

CALVINISM: IRRESISTIBLE GRACE, Part 1

Having discussed the first three foundational points of Calvinistic doctrine (inherited total depravity, unconditional election, and limited atonement) we now notice the fourth. In the acrostic of "Calvin's TULIP," it is represented by the letter "I" standing for the concept of *irresistible grace*, also referred to as *effectual calling*. This doctrine is popularly described as the *direct operation of the Holy Spirit*.

It is predicated on the assumption that all are born under the guilt of Adam's original sin and that "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."

Consequently, "All those whom God hath predestined unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit...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" (THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, U.S.A., Confession of Faith, pp. 52-53; 54-56).

Confused? Probably so. The foregoing quotation is quite a "word salad." We quote it, however, to document the matter from a Calvinistic source. In a nutshell, what is claimed is that man is so corrupted by virtue of the sinful nature he inherits from Adam's original sin that one is unable to seek God so that God must therefore call him directly and irresistibly ("effectually") by means of the Holy Spirit operating directly on each sinful person whom God has predestined to salvation.

To the contrary, the Scriptures teach that the gospel of Christ is God's power to save those who believe and that the Holy Spirit's part in man's salvation was the revealing of the word of the gospel to the apostles and, through them, to the world (Cf., Romans 1:16; John 16:12, 13; Mark 16:15, 16). Further, whether or not one is saved is therefore up to himself. He can accept the gospel and be saved, or he can reject it and remain dead in sin, this by the free will with which everyone is endowed by God (Revelation 22:17).
—Jerry F. Bassett