

Irresistible Grace

The “I” of our TULIP is Irresistible Grace —the belief that the elect cannot resist the call of God when the time is right.

The **Reformers** believed that salvation is based on the free will of God alone and since God is omnipotent (all-powerful) His grace cannot be resisted.

The **Arminians** refuted that belief stating that salvation is based upon the free will of man who is capable of rejecting the sovereign will of God

One of the greatest misconceptions of mission-minded people is the belief that “the lost are longing to hear the gospel.”

But the Lord was very clear that the world hates Jesus, the world hates God’s Word, the world hates God’s messengers

John 15:18 (Jesus speaking) **"When the world hates you, remember it hated me before it hated you. If you lived on the world's terms, the world would love you as one of its own. But since I picked you to live on God's terms and no longer on the world's terms, the world is going to hate you."**

It seems that the most committed **Arminian** must be challenged by two thoughts that if God wills that all men should be saved...

- but man can resist and reject God’s saving grace
- then God is not omnipotent

Most **Arminians** believe... that God’s call can be obstructed and they cite the following passages for this belief...

John 1:12 **But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.**

John 3:36 **And all who believe in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them.**

John 3:18 **There is no judgment awaiting those who trust him. But those who do not trust him have already been judged for not believing in the only Son of God. Their judgment is based on this fact: The light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. They hate the light because they want to sin in the darkness. They stay away from the light for fear their sins will be exposed and they will be punished. But those who do what is right come to the light gladly, so everyone can see that they are doing what God wants.**

John 5:40 **Yet you refuse to come to me so that I can give you this eternal life.**

John 8:45 **So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me!**

The **Arminian** looks at these verses and sees a man or woman... who makes a choice of their own will, and rejects the wooing of the Holy Spirit and turns down the offer of salvation.

The **Reformers** look at these same verses and sees a man or woman... who rejects the "outward" call because they are inwardly spiritually dead, and...

- if they were one of God's elect... their spirit would have been quickened
- they would have been given life and they would respond to His call

Reformers believed... the work of God must precede faith... and repentance.

John 3:3 Jesus answered (Nicodemus) and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Regeneration and faith... are in fact... simultaneous. It's as if...

- Life (regeneration) unlocks the bondage that releases the faith to believe.

Ephesians 2:1-5you were dead....and were by nature children of wrath....But God, being rich in mercy....made us alive together with Christ....and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The Reformers believed...

- God doesn't force the elect to Trust Him
- Rather, He gives them Life and a living human Spirit... cannot resist the power of the Father's call

A living human spirit finds the living God irresistible.

Before we look at the Scriptural foundation for this, let's look briefly at the overall concept as some express it.

John MacArthur... "God's saving purpose cannot be thwarted."

R.C. Sproul brings clarification... "Irresistible conjures up the idea that one cannot offer any resistance to the grace of God. The history of the human race, however, is a history of relentless resistance by humans to the sweetness of the grace of God. The word *irresistible* suggests the grace of God is incapable of being resisted. But we are capable of resisting God's grace, and we do resist God's grace. The idea here is that in spite of our natural resistance to God's grace, His grace is so powerful it has the capacity to overcome any natural resistance. I prefer to call it 'Effectual Grace'."

The **Reformers** based their beliefs largely on the following:

John 6:37 However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.

John 6:29 Jesus said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

James 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

John 1:13 They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan- this rebirth comes from God.

John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

Ephesians 2:4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, :5 that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.

A great example of how God works is in the life of a business woman whose name was Lydia... who worshipped God.

She heard the apostles teaching the Word of God, and Truth came in through her mind. But, did she have to focus, consider, and provide a rationale before her decision?

Here is what God tells us about that moment...

Acts 16:14Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.

- Lydia listened
- the Lord opened her heart
- she accepted—(no wrestling, “should I or not?”)

Think for a moment of Paul's conversion:

- on his way to Damascus
- to arrest Christians, take them to Jerusalem in chains
- God initiated....a brilliant light from heaven
- Paul fell to the ground....and found himself blind
- Jesus told him to go into the city and wait
- he went without food and water for three full days
- the Lord sent Ananias to tell Paul he was chosen by God
- and - he was told how much he would suffer for Jesus
- he got his sight back
- he ate and was strengthened
- he was baptized
- he went out immediately and began to preach the gospel

At what point did he wrestle with any decision?—or did he resist God?

I can vividly recall my own salvation over 50 years ago. There was no wrestling, no “taking into consideration” or “let me think about that”—the light went on! Eternal Life invaded my heart in the persons of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit. It was done! It was all God's doing!