

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

- ▣ Before we get into the doctrine, I want us to consider something first:
- ▣ Whenever we see conditional language in the Bible, we shouldn't dismiss the possibility that God would fulfill those conditions for us.

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2 Chronicles 30:1-12

¹ Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. ² The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month.

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³ They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. ⁴ The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly. ⁵ They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written.

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⁶ At the king's command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and from his officials, which read:

“People of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. ⁷ Do not be like your parents and your fellow Israelites, who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their ancestors, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see.

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⁸ Do not be stiff-necked, as your ancestors were; submit to the LORD. Come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. ⁹ If you return to the LORD, then your fellow Israelites and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will return to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.”

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¹⁰ The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but people scorned and ridiculed them. ¹¹ Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem. ¹² **Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD.**

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- ▣ What is the most compelling evidence that God fulfills conditions for us?
- ▣ Answer: the cross
- ▣ The condition of perfect and personal obedience was fulfilled for us through Jesus Christ.

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- ▣ What is Irresistible Grace (also known as Effectual Calling)?

- ▣ We'll explore three aspects of what it is:
 - 1) A monergistic work
 - 2) A supernatural work
 - 3) An effectual work

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- ▣ **1) A monergistic work**
- ▣ *mono* = one, *erg* = work
- ▣ Monergistic regeneration is *exclusively* a divine act.
- ▣ Man does not have the creative power God has. A corpse cannot revive itself. It cannot even *assist* in the effort. It can only respond after receiving new life.

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- ▣ Once it is revived, it is empowered to act and respond.
- ▣ God's monergistic regeneration not only makes a positive response possible, it makes it certain. (Ezekiel 36:27 says, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*")
- ▣ Therefore, *regeneration precedes faith.*

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- ▣ **2) A supernatural work**
- ▣ John 11:38-44, “³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” ⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

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- ▣ ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³
When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

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- ▣ Lazarus was dead, not critically ill or at the point of dying.
- ▣ Jesus uttered a command, not a request or an invitation.
- ▣ He made no attempt to woo Lazarus from the tomb. This resurrection was strictly monergistic. Lazarus rendered absolutely no assistance.

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- ▣ Some might say Lazarus still had to respond to Jesus' command to come forth from the tomb. Isn't this a cooperative work between Jesus and Lazarus?
- ▣ Of course, after life flowed anew in Lazarus's body, he became quite active.
- ▣ Monergistic regeneration has to do, *not* with the whole process of redemption, but strictly with the *initial condition of our first step* of coming to faith.
- ▣ His resurrection preceded his coming forth from the tomb. His restoration to life preceded his response.

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- ▣ **3) An effectual work**
- ▣ A work that accomplishes what God intends
- ▣ God offers grace that can be resisted every day.
- ▣ Irresistible Grace refers to God's ability to *overcome* man's resistance.
- ▣ Man's resistance to the grace of regeneration cannot thwart the Spirit's purpose. The Spirit's grace is invincible.
- ▣ We can do nothing to make it effective; we can do nothing to make it ineffective.

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- ▣ We are passive with respect to our own regeneration just as Lazarus was passive to his resurrection.
- ▣ The grace of regeneration changes the heart or soul from something cold, lifeless, and stony into something living, pulsating, and responsive.
- ▣ Augustine once said, “This grace, which is secretly imparted to the hearts of men, is not received by any hard heart; for the reason for which it is given is, that the hardness of the heart may first be taken away.

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- ▣ **Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) provides a nice summary of this doctrine:**
- ▣ **10.1.** All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed 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 an 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.

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- ▣ 10.2. 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.

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Review. See if you can follow the sequence of events:

- 1) We are utterly unable to respond to the grace of God.
- 2) God overcomes our natural resistance by regenerating us.
- 3) *After* regeneration we witness the fruit of repentance, faith in Christ, and a genuine change in the heart. (regeneration precedes faith)
- 4) We desire God and we choose God willingly and joyfully. Because #1-3 is true, God gets all the praise and the glory, not us.