

Podcast: Confessing the Faith

Episode 12: Irresistible Grace

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Q1: What does the doctrine of irresistible grace teach?

1. Effectual calling is a more helpful term.
2. LBC 10.1 - "Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, 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."

Q2: What are some objections that you hear leveled against this doctrine?

1. "It sure does seem as if people resist the grace of God!"
 - a. General calling: external; word only; ineffective due to the fact that man is blind, deaf, and at enmity with God. "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14, ESV)
 - b. Effectual calling; internal; word and Spirit; effective only because of the Spirit's work of regeneration. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44, ESV)
2. "This doctrine violates our free will. God is a gentlemen, he would never force himself on anyone..."
 - a. When a person makes a comment like this it reveals to me that they do not understand what we Calvinists believe.
 - i. LBC 9 - Free Will:
 1. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is neither forced, nor by any necessity of nature determined to do good or evil. (Matthew 17:12; James 1:14; Deuteronomy 30:19)
 2. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God, but yet was unstable, so that he might fall from it. (Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 3:6)
 3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto. (Romans 5:6; Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Titus 3:3-5; John 6:44)
 4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that by reason of his remaining corruptions, he doth not perfectly, nor only will, that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil. (Colossians 1:13; John 8:36; Philippians 2:13; Romans 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 23)
 5. This will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone in the state of glory only. (Ephesians 4:13)
 - ii. LBC 10.1&2 - Effectual Calling
 1. Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, 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. (Romans 8:30; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:10, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; Ephesians 2:1-6; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:17, 18;

Ezekiel 36:26; Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:27; Ephesians 1:19; Psalm 110:3; Song of Solomon 1:4)

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead. (2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:5; John 5:25; Ephesians 1:19, 20)

Q3: How is the effectual calling connected to regeneration?

1. Effectual *calling* emphasizes the summons.
2. Regeneration emphasizes the inward work of the Spirit by which he makes alive to God and able to believe.
3. I suppose the concept of regeneration is contained within the word effectual.
4. The point is that the word must be proclaimed *and* the Spirit must work.

Q4: How would you go about presenting this doctrine from the scriptures?

1. A theological presentation (the necessary consequences that flow from other doctrines):
 - a. First of all, it is important to see this doctrine in light of what has already been said about unconditional election.
 - i. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:3–6, ESV)
 - ii. Understand this: we are not saved by our predestination. When we speak of predestination, or election, we are talking about the decree, or plan, of God established before the world was created. Redemption needed to be accomplished (atonement made). And redemption also needs to be applied to sinners. We come to possess salvation only after we have believed upon Christ who has earned salvation for us. This is what effectual calling (irresistible grace) is dealing with (also, preservation or perseverance). This belongs under the heading of "redemption applied".
 - iii. That said, the two things - predestination and effectual calling - are certainly connected. If they are not, then all that the scriptures say concerning election becomes meaningless. If there is no effectual calling then *God's will* is turned into *God's wish*.
 - b. Secondly, it is important that we see this doctrine in light of what has already been said about total depravity.
 - c. Thirdly, consider the implications of the doctrine of particular redemption.\
 - d. All theology hangs together!
2. A scriptural presentation:
 - a. New Testament:
 - i. The Spirit must give new life:
 1. "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12–13, ESV)
 2. "Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."" (John 3:3, ESV)
 3. "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:7, ESV)
 4. "...he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5, ESV)

- ii. The Father must “draw”:
 - 1. “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” (John 6:37, ESV)
 - 2. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—” (John 6:44–45, ESV)
- iii. The Father must grant that a person come to faith and repentance:
 - 1. “But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (John 6:64–65, ESV)
 - 2. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8–9, ESV)
 - 3. “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake...” (Philippians 1:29, ESV)
 - 4. “God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.” (2 Timothy 2:25–26, ESV)
- iv. God must reveal himself:
 - 1. “At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11:25–27, ESV)
 - 2. “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14, ESV)
 - 3. See also Luke 10:21; Matthew 13:10-16; Luke 8:10; Matthew 16:15-17
- v. God effectually calls:
 - 1. “including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:6–7, ESV)
 - 2. “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” (Romans 8:30, ESV)
 - 3. “in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?” (Romans 9:23–24, ESV)
 - 4. “Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:” (1 Corinthians 1:1–2, ESV)
 - 5. “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:9, ESV)
 - 6. “but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the

weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:23–31, ESV)

7. "Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:15, ESV)
8. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9, ESV)

b. Old Testament Scriptures:

- i. "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." (Deuteronomy 30:6, ESV)
- ii. "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:26–27, ESV)

Q5: Who is it that calls us?

1. In general terms, it is the work of the Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Specifically, it is the work of the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Q6: How does this work in real life?

1. Every Christian knows what it is to be effectively called by God. All true testimonies share that in common.
2. The word and Spirit are involved.
3. How that all plays out differs from person to person.

Q7: What difference should this make in our lives?

1. Humility. Everything we have comes from God.
2. Evangelism
 - a. The gospel must be preached.
 - b. The Spirit must work.