

Hermeneutic Study – 17th Session

Agenda: for tonight – July 25th, 2010

- Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages
 - “Understanding Calvinism”
 - Quick Recap of History
 - Quick Recap of 5 Points
 - Irresistible Grace (the fourth of 5 points)
 - **The Calvinistic view**
 - **General thoughts on the subject**
 - **Arguments for Irresistible Grace**
 - **Arguments used by Arminians against the doctrine**

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

□ Recap of the history of the debate

Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) formally wrote against the doctrines espoused by the reformers and systemized by Calvin. Arminius attempted to change Calvin's doctrines so that man would have, as he perceived, the primary role in determining his salvation. From his writings Arminius picked up followers, who did not want to bear his name, so they called themselves Remonstrants (one who protests).

At the Synod of Dort, held in Dordrecht, Holland, in 1618/1619, the representatives of the various protestant churches published a condemnation of Arminius and his followers as heretics. Part of this publication came to be known as the "five points of Calvinism" in response to the "five articles of Remonstrance" written by followers of Arminius. These five points are used even today to define Calvinism and are often called the "TULIP." It must be understood though that Calvinism is much more than the "five points" used to counter Arminius. Calvinism, is considered by many theologians as the systemitized doctrine of the Bible related to grace, Christocentric teaching, and the sovereign glory of God.* parts from Wikipedia

Understanding Calvinism

❑ Five doctrines were determined by the Synod of Dort to counter the five statements of the Remonstrants. These became known as the Five Points of Calvinism.

T – Total Depravity

U – Unconditional Election

L – Limited Atonement (Particular Atonement)

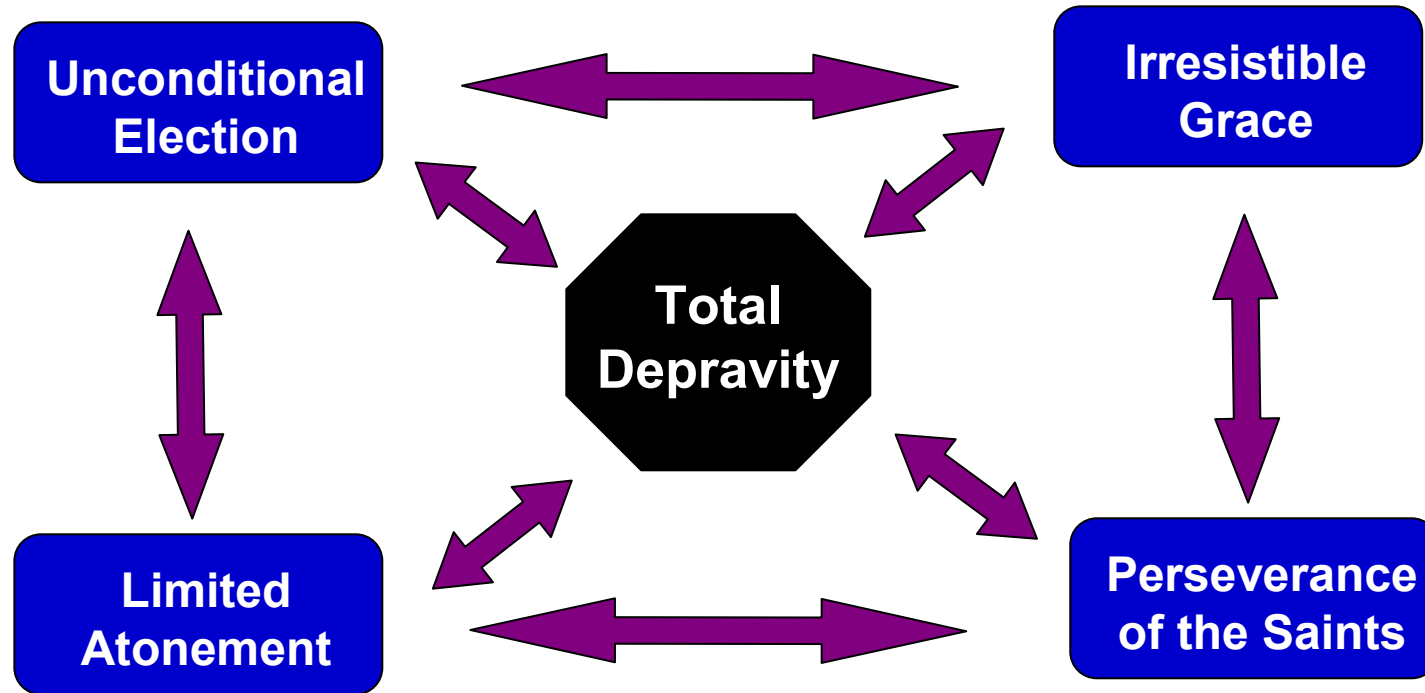
I – Irresistible Grace (Effectual Call)

P – Perseverance of the Saints (Eternal Security)

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

- ❑ Correctly understood, these points effect everything on how the truth is approached, and understood.



The points are all interconnected – but, each can easily be supported individually from Scripture.

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

“The doctrines of grace flow naturally from one to another. That is not because they are built upon the “wisdom of man,” but because they reflect the perfect consistency of the Word of God. The doctrine of ‘irresistible grace’ flows naturally and logically from what has come before. If God is all sovereign, if man is dead in sin and incapable of saving himself, if God has eternally elected to save certain men and women, and if Christ has died in their place, then it is obvious that God’s eternal plan will not fall on its face when it comes time for the individual to enter into the salvation that was secured for him in eternity past.” (God’s Sovereign Grace, White, Crowne Publications, 1999, Page 79)

“No more soul-destroying doctrine could well be devised than the doctrine that sinners can regenerate themselves, and repent and believe just when they please...as it is a truth both of Scripture and of experience that the un-renewed man can do nothing of himself to secure his salvation, it is essential that he should be brought to a practical conviction of that truth. Hence thus convinced, and not before, he seeks help from the only source whence it can be obtained.”
Charles Hodge

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, & Passages

Understanding Calvinism

☐ Atonement

Arminianism

The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted

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) proceeds and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free 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.

Calvinism

The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace

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 internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it 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.

Chart by David Steele and Curtis Thomas - Originally posted on Archegos: the Champion Statement on offsite articles.

Understanding Calvinism

❑ Irresistible Grace

By definition: “According to Calvinism, those who obtain salvation do so, not by their own "free" will, but because of the sovereign grace of God. That is, men yield to grace, not finally because their consciences were more tender or their faith more tenacious than that of other men. Rather, the willingness and ability to do God's will, are evidence of God's own faithfulness to save men from the power and the penalty of sin, and since man is so corrupt that he will not decide and cannot be wooed to follow after God, God must powerfully intervene. In short, Calvinism argues that regeneration must precede faith” (from Wikipedia).

A summary of the “effectual calling” doctrine:

In **John 10:26-27** we have the very words of Jesus to provide the platform for considering this important doctrine. In **verse 26** Christ is providing the explanation as to why the religious Jewish leaders do not believe Him. It was not lack of evidence, or because it was illogical, or Jesus had not told them or shown them in countless ways. It is because they are not of God’s chosen, and do not therefore have the special calling of God necessary.

Understanding Calvinism

❑ Irresistible Grace...continued

By contrast, Jesus sheep (His chosen given to Him by the Father - **John 6:37**), act altogether differently toward Christ. The hearing of Jesus voice is the special effectual call required. In **Romans 8:29-30** we see a disclosure of the special chain of events God works in salvation beginning with His unconditional election, and ending with glorification. The effectual call is a necessary component of this chain of absolute and unbroken events. This is the same consistent chain of events we see in other passages (**Eph 1:3-14; Eph 2:1-10; Col 1:13-23; 1 Pet 1:1-5; 2 Tim 1:8-14**).

As the sheep (His elect) “*hear My voice*” (**John 10:27** words of Christ) it is the idea of a special hearing with reception that produces action. The action is “*they follow Me*” (follow Christ) with the idea they trust Him, and have a life changing relationship with Him as their true Shepherd. This voice of Christ carries life and power (**Hebrews 4:12**), and Christ’s voice is equal to His Word – as He is the Word of God (**John 1:1**). The power of Christ’s Word called creation into existence, and the same power is effectual in calling His sheep. That is why such passages as **Isaiah 55:8-11** show the effectual reality, or irresistible reality of the power of His Word. When Jesus cried “*Lazarus come forth*” (**John 11:43**) he came out of the physical dead into resurrected life. Lazarus experienced the irresistible call of Christ.

Understanding Calvinism

❑ Irresistible Grace...continued

This same power is used of God to call dead sinners (**Ephesians 2:1**) out of “*darkness into marvelous light*” (**1 Peter 2:9**). God uses His Word to call sinners to Himself, and it is always an effectual call (**1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18; Romans 10:17**). By contrast, just like the Pharisees in the John 10 passage did not believe in Jesus, the natural man (those unsaved) “*cannot understand*” the Words of Christ (**1 Corinthians 2:12-14**). This is true of all unsaved men (Romans 3:11), and therefore God must act to powerfully overcome the condition of man in his spiritual deadness so that he will understand and believe (**1 John 2:21**).

❑ General Thoughts on studying this subject:

1. Irresistible grace flows naturally from what has already been discussed. Man is totally depraved – that is he is completely unable to make one step toward God, and has no desire to do so. His basis for being elected by God is unconditional – that is God did not look at any man and see something within them that attracted God or provided merit whereby God would select them over another. His election was something within God Himself, and was not on the basis of anything any man has done. The scope of

Understanding Calvinism

□ General Thoughts on studying this subject...continued:

was for the elect of God only. Christ Jesus purposely went to the cross to save those whom the Father had chosen to elect and given to Him, and therefore all for whom He died will indeed be saved. Therefore, the calling of those who are elected and for whom Christ died must be irresistible or effectual in order for it to be absolutely successful. As God the Father chose them, and Christ died for them, they must in His providence and by the Spirit's omnipotent power be drawn to Him.

2. Irresistible grace corresponds with or is consistent with the character of God. That is God is sovereign and omnipotence, and accomplishes all He desires to accomplish – therefore, His grace is powerful or effectual as He is powerful. Any other conclusion would be inconsistent.
3. The essential teaching of Christ to Nicodemus that one must be “born again” is shown in its context not to be of human ability or origin. It is the Spirit of God that moves as He wills, and causes the new birth, supernaturally and powerfully to occur. Where it not so there would be no “new birth.”

Understanding Calvinism

□ General Thoughts on studying this subject...continued:

4. A general examination of passages dealing with the purpose and workings of God in salvation consistently reveal salvation as not just a possibility, but an emphatic, predetermined, purposeful, and dynamic plan of God carried to completion.
5. The “effectual call” (irresistible grace) of God is one of the inseparable components of God’s plan of salvation, without which faith would not be possible, and the uniting of men to Christ would not then occur.

Understanding Calvinism

Arguments for Irresistible Grace:

- **The argument based on man's revealed condition**

We have already shown the Bible teaches the spiritual death of mankind outside of Jesus Christ (handout 13 on total depravity). This is spoken of in **Ephesians 2:1** "*as being dead in trespasses and sins.*" In **Romans 3:11** "*there is none who understands*" meaning mankind cannot know or accept the things of God as they are "*spiritually discerned*" (**1 Cor 2:14**). These passages and many more teach the spiritual inability of those outside Christ, and that there is nothing in natural man that would make him, or induce him to formulate a saving belief in Christ. Therefore, the only answer is the Biblical answer of an intervening by God, an intrusion of His grace to make the heart receptive to His call so that repentance and saving faith become a reality.

Understanding Calvinism

Arguments for Irresistible Grace....continued:

- **The argument based on the revealed decrees of God's purpose**

God's overall process for salvation, along with a view of the inner workings of God, is revealed in a number of passages. In **Ephesians 1:3-14** is one of the most comprehensive pictures of the purpose and out-workings of God by all three Persons of the Godhead. In this passage it is revealed that God is the originator of a comprehensive plan dating back before the foundation of the world, and that He is purposely and precisely carrying out the plan. The plan serves as a chain of God originated events beginning with His choosing (election), predestination to adoption, with the means of calling stated - the preaching of the Word. The idea is that God initiates and plans each step of the process, and an essential component is His calling (here spoken as *"listening to the message of truth."*) This calling is further shown to be effectual, because there is no break or possibility of refusal (stated as *"having also believed"*) from His initiated decree. This same concept is seen clearly in **Romans 8:28-30**. This is a chain of God decreed events that cannot be stopped, must be successful because God Himself is doing it, and included in the chain is *"He called"* with the manifestation the call was irresistible as the chain continues unbroken to reach *"glorification."* As there is no possible break shown in the chain, the calling therefore must be irresistible (*"for who resists His will?"* **Rom 9:19**).

Understanding Calvinism

Arguments for Irresistible Grace....continued:

- **The argument based on the necessity of God to act first and decisively**

Often it is considered in Christian circles that faith precedes grace. It is generally thought the person must first believe in order to be born again by grace. In reality the Scripture teaches that unsaved man has no ability in himself to believe (**Rom 3:11**). The Scripture further teaches that faith is a “*gift of God*” (**Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Peter 1:1**). Therefore, God must grant the person faith in order for faith to be demonstrated within the person. This is the same as is true with love “*we love because He first loved us.*” The necessary initiation must begin with God, as it cannot with man. This is precisely the order in **John 3:3** by Christ in His response to Nicodemus “*unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” Unless God transforms the heart, there can be no understanding to precipitate belief. This is also the intention of **1 Pet 1:2** when the “*sanctifying work of the Spirit*” comes before “*obeying Jesus Christ*” (obedience in this context is the obedience of faith). Therefore, before one can believe (the obedience commanded) the Spirit of God must initiate a “*new birth*” in that person. In all of this and much more there must first be the work of God, and it must be decisive – this is the substance and teaching of the “*effectual calling.*”

Understanding Calvinism

Arguments for Irresistible Grace....continued:

- **The argument based on the focus of the prayers of God's people**

It has been stated that everyone is a Calvinist when it comes to praying. What is meant by this? To whom are Christians praying? Well, the obvious answer is they are praying to God. Why is it that people pray to God that He will move by His Spirit, that He will save if we do not believe He effectually provides salvation according to His sovereign good pleasure? If salvation is somehow within the person for whom we are praying, why not pray to them? Philippians 1:29 states in part *"it has been granted on behalf of Christ for you to believe."* The granting, or irresistible calling came from God – therefore Christians pray to God on behalf of others thereby recognizing His sovereign right over every calling. This is a natural given that provides undeniable proof to the effectual calling doctrine.

Understanding Calvinism

❑ The arguments used by the Arminian's against the doctrine of "Irresistible Grace"

1. Man has the natural power of will to choose to believe God without any overpowering intervention from God.

Answer: *There is no basis for such a statement anywhere in Scripture. Just the opposite is taught as has been covered under man's "total depravity." This idea springs from the general call of God for faith and repentance.*

2. God does not force Himself on anyone.

Answer: *It is true that God does not take people into His sheep-fold against their will. The process of God in salvation was begun long before conversion, we read in Romans 5:10 "while we were enemies (of God) we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." This actually fits with the teaching of "total depravity" – that is no saved person was out looking for God, but instead they were enemies. However, the situation didn't remain that way, and therefore we should never think that possible. For the same context says in Rom 5:5 "the love of God has*

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