

Calvin's Terrible Tulip: Irresistible Grace

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Intro: Synopsis of Calvinism - TULIP

A. As stated before, the system of Calvinism is logically consistent. If one believes that man is so depraved that he is completely unable to choose God and God must unconditionally elect specific ones, there must then be a way that God controls the salvation of the chosen one - voila! Irresistible Grace!

1. "Men cannot come to the knowledge of God by themselves. Even the elect cannot respond to God, cannot have faith, until the Holy Spirit opens their hearts to believe and understand. The grace of God, exerted in behalf of His elect, and according to His Sovereign will, cannot be thwarted." **If you are one of the elect for whom the limited atonement is intended, you cannot resist the grace of God!**

B. Held by hard-core Calvinists

1. "A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved." (Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*)
2. "This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, 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." (Presbyterian Confession of Faith)
3. Irresistible Grace "means that when God undertakes to save a person by his grace or unmerited favor, that grace is invincible. Even in making every effort, a person could not refuse it. Therefore no credit should be due for accepting it." (Presbyterians, *Their History and Beliefs*, Walter Lingle, p.36)
4. "Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only. The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and of God's grace in saving sinners as being 'efficacious,' 'invincible,' or 'irresistible.' For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ." (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented*)
5. Supposedly it's akin to something like an old computer, say an Intel 286. It can't run Windows XP or Vista unless the chipset is replaced. Man gets a special "chip upgrade" from the Holy Spirit; w/o this irresistible help, he could never be saved.

I. Biblical Proof?

A. Calvinists say "Absolutely!" But are their proof texts really bulletproof?

B. Eph 1:13

1. "Sealed" supposedly speaks of God stamping His approval upon someone.
 - a. However, context shows that man must respond first before whatever action the Spirit does.
 - b. Second, the "sealing" is not what Calvinists say. It is simply the "authenticating" of the believer by the influence of the Spirit upon his life. (Rom 8:14-16)

C. Rom 9:14-24

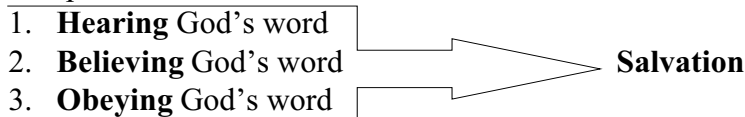
1. This passage simply shows that whoever responds to God's will *on His terms* is granted His favor. This is God's prerogative. Whether Moses, Pharaoh, the Israelites, or the Gentiles, no one was accepted or rejected unless by their own acceptance or rejection of God's will.

D. We've seen in past studies of Calvinism that saving faith is preceded by hearing & receiving God's Word.

1. **Rom 10:17; 1:16-17; John 6:44-45**
2. Jesus says "*I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.*" **Rev 3:20**
3. Calvinism has Jesus crashing down the door and dragging the man kicking & screaming into salvation!
 - a. This totally destroys the concept of man's free will which is taught in Scripture.

II. Consider the examples of conversion in Acts

- A. **Acts 2:40-41** Gladly rec'd Peter's word, baptized
- B. **8:12-13** - Samaritans heard, believed, baptized
- C. **8:35-39** - Eunuch heard, believed, baptized
- D. **9:6; 18; 22;16** - Saul heard, believed, baptized
- E. **10:22; 33-48; 11:14** - Cornelius heard, believed, baptized
- F. **16:13-15** - Lydia heard, believed, baptized
- G. **16:30-34** - Jailer heard, believed, baptized
- H. **18:8** - Corinthians heard, believed, baptized
- I. The pattern is unmistakable!



J. Is this the Holy Spirit at work? **YES!**

1. He works through the word to convict of sin and call man to respond to God -
 - a. **2 Thess 2:13-14, 1 Thess 2:13**

K. Consider how the Spirit works. When the same action is ascribed to an instrument and a person, it is axiomatic that the person achieves the action through the instrument. Consider what Scripture says about the Spirit and the Word.

1. The HS comforts - **Acts 9:31**
 - a. The word comforts - **1 Thes 4:18**
2. The HS convicts of sin - **John 16:8**
 - a. The word convicts - **Titus 1:9**
3. The HS teaches - **1 Cor 2:13**
 - a. The word teaches - **2 Tim 3:16**
4. The HS sanctifies - **1 Pet 1:2**
 - a. The word sanctifies - **John 17:17**
5. The HS purifies - **1 Pet 1:22 (NKJ)**
 - a. The word purifies - **1 Pet 1:22**
6. The HS works in the new birth - **John 3:5**
 - a. The word works in the new birth - **1 Pet 1:23**
7. The HS saves - **Titus 3:5**
 - a. The word saves - **James 1:21**
8. The HS exerts power - **Rom 15:13**
 - a. The word exerts power - **Rom 1:16**

- L. Yet, as powerful as the Spirit's work is through the Word, He can be refused!
1. **Prov 1:23-33; Acts 7:51**

Conc: *Again, Calvin got it wrong.*

- A. He says the Spirit works mysteriously, directly, and irresistibly.
- B. Bible says He works through the word and we can accept it or reject it to our own peril.
- C. However, knowing that Calvin's doctrine is in error is one thing, resisting the Spirit in your own life is another! You resist the Spirit and God's grace when ...
 - 1. you behave like the world and adopt their customs and language
 - 2. you leave prayer and Bible study on the back burner for other priorities
 - 3. you don't attend worship like you know you should
 - 4. you know what you must do to be saved but you refuse to obey the gospel.
- D. What will YOU do? Stop resisting God's grace.
- E. **INV**