

Sovereign Grace Series

Lesson #10 – The Holy Spirit’s Irresistible Grace (2010)

T U L I P

File # Title

1415 Irresistible Grace – is it Biblical?

Applicable Sections of These Confessions:

LBC of 1689 Ch 3, Items 4, 5 & 6; Ch 10, Items 1, 2 & 3;
Ch 20, Items 3 & 4;

AoP of 1858 VIII. Regeneration & IX. Repentance
(inferred by both Principles)

Before eternity past, **the Father** decreed by “election” who would be saved. (Unconditional Election)

At the crucifixion, **the Son** atoned for those whom the Father had given Him, securing their redemption. (Particular/Limited atonement)

At a later date, (our individual “new birth”) **the Holy Spirit** of God provided the “Effectual Call” to each individual that the Father “elected” and whom the Son “atoned”. (Irresistible Grace)

We are saved through the work of all 3 members of the Godhead! Our salvation is specially designed and specifically implemented by God. It is not a generic opportunity to be saved.

I. Definition of “Irresistible Grace” -

The sovereign Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner’s heart, turning it from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, enlivening the sinner into a new creation of God. No man is able to resist this change of heart from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. In that new regenerated nature, that man will see his wicked state for the first time and will freely flee to the cross for forgiveness. He has no other recourse. He is a new creation with a new nature.

It is not so much that the Spirit compels us against our will, but rather that our new nature compels us in accordance with our new will.

The Logic of Irresistible Grace:

1. If Christ atoned for a person’s death based on the Father’s eternal decree, how could it be possible for God not to carry out His own purpose in the “effectual call”?
2. If we are a “new creation” in Christ (**2 Cor 5:17**) how can we any longer hold back from God?
How can we reject the work of Christ? (The old dead man is gone, we have been regenerated to new life.)
How can we resist the sovereign purpose of God? (see page 2)
3. Scripture speaks of a call that comes from God directly. This is a different call than the “General call” of the Church. **Rom 9:22-24** (see page 3)

II. Scriptural Basis of Irresistible Grace – Also known as Efficacious Call. The logic statements above are helpful, but in the end, you as a student of Scripture must decide for yourself, before a Holy God, what you believe about His role in our salvation. This decision should be informed by what Scripture says and not be affected by your preferences, your pre-suppositions, your tradition, etc.

Reference	Scripture (NASU)	Key Point
1st Scripture states that the Holy Spirit saves men:		
1 Cor 2:10-13	<i>For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.</i>	Man in the flesh cannot know God. As Christians, we have the Spirit of God in us to reveal God to us.
1 Cor 6:11	<i>Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.</i>	We are saved in the name of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

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2 nd The Holy Spirit gives “new birth”:		
Jn 1:12-13	<p><i>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, <u>13who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.</u></i></p>	The new birth precedes our receiving of Him. Our flesh and will were not involved.
Jn 5:21	<p><i>For just as the <u>Father raises the dead and gives them life,</u> even so <u>the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.</u></i></p>	No mention is made of man’s part in this achieving of life.
Acts 16:14	<p>A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and <u>the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.</u></p>	Lydia was a religious women, but her heart was not of the Spirit. It was and closed. While listening to Paul’s teaching, God opened her heart to respond.
Jn 3:3b-8	<p><i>Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again <u>he cannot see the kingdom of God.</u> ⁴Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, <u>unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.</u> ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and <u>that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.</u> ⁷Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸<u>The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.</u>”</i></p>	<p>The natural man is blind and cannot see.</p> <p>“water” is used here as indicating a cleansing process involved in this new birth. (repentance??) Flesh is flesh and has nothing to do with Spirit. We do not see the work of the Spirit in this new birth.</p>
2 Cor 5:17-20	<p><i>Therefore <u>if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature;</u> the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸Now <u>all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ</u> and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹namely that <u>God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,</u> not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, <u>as though God were making an appeal through us;</u> we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.</i></p>	<p>The old man, dead in his sins, blind to his condition is gone.</p> <p>The reconciliation is past tense. It occurred on the cross.</p> <p>Actual “effectual call”</p>
Titus 3:4-7	<p><i>But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵<u>He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,</u> ⁶<u>whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,</u> ⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.</i></p>	God saved us according to His mercy without pre-condition, by the work of the Holy Spirit.
Eph 2:8-10	<p><i>For <u>by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;</u> ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are <u>His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.</u></i></p>	This gift is freely given without any action on our part. God created us and crafted us for a purpose which He knew beforehand.
3 rd The Holy Spirit gives faith and repentance:		
Acts 11:15-18	<p>(Peter speaking) <i>"And as I began to speak, <u>the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.</u> ¹⁶"And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ' John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷"Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, <u>God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.</u>"</i></p>	<p>The Holy Spirit acts first.</p> <p>Repentance is granted to us. We do not come to repentance on our own.</p>

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Acts 13:48	<i>When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and <u>as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.</u></i>	Appointment directs the work of the Holy Spirit who regenerates us and then we can believe.
Phil 1:29-30	<u>For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him,</u> but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ <i>experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.</i>	Our faith is granted to us. It does not come from us.
2 Tim 2:25-26	<i>with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps <u>God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,</u> ²⁶<i>and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, <u>having been held captive by him to do his will.</u></i></i>	Repentance is granted to us, because we are not capable to repent in our natural state. Our father was the Satan.
4th The Holy Spirit reveals the secrets of God to us:		
Rom 9:22-24	<i>What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience <u>vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?</u> ²³<i>And He did so to make known the <u>riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,</u></i> ²⁴<i>even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.</i></i>	There are two types of vessels described in God's administration. Wrath and mercy. Both were prepared for their role beforehand.
Ezek 11:17-20	<i>"Therefore say, thus says the Lord GOD, "I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. ¹⁸<i>When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. ¹⁹<u>And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,</u></i> ²⁰<i>that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."</i></i>	Speaking of Israel's future salvation, God will act in regenerating their hearts just as He does with saints in this current age.
John 6:63-65	<i>"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. ⁶⁴<i>But there are some of you who do not believe."</i> For <u>Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe,</u> and who it was that would betray Him. ⁶⁵<i>And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that <u>no one can come to Me unless it has been granted from the Father.</u>"</i></i>	Jesus knew the lostness of His disciples. Jesus clarifies that no one can come to Him without the authority and enablement of God.
1 Cor 2:14-16	<i>But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and <u>he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.</u> ¹⁵<i>But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. ¹⁶<u>FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM?</u> But we have the mind of Christ.</i></i>	The natural man cannot understand the things of God. Therefore, it is impossible for him to come to God without regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
2 Cor 3:3	<i>being manifested that <u>you are a letter of Christ,</u> cared for by us, <u>written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God,</u> not on tablets of stone <u>but on tablets of human hearts.</u></i>	We are identified with Christ by the Holy Spirit who has acted indelibly on our hearts.
Eph 1:17-18	<i>that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, <u>may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.</u> ¹⁸<i>I pray that the <u>eyes of your heart may be enlightened,</u> so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,</i></i>	God must give us understanding or we will never know Him.
5th God (the Holy Spirit) Effectually Calls all who belong to Christ:		
Rom 1:6-7	<i>among whom <u>you also are the called of Jesus Christ;</u> ⁷<i>to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.</i></i>	All of the beloved in Rome are called of Jesus Christ. This is an identity.

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Rom 8:28-30	<i>And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.</i>	The called by God are called in accordance with His purpose, not our will.
Gal 1:15-16	<i>But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,</i>	Paul's call to salvation was preceded by being set apart in his mother's womb.
2 Tim 1:8-9	<i>Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹who has 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 us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,</i>	Our call is a holy calling according to God's own purpose. This gracious call was planned from all eternity.
1 Pet 2:9-10	<i>But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.</i>	We were called out of darkness. We were called into His marvelous light!
1 Pet 5:10-11	<i>After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ¹¹To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.</i>	We have been called to glorify God in Christ for eternity.

Some Relevant Quotes

If all of us are so depraved that we cannot come to God without being born again by the irresistible grace of God, then it is clear that the salvation of any of us is owing to God's election. Election refers to God's choosing whom to save. It is unconditional in that there is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him. Man is dead in trespasses and sins. So there is no condition he can meet before God chooses to save him from his deadness. We are not saying that final salvation is unconditional. It is not. We must meet the condition of faith in Christ in order to inherit eternal life. But faith is not a condition for election. Just the reverse. Election is a condition for faith. It is because God chose us before the foundation of the world that he purchases our redemption at the cross and quickens us with irresistible grace and brings us to faith. –

Dr. John Piper, *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*

We may choose to give a thief money, not because we want to but because we have a gun pointed at our head (that is coercion). Needless to say, God does not coerce a person to believe. There is no such thing as a person who doesn't want to be saved and God saves him anyway because he is elect. Nor has any person ever existed who would like to be saved but cannot be because he is not elect. God works in the lives of those who are to be saved, convicting them of sin and giving them the faith to believe the gospel. He changes their disposition so they get saved because they want to.

Irwin Lutzer; from *Doctrines that Divide*; p. 191

Some say: "There are those who misrepresent the doctrine of election in this way: Here I am sitting down at my table tonight with my family to tea. It is a cold winter's night, and outside on the street are some hungry starving tramps and children, and when they come and knock on my door and they say, "We are so hungry, Sir, Oh, we are so hungry and cold, and we are starving: won't you give us something to eat?"

The Truth: "God has spread the feast but the fact is that nobody is hungry, and nobody wants to come to the feast, and everybody makes an excuse to keep away from the feast, and when they are bidden to come they say, "No, we do not want to, or We are not ready yet." Now God knew that from the beginning, and if God had done nothing more than spread the feast, every seat at His table would have been vacant for all eternity!"

A. W. Pink; from *Gospel Preaching Commanded*