith and repentance. Now the sinner freely and willingly chooses Christ because his(her) new heart enables him(her) to do so. The inward call of the Spirit never fails to produce conversion in those to whom it is made.

II. Two Historical Views

Westminster Confession of Faith – Chapter 10 – Of Effectual Calling

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 an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

Arminian View – The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted	Calvinism View – The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace
The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit’s call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man’s contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man’s free	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

will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man. (The Five Points of Calvinism – Defined, Defended, Documented – Steele, Thomas)

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. (The Five Points of Calvinism – Defined, Defended, Documented – Steele, Thomas)

III. Biblical Evidence

A. General statements indicating that salvation is the Spirit's work as well as the Father's and the Son's.

1. *I Pet. 1:2 - ...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

2. *I Cor. 2:10-14 – The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

3. *I Cor. 12:3 – Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

4. see also Rom. 8:14, I Cor. 6:11, II Cor. 3:6, II Cor. 3:17-18, I Pet. 1:2

B. Regeneration brings sinners into God's kingdom making them His children. The Spirit is the author of this second birth and the Word is His instrument.

1. *John 3:3-8 – In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

2. *Titus 3:5-6 – he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saves us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,...*
3. *John 1:12-13 – Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*
4. see also I Pet. 1:3, I Pet. 1:23, I John 5:4

C. Through the Spirit's work, the dead sinner is given a new heart.

1. *Exek. 36:26-27 – I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decreed and be careful to keep my laws.*
2. *Deut. 30:6 – The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.*
3. *II Cor. 5:17-18 – Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:*
4. see also Gal. 6:15, Eph. 2:10

D. The Holy Spirit raises the sinner from spiritual death to life.

1. *Eph. 2:1,4-5 – As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ...But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions --- it is by grace you have been saved.*
2. *Col. 2:13 – When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.*
3. *John 5:21 - For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*

E. God makes known, to His elect, the secrets of the kingdom, through revelation given by the Spirit.

1. *Luke 10:21 – At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.*
2. *I Cor. 2:14 – The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
3. *Matt. 16:15-17 – “But what about you?” he asked, “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Johah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.*
4. see also Matt. 11:25-27; Matt. 13:10,11,16; John 6:37,44,45,64,65, John 10:3-6, 26-29.

F. Faith & Repentance are divine gifts wrought in the soul through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

1. Acts 5:31 – *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

2. Acts 13:48 – *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*

3. Acts 16:14 – *One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.*

4. see also Acts 11:18, Acts 18:27, Eph. 2:8-9, Phil. 1:29, II Tim. 2:25-26

G. The general outward call of the gospel can and is often rejected, but the special inward call of the Holy Spirit to the elect cannot be rejected.

1. Rom. 8:30 – *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

2. Heb. 9:15 – *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance---now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

3. Rev. 17:14 - *They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--- and with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers."*

4. see also Rom. 1:6-7; II Tim. 1:9; Jude 1; Rom. 9:23-24; I Cor. 1:1,2,9,23-31; Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 4:4; I Pet. 1:15; I Pet. 2:9; I Pet. 5:10; II Pet. 1:3

H. Salvation is all God's doing. It's His work from beginning to end.

See Isaiah 55:11; John 3:27; I Cor. 3:6-7; James 1:18; John 17:2; Rom. 9:16; I Cor. 4:7; Phil. 2:12-13; I John 5:20