

Doctrine of Irresistible Grace

1. A better term for what this doctrine teaches is “effectual grace”.
2. Proposition. “It is the teaching of the Word of God that sinful, mortal, fallen men cannot finally and ultimately resist what God has decreed will come to pass.”
3. This proposition has guided the historic faith of the Reformation, and is certainly part of the spiritual heritage of Baptists.

1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith Chapter 3: Of God's Decree

“As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto; wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

4. The Scriptural support for this position in the Baptist Confession is given.
 - *1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*
 - *2 Thessalonians 2:13 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:*
 - *1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*
 - *Romans 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*
 - *1 Peter 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
 - *John 10:26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*
 - *John 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*

- *John 6:64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.*

5. There is much misunderstanding about the Doctrine of Irresistible Grace.

Special Note.

There are people who reject this doctrine of grace because, they say, they do not believe that God will drag some people, against their will, into the kingdom of heaven, while refusing to save other people who desperately want to be saved. Of course, this is a terrible distortion of the Reformed position, and manifests a terrible ignorance of the Word of God.

6. The idea of “irresistible” conquers up the belief that one cannot offer any resistance to the grace of God. That is obviously not what the Bible teaches.

- *Acts 7:51 Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*

7. The history of the human race is the history of humanities resistance to the sweetness of God’s grace.

8. The idea here is that God’s grace is so powerful, it has the ability to overcome the natural resistance of the fallen human heart.

9. However, effectual grace effects what God intends to effect by it.

10. The controversy over irresistible comes between faith and regeneration. In historical Reformed theology, regeneration precedes salvation. In Arminian theology, regeneration is a result of salvation.

11. The word “precede”, is usually used to refer to something that comes before something else in time. It has temporal priority.

12. The word “precede”, when used in theology, does not refer to time, but to the order of something.

13. The logical priority, the logical order of salvation, is that regeneration must take place before salvation, or there is no salvation. “Nicodemus, you must be born from above.”

- *John 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

14. By using logical priority, we say that justification is by faith alone. We do not say that faith is by justification. We say justification is by faith.

15. There is no time gap between faith and justification. There is no time that elapses. But, justification depends upon something else, faith, in order for it to be real.

16. To say that regeneration precedes faith, is to say that before a person believes they must have the capacity to believe, they must have the ability to believe, and that ability is only a result of the new birth. The hunger in a person indicates life. The spiritual hunger in the heart indicates spiritual life.
17. Before a person, who is dead in trespasses and sin, can exercise their will to believe in Christ, God must do something for them, and in them, so that they can believe, and faith can be exercised.
18. It is a common expression in our society to say that all it takes to be born again is to believe. And that is true. But the natural man has neither the ability to believe, the inclination to believe, or the desire to believe. The state of the natural man is one of hostility towards God.
- *Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*
 - *Romans 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*
19. The old view of Pelagius, that original sin left a little isle of righteousness in the heart of man so that he has a natural ability to do what is right, that view is wrong. There is not a shred of goodness in the heart of the natural man in the sight of God. Even his good works are like filthy rags.
- *Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*
20. The natural man does not have the moral power to respond to God's grace in and of himself. The natural man needs to be "quickenened", or "made alive."
- *Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*
21. The semi-Pelagian man believes that the natural man still has the power to make a "decision" on their own if God woe, exhorts, or encourages the sinner. God draws in an equal, persuasive power, and so those who are lost are lost because of their own will.
22. Arminians resent the idea of God dragging individuals to salvation, even though the Scriptures plainly declare that is exactly what happens. There is no wooing, or enticing. There is only a divine compelling.

- *John 6:44 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.*

23. Proponents of Arminianism argue that the word "draw" (Greek: ἔλκω, *helkō*) as used in John 6:44, does not require the sense of "drag", though they are compelled to admit this is the word's consistent meaning in Scripture.

- *John 21:6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*
- *John 21:11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, and hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.*
- *Acts 16:19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,*
- *Acts 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.*
- *James 2:6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*

24. A person who desires water in a well does not try to woo it out. A bucket must be taken and the water must be drawn up by compulsion.

25. There is not a moral desire for God, unless God puts that desire into the heart.

- *John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

26. God the Holy Spirit does not bring people to Christ against their will, but He changes their will, He changes their disposition, and inclination so that they will to believe, they want to believe. In the day of salvation they are made willing. The carnal mind is transformed. A heart of stone is taken away, and a new heart, a heart of flesh is given, and then a person runs into the arms of Christ.

- *Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

- *Jeremiah 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

27. The work of regeneration is monergistic. It is the one work of the triune God. Salvation is not synergistic, part man, and part God. It is all of God, all of grace, all of divine mercy.
28. When God creates a person in the first place, He brings about the desired effect of their birth. When God recreates a person, He accomplishes His desired effect of the new birth.
29. Effectual grace works. It brings about what God wants to be brought about.
30. To the question: “What must I do to be saved?”

The old gospel replies: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

To the further question: “What does it mean to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Its reply is: It means knowing oneself to be a sinner, and Christ to have died for sinners; abandoning all self-righteousness and self-confidence, and casting oneself wholly upon him for pardon and peace; and exchanging one’s natural enmity and rebellion against God, for a spirit of grateful submission to the will of Christ, through the renewing of one’s heart by the Holy Ghost.

And to the further question still, “How am I to go about believing on Christ and repenting, if I have no natural ability to do these things?”

It answers: Look to Christ, speak to Christ, cry to Christ, just as you are; confess your sin, your impenitence, your unbelief, and cast yourself on his mercy; ask him to give you a new heart, working in you true repentance and firm faith; ask him to take away your evil heart of unbelief and to write his law within you, that you may never henceforth stray from him.

Turn to him, and trust him as best you can, and pray for grace to turn and trust more thoroughly; use the means of grace expectantly, looking to Christ to draw near to you as you seek to draw near to him; watch, pray, and read and hear God’s word, worship and commune with God’s people, and so continue till you know in yourself, beyond doubt, that you are indeed a changed being, a penitent believer, and the new heart which you desired has been put within you.

The emphasis in this advice is on the need to call upon Christ directly, as the very first step ... So do not postpone action till you think you are better, but honestly confess your badness and give yourself up here and now to the Christ who alone can make you better; and wait on him till his light rises in your soul, as scripture promises that it shall do.

Anything less than this direct dealing with Christ is disobeying the gospel. Such is the exercise of spirit to which the old evangel summons its hearers. ‘I believe – help thou mine unbelief’: this must become their cry” (J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*).