

***God's Grace Cannot Be Resisted***  
***Ephesians 2:4-6***  
***Dr. Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher***  
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**INTRODUCTION**

1. We are currently in a series examining that state of man and salvation.
2. Some call it “The Doctrines of Grace.”
3. Others refer to it as “The Five Points of Calvinism.”
4. The five points are the acrostic t-u-l-i-p which stands for *total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.*
5. We have already considered the first three.
6. This morning we are considering the fourth: *Irresistible Grace.*
7. What is *irresistible grace*?
8. “Irresistible grace is the supernatural work of God wherein He works in the soul of the individual, changing the entire nature by the Holy Spirit’s operation” (Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* [Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1997, c1989]. 484).
9. Those who oppose this teaching argue that if “grace is irresistible then God forces someone to come against his own will” (Ibid., Enns).

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10. Irresistible grace does not “make someone come contrary to his will. Rather, irresistible grace makes the individual *willing* to come” (Ibid., Enns).
11. Louis Berkhof says, “By changing the heart it makes man perfectly willing to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation and to yield obedience to the will of God” (Ibid., Enns).
12. So *irresistible grace* has to do with the heart or the inward call of God.
13. It is the Holy Spirit intervening in man’s heart and sovereignly giving Him the new birth, faith, and repentance of which he does not resist.
14. Apart from this intervention, he resists the outward call of God.
15. To help us with this, it is important to note that Scripture teaches that there are two types of “calls” from God.
16. There’s the outward call of God and the inward call of God.
17. The outward call of God comes from the preaching of His word.
18. Many share the gospel with others, but not all who hear the message receive it.
19. For example, in Acts 18:6, Luke records the response of the

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Jews after Paul preached to them. He says, “But when they ***resisted*** and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’”

20. This is the outward call.
21. The outward call of God can be resisted.
22. In fact, apart from God’s working in us, we will resist this call (remember total depravity?).
23. The inward call of God, on the other hand, is His secret work of regeneration (rebirth, a new beginning, spiritual resurrection) done in the souls of the elect by the work of the Holy Spirit.
24. This work of the Holy Spirit changes us because it is inward.
25. God places within us a desire for Him.
26. Before the inward call of God, no person is inclined to come to Him.
27. After the inward call, we respond to God with the gift of faith.
28. The inward call of God cannot be resisted.
29. So we could say that the word “Irresistible” means “that

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when God has chosen some to be saved and when he sends His Spirit to change them from being hateful to being loving, no one can resist Him.

30. He is irresistible. He does what He sets out to do...If [this word] causes misunderstanding, then another word may be chosen. For example, efficacious, or effectual or unconquerable, or certain.
31. All that irresistible means is that God sends His Holy Spirit to work in the lives of people so that they will definitely and certainly be changed from evil to good people.
32. It means that the Holy Spirit will certainly—without any and's, if's and but's—cause everyone whom God has chosen from eternity and for whom Christ died to believe on Jesus” (Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 58).
33. In the words of the puritan preacher Christopher Love, who said, “The internal call is when the Spirit of God accompanies the outward administration of the Word to call a man from ignorance to knowledge, and a state of nature to a state of grace.”
34. To illustrate this truth, I would like to invite you to take God's Word and turn with me to Ephesians chapter two.
35. We have the privilege, once again, of looking at this chapter as we consider verses 4-6.

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36. We have already examined what Paul said in the first three verses about total depravity.
37. Now I want to see how you were brought from spiritual deadness to spiritual life.
38. Read Ephesians 2:1-10.
39. We said last time that chapter 2 is still a running thought that Paul had begun in chapter 1, verse 15.
40. Paul is praying that the Ephesian believers would know “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places” (vv.19-20).
41. Paul says this “mighty power which...raised [Christ] from the dead” (v.20, NKJV), is the same power that raises believers from spiritual death.
42. In verses 1-3 of chapter 2 Paul paints a graphic picture of what we were before God raised us up from spiritual death.
43. He says we “were dead in...trespasses and sins” (v.1), living according to the world and Satan (v.2), and living according to the flesh (v.3).

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44. In other words, as Charles Spurgeon says, “We were full of vigour towards everything which was contrary to the law or the holiness of God, we walked according the course of this world; but as for anything spiritual, we were not only somewhat incapable, and somewhat weakened; but we were actually and absolutely dead. We had no sense with which to comprehend spiritual things. We had neither the eye that could see, nor the ear that could hear, nor the power that could feel” (From the sermon, “Life from the Dead” preach on March 13, 1890).
45. We were dead!
46. But something happened in verse 4.
47. It says, “But God.”
48. Those words...form one of the most significant, eloquent, and inspiring transitions in all literature.
49. They indicate that a stupendous change has taken place.
50. It is a change from the doom and despair of the valley of death to the unspeakable delights of the kingdom of the Son of God’s love” (Believer’s Bible Commentary).
51. D. Martin Lloyd Jones says, “These two words, in and of themselves, in a sense contain the whole of the gospel. The gospel tells of what God has done, God’s intervention; it is something that comes entirely from outside us and displays

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to us that wondrous and amazing and astonishing work of God” (God’s Way of Reconciliation: Ephesians 2, p.59).

52. John Calvin describes that work as “God [delivering] the Ephesians from the destruction to which they were formerly liable” (Calvin’s Commentaries: Ephesians).
53. Notice in verses 4-10 *what God did in spiritually raising us from the dead.*
54. First, *He made us alive*—This is regeneration.
55. Titus 3:5 says this is “the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” that believers have experienced.
56. It is what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3 of being “born again.”
57. R.C. Sproul says, “To be ‘born again’ is to experience a second genesis. It is a new beginning, a fresh start in life...Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is a change. It is a radical change into a new kind of being. To be regenerated does not mean that we are changed from a human being into a divine being. It does mean that we are changed from spiritually dead human beings into spiritually alive human beings. Spiritually dead persons are incapable of seeing the kingdom of God. It is invisible to them, not because the kingdom itself is invisible, but because the spiritually dead are also spiritually blind” (The Mystery of the Holy Spirit,

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- 93).
58. That's why we need a regeneration and "regeneration is the sovereign work of God the Holy Spirit" (Sproul, 101).
59. And "the first step of regeneration by which a person is quickened to spiritual life, is the work of God and of God alone. The initiative is with God, not with us" (Sproul, 104).
60. In our study of *total depravity*, we saw *what we were before our spiritual resurrection* in verses 1-3.
61. Now notice ***What God Did in Spiritually Raising Us From the Dead (vv.4-6)***.



**I. What We Were Before Our Spiritual Resurrection  
(vv.1-3)**

- A. Dead in Sin (v.1)
- B. Living According to the World and Satan (v.2)
- C. Living According to the Flesh (v.3)

**II. What God Did in Spiritually Raising Us From the Dead  
(vv.4-6)**

- A. He Made Us Alive (vv.4-5)

Verse 4 begins with “But God” and the middle of verse 5 continues after the parenthesis “made us alive.”

The conjunction ‘but’ that Paul uses introduces God’s actions toward sinners, in contrast with their plight in verses 1-3.

In the Greek text God immediately follows ‘but,’ thus placing it in an emphatic position” (John Walvoord, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

1. God is the subject here in verse 4. He is the one who spiritually raised us from the dead. “He made us alive.”
  - a) Paul uses similar terminology in Colossians 2:13 when he says, “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of

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your flesh, ***He made you alive together with Him***, having forgiven us all our transgressions.”

- b) He told the believers at Rome in Romans 6:11 to “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but ***alive to God*** in Christ Jesus.”
- c) In chapter 8, he said in verses 10-11, “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

When we talk about irresistible grace, we must understand, as Paul says in verse 8 of Ephesians 2, that “faith is a gift of God.”

But for that faith to be saving faith it has to be energized by God.

When God raises one from spiritual death, He gives them the faith to believe. It is a gift. It is not something he can earn.

- d) Romans 12:3 also talks about “faith” being a gift when it says, “For through the grace

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given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, **as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**”

- e) Probably the best example of this is what Luke records in Acts 16:14 where God opened Lydia’s heart to believe the things spoken by Paul.

It says, “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”

No one can or will believe unless God first opens the dead heart of the natural man.

- 2. Not only is faith a gift, but repentance also
  - a) 2 Timothy 2:24-26 says, “The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps **God may grant them repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the

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snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

- b) Acts 11:18 reveals the same truth when it says, “When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, ***God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.***”

Faith and repentance, which are gifts from God, provides for us the proof that God’s true, saving grace is irresistible.

Again, it’s that inward call that we’re talking about which irresistible.

John Piper said, “Grace can be resisted until God wills to overcome resistance.”

He overcomes resistance when He grants faith and repentance.

When we were in chapter 6 of John’s gospel, one essential truth we learned is what is stated in verse 44.

3. We cannot come to Christ unless God draws us

John 6:44 says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will

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raise him up on the last day.”

The words “no one” is a universal negative.

They are all-inclusive. This includes every person who have ever been born or to be born.

It allows for no exception apart from the exceptions Jesus adds.

The word “can” has to do with ability not permission.

Jesus is not saying, “No one is allowed to come to Me...” He is saying, “No one is able to come to Me...”

The word “unless” is also vital to our understanding.

It refers to a necessary condition. A necessary condition refers to something that must happen before something else can happen.

The meaning of Jesus' words is clear.

No human being can possibly come to Christ unless something happens that makes it possible for him to come.

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That necessary condition Jesus declares is that “it has been granted to him by the Father.”

Jesus is saying here that the ability to come to Him is a gift from God.

Man does not have the ability in and of himself to come to Christ. God must do something first.

What does Jesus mean when He uses the word “draw”?

Some have defined this as a wooing or an enticing to come to Christ.

Others refer to it as prevenient grace which means that the power to come to Christ is dispensed to all of mankind, thus enabling everyone to accept or reject the gospel according to their own will alone. This is what Charles Finney taught.

The Greek word that Paul uses here means to “compel by irresistible superiority” (Kittel).

So linguistically and lexicographically, the word means “to compel.”

To compel is a much more forceful concept than to woo.

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Listen how it is used in other places in Scripture:

- a) James 2:6 says, “But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally ***drag*** you into court?”
- b) Acts 16:19 says, “But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and ***dragged*** them into the market place before the authorities.”

John MacArthur, referring to this verse in his study Bible says, “Scripture indicates that no ‘free will’ exists in man’s nature, for man is enslaved to sin (total depravity) and unable to believe apart from God’s empowerment (Rom. 3:1-19; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:9). While “whosoever will” may come to the Father, only those whom the Father gives the ability to will toward Him will actually come to Him. The drawing here is selective and efficacious (producing the desired effect) upon those whom God has sovereignly chosen for salvation, i.e., those whom God has chosen will believe because God has sovereignly determined that result from eternity past (Eph. 1:9-11)” (The MacArthur Study Bible).

- c) In John 6:63-65 Jesus uses another word to

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indicate the Father's choice in salvation

Jesus said, "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 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.'"

A.W. Pink says, "The Lord here presses upon His critics what He had first said in verse 44. To believe on Him, to appropriate the saving value of His death, was not an act of the flesh: to do this, they must first be "drawn by the Father,' that is, be 'quickeneth by the Spirit.' There must be life before there can be the activities of life. Believing on Christ is a manifestation of the Divine life already in the one that believes. The writer has no doubt at all that the words, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth,' refer to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit" (The Gospel of John).

If faith and repentance are a gift from God and no one can come to Christ unless God draws him first, then...



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4. God's effectual calling overcomes resistance to the gospel

Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 **but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**"

You see...

5. It is the new birth that enables us to receive Christ
- a) 1 John 5:1 says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born [literally: perfect tense, "has been born"] of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him."
  - b) John said in John 1:11-13, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe ["are believing"] in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Grace can be resisted until God wills to overcome

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resistance and He overcomes resistance by the Holy Spirit's work on the heart.

He grants faith and repentance and compels those whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world to come to Christ.

Since that is the case....

6. Who then can resist His will?

Romans 9:14-23 says, "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." 18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? 21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the

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same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory.”

If you go back to our text in Ephesians 2:4...

7. It says in verse 4 that He did this according to His “mercy” (v.4a)

“He shows mercy to us by not treating us the way we deserve to be treated” (MacDonald).

- a) Ps.86:5 says, “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, ***and abundant in mercy*** to all those who call upon You” (NKJV).
- b) Ps.86:15 says He is a “But You, O Lord, are a God ***merciful*** and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.”
- c) Paul says, “God is *rich* in mercy” which means His mercy comes from His abounding wealth.

Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have

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redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

In 3:8 Paul said he was given this grace that he “preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.”

Just as Paul spoke of “the riches of His grace,” and “the unfathomable riches of Christ,” he now speaks of “God, who is rich in mercy” (NKJV).

Albert Barnes says, “Mercy is the riches or the wealth of God. People are often rich in gold, and silver, and diamonds, and they pride themselves in these possessions; but God is “rich in mercy.” In that He abounds and He is so rich in it that He is willing to impart it to others; so rich that He can make all blessed” (Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible).

- d) The word that Paul uses here for *mercy* is *eleos*, which means, “undeserved kindness.”

“In the Septuagint ‘mercy’ (*eleos*) translates the Hebrew *Hesed* (‘loyal love’).

In the New Testament *eleos* means

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‘undeserved kindness’ toward sinners. Thus God, who is rich in exhibiting this undeserved kindness, acts on behalf of sinners because of His great love for us” (Walvoord).

We see that in applied in Titus 3:3-5.

- e) God has initiated our spiritual resurrection out of His abundant kindness towards us even though we were dead in trespasses and sins

Ps.103:4 says He “crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (NKJV).

- 8. Verses 4-5 also says He did this “because of His great love”

“Salvation is *from* sin and *by* love” (MacArthur).

- a) Romans 5:8 says, “But ***God demonstrates His own love toward us***, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- b) John 15:13 says, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”
- c) He did what none of us could do because “we were dead.” (v.5)

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- (1) We already saw that in verse 1 (dead - nekros, refers to spiritual death)
  - (2) Colossians 2:13 says we were “dead in...trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh.”
  - (3) Romans in 5:8 says “we were still sinners.”
- e) He made us alive by raising us from spiritual death and giving us spiritual life

“Made us alive” Gr.suzoopoieo, “to cause to live, to give life” (Wuest), “to make alive together with someone” (UBS)

Romans 8:11 says, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

“There was such a connection between Christ and those whom the Father hath given to him, that His resurrection from the grave involved their resurrection to spiritual life” (Albert Barnes, Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible).

- (1) Colossians 1:13 describes it as Him

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delivering “us from the power of darkness and [translating] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (NKJV).

- (2) In verses 21 and 22, Paul says we “once were alienated and enemies in [our] mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present [us] holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (NKJV).
- (3) At the end of chapter 2, he says in verses 13 and 14: “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, ***He has made alive*** together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”
- f) To highlight this being a total work of God through Christ, Paul says at the end of verse 5, “by grace you have been saved.”

We, who were “dead in...trespasses and sins”,

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living according to the world and Satan and according to the flesh, has He made alive because of His abundant mercy and great love toward us.

B. He Raised Us Up (v.6a)

Paul says that God “raised us up with Him.”

1. This speaks of our union with Christ

His resurrection is the basis for our resurrection. We partook of his resurrection life and now we have been “positionally resurrected” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary).

“The tense of "raised" and "made" indicates that these are immediate and direct results of salvation” (John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible).

2. When Christ was raised physically, we were raised spiritually

“Our union with Him is the ground of our present spiritual, and future bodily, resurrection and ascension” (JFB).

a) Romans 6:4-5 says we “were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as



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Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

“Not only have we been made alive with Christ; we have also been raised up with Him. Just as death and judgment are behind Him, they are behind us also.

We stand on the resurrection side of the tomb. This is our glorious position as a result of our union with Him. And because it is true of us positionally, we should live as those who are alive from the dead” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997, c1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Eph 2:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

John Walvoord says, “Believers are positioned spiritually in heaven, where Christ is. They are no longer mere earthlings; their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). He is the exalted Son of God, and they are exalted sons and daughters of God. These actions of God toward unbelievers are similar to what God did for Christ: "He raised Him from the dead

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and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 1:20). Whereas Christ had died physically (1:20), unbelievers were dead spiritually (2:1-3). While Christ was raised physically (1:20), unbelievers are made alive and raised with Christ spiritually (2:5-6). Christ is seated in the heavenly realms physically (in His resurrected, ascended body; 1:20), but believers are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms spiritually (2:6). This divine power that can make an unbeliever have life, be raised, and exalted with Christ is the same power that presently operates in believers" (The Bible Knowledge Commentary).

- b) Colossians 3:1 says, "Since" (speaks of a fulfilled condition) not "If" "then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God."

## **CONCLUSION**

1. So what were we before our spiritual resurrection? Dead in sin, living according to the world and Satan, and living according to the flesh.
2. When God raised us from spiritual death, He made us alive

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by raising us up with Christ and seating us together with Him in the heavens “so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (v.7).

3. It is “by grace” that we “have been saved through faith” (v.8).
4. As such “we are His workmanship” (v.10).
5. That is irresistible grace.
6. If God is tugging at your heart to come to Him, you will come.
7. You will no longer resist.
8. You will believe and repent because that is what God does in the heart of all His elect.
9. I pray this morning that He is drawing someone in here to Himself.
10. You can know that He is when you believe and see your sin and desire to turn from it and turn to Christ.
11. Let's pray.