

# Irresistible Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Where the psalmist says, O Israel, hope in the Lord.

For with the Lord there is steadfast love. And with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

So this evening we're returning to what we've called the Christian's Greenhouse. And we're going to check on that one flower that should always be in the forefront of our minds.

Because the tulip, as we've seen, it's a flower that should never be allowed to wilt or to die. And this flower, it should shape the way that we walk. It should shape the way we worship.

And it should shape the way we witness as Christians. And as I've said before, I believe that when we understand this flower, and when we see it in all its beauty, it should cause us to respond in praise and adoration towards the Lord.

[ 1 : 26 ] Because as the tulip has highlighted to us over the past few weeks, our salvation, it's all of the Lord. It's not of ourselves. It's the gift of God.

It's all of grace. And as we said before, tulip, it's an acrostic for what has become known as the five points of Calvinism. T-U-L-I-P. Total depravity.

Unconditional election. Limited atonement. Irresistible grace. And perseverance of the saints. And over the past few weeks, well, we've considered the first three letters of this acrostic.

We consider T for total depravity. That when Adam sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, he brought the entire human race into any state of sin and misery.

Mankind is dead. Dead in trespasses and sins. In Adam, we are spiritually dead. It doesn't matter if we're spoken to with wisdom or eloquence or passion or even shouting.

[ 2 : 25 ] We're dead. But we're not only dead. We're also in that dungeon. We're imprisoned by sin. We're enslaved to sin. And without the Lord intervening in our lives, without the Lord working in our heart, without the Lord taking that first step, the initiative, we would never respond.

Without the Lord, we wouldn't respond. Without the Lord, we can't be saved. The Lord is the only one who can bring a sinner from darkness to light, from death to life, from the dungeon to liberty. And as we said before, if that's the case, if our salvation is all of the Lord, then the Lord has chosen who will be saved and who will not be saved.

If our salvation is all of the Lord, then there must be an elect. And that brought us to consider the second letter in our acrostic, the U in tulip, which is unconditional election.

And as we saw, the Bible tells us that election is part of the gospel. Election is good news. Because were it not for election, no one would be saved, regardless of how privileged we are.

[ 3 : 37 ] And our unconditional election, it ought to remind us that the Lord didn't have to do anything. The Lord didn't have to save anyone. He didn't have to elect anyone. He was under no obligation to save any of us.

Because we're all totally depraved. We are totally depraved by sin. But the wonder of our salvation is that the Lord, in his grace and mercy, he chose to save some.

And the wonder of our unconditional election is that we have been loved and chosen in Christ from before the world began. But more than that, when Jesus Christ entered into this world, into time itself, he came to redeem those who were loved and chosen from before the world began.

And as our catechism reminds us, Jesus Christ, he is the only redeemer of God's elect. The only redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why last week we considered the letter L for limited atonement. But this evening we're looking at the fourth letter of Tulip.

[ 4 : 49 ] I is for irresistible grace. I is for irresistible grace. And the question we need to ask is, how does the Lord draw us to himself?

How does the Lord draw us to himself? Of course, we know that it's a work of the Holy Spirit. But you know, whenever I think of, whenever I think about irresistible grace, I always have in mind as to what Jesus said when he called Peter and Andrew to be his disciples.

You'll remember that Jesus, as he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he said, he stopped and said to Peter and Andrew, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

And so when I think of irresistible grace, I have in my mind a fisherman. Not with a net, but with a fishing rod. And the fisherman is, as Jesus said, he is a fisher of men.

He's a preacher of God's word. And the word of God is, you could say, the bait that draws the fish to bite down on the hook.

[ 5 : 58 ] And when a fish, when a sinner takes the bait and bites the hook, they're reeled in. They're drawn in by God's irresistible grace.

Now, I want to break down this illustration that I have in my mind. I want to break it all down into five stages. Five stages so that we can consider what happens when a sinner is irresistibly reeled in, you could say, or drawn in by God's gracious work of the Spirit.

So these five stages, stay with me on this one. They are call, conviction, confession, commitment, and communication.

Five stages. Call, conviction, confession, commitment, and communication. So what happens when a sinner is irresistibly drawn by God's gracious work of the Spirit?

What happens? Well, there is, first of all, a call. A call. You know, Psalm 130, it begins at the point when a sinner is effectually called by the Lord.

[ 7 : 08 ] A sinner is effectually called by the Lord. That's how Psalm 130 begins. And our catechism, it helpfully summarizes what we're looking at this evening. And, you know, well, the catechism, it was never one of my strong points.

I was never good at memorizing the catechism as a child in Sunday school. And, ironically, the question I got stuck on and never got past was question 31.

What is effectual calling? And, you know, it's strange. It wasn't until I was effectually called that I not only learned this catechism, but I also understood what was being taught.

Question 31 in the catechism, it asks, what is effectual calling? And the catechism teaches us effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery.

He enlightens our mind in the knowledge of Christ. He renews our will and the Spirit persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ as he's freely offered to us in the gospel.

[ 8 : 15 ] Effectual calling is a gracious work of God the Holy Spirit. And so it's not 50% God and 50% human effort. It's not even 99% God and 1% human effort.

It's the Lord and the Lord alone. It's 100% God's gracious act of our salvation, God's salvation working in our heart and lives.

And it is nothing to do with us. The Lord and the Lord alone has the power to bring us from any state of sin and misery into any state of salvation.

And the Lord does all this by calling us. He calls us. But what we have to always remember is that there are two types of call. There is the outward call and there is the inward call.

The outward call and the inward call. Now the outward call, it can be resisted. But the inward call, which is effectual, it is irresistible.

[ 9 : 20 ] The outward call is the preaching of the gospel. But this call, the outward call, it's still a gracious call. For the Lord has given his word to us and the preacher is to graciously put this call, the outward call, to whosoever.

The outward call is to whosoever, which includes everyone and excludes no one. The outward call is a gracious call to whosoever.

But the outward call is resistible. And we see evidence of this. We see it every week. We see it in our homes. We see it in our families.

We see it in our congregations. And, well, we saw it in ourselves. We were coming to church for years. We were going to Sunday school. We were sitting, listening to many different preachers.

We were under the sound of the gracious outward call of the gospel. And yet, we were still dead in sin, enslaved to sin, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.

[ 10 : 24 ] And, like it was for us, nothing can free the sinner from their estate of sin and misery, unless they have been unconditionally elected from all eternity.

And Christ died for them on the cross. But, you know, this is the point. No one knows who will be effectually and inwardly called. And so, well, the preacher, myself and many others, have to faithfully give the outward call of the gospel to whosoever.

But, you know, just like a fisherman going down to the Barvis River to catch a fish, he might have the perfect conditions for fishing.

He might have the best rod, good bait, and lots of patience. But that fisherman will never catch anything if he's not fishing in the right place. If the fisherman is nowhere near the fish, his hook is never going to find them.

And in a similar way, a preacher might have the best sermons. He might speak with such eloquence and such wisdom. And he might be able to address all the questions and all the concerns of people's hearts in his day and generation.

[ 11 : 35 ] But unless those in the hearing have been elected from all eternity and Christ died for them and the Spirit is drawing them, unless all these things are in place, they will never be saved.

They will never be saved. And, you know, thinking about it, looking at my own calling, my own job, the preacher is completely redundant.

Because, as we've been reminded again and again, salvation is all of grace. It's nothing to do with man. And so the outward call of the Gospel is a gracious call to whosoever.

But the outward call is resistible. We can suppress the truth and unrighteousness. But the effectual inward call, that's irresistible. Completely irresistible.

And it's irresistible because when the Holy Spirit begins to work in the heart and life of one of the elect, he draws us to Jesus. And it's not that a sinner is dragged into the kingdom of God, kicking and screaming.

[ 12 : 40 ] No, they're irresistibly drawn. The sinner is brought to a point where they can no longer refuse. And they have to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ.

And so the first stage after that inward call is made effectual. The first stage is conviction.

Conviction of sin.

It's like the fisherman standing at the riverside in Barvis. He's doing his utmost to persuade the fish to come. He's got all the best flies and the best bait.

But it's only when the fish bites the hook. And as soon as the hook is in, there's no turning back. As soon as the Holy Spirit effectually calls a sinner, there's no going back.

The hook is in. And the Spirit will draw that sinner to Jesus. But by biting down on the hook, that's what brings conviction of sin.

[ 13 : 44 ] And that's the second stage of what happens when a sinner is irresistibly reeled in or drawn in by God's gracious work of the Spirit. There's conviction of sin. So there's the call, the inward call.

And then there's conviction. Conviction. And that's what we see at the beginning of the psalm. The psalmist says, Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. So when a sinner is inwardly and effectually called by God's gracious work of the Spirit, there is conviction of sin.

And that's what the catechism reminded us. Effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit, whereby he convinces us of our sin and misery.

And so when a sinner is inwardly and effectually called by God's grace, there's conviction of sin. Because they become convinced of their sin and misery. And that's what we see here with the psalmist.

[ 14 : 50 ] That when the Spirit started working in his life, he discovered that he was in the depths. And he's crying out to the Lord for mercy. But what brought him from the heights of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction and self-appraisal, what brought the psalmist down into the depths, was when the Spirit effectually called him.

And he was convicted of his sin. And he was convinced of his sin and misery. He was convicted of the fact that he had sinned and come short of a holy God.

And he was convinced that he's dead in trespasses and sins. He's enslaved to sin. And he can do nothing to save himself from this estate of sin and misery.

Which is why he's crying out to the Lord for mercy. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy.

And you know, my friend, that's where the Lord brings every one of his elect. He brings us into the depths. Because, you know, the Holy Spirit, he has to convict us and convince us of our sin and misery before he will comfort us.

[16:09] The Holy Spirit has to convict us and convince us of our sin and misery before he will comfort us. But how does the Spirit do that?

How does the Spirit bring us to that point where we're in the depths crying for mercy? Well, he does it through the Word of God. The Spirit works through the Word.

The Spirit and the Word, they work together to convict us and convince us of our sin and misery. And you know, this is what the Catechism also teaches us.

The Catechism is a wonderful document, worth studying. Because question 89 in the Catechism, it asks, how is the Word of God made effectual to salvation?

And the Catechism teaches. It says, the Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

[17:16] Therefore, it's the Spirit of God that uses the Word of God, whether it's read or preached, and the Spirit uses it as an effectual means of convicting, convincing, and converting sinners to salvation.

And you know, this is the wonder of God's Word. God's Word describes itself as living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.

And it's able to pierce even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow. And it's a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It's a book that's living and active.

It's the Word of God. And when it's applied by the Spirit of God, it cuts right to the heart. And that's why Paul could say to the Romans that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Because the Gospel, the Word of God, is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. So my friend, it's the Spirit who convicts us, and it's the Spirit who convinces us of our sin and misery before He will comfort us.

[18:36] Now, although this is a personal illustration, I hope Sandy will forgive me for saying it. I'll never forget that Sunday morning. Sandy spoke to me at the door on the way out of church.

And as an unconverted man, he had sat under the Word of God, the Word that was sung, read, and preached. And yet Sandy's response to the Word of God, when I asked him, how are you?

He said to me, I'm lost. I'm lost. And believe it or not, I was completely lost for words. I didn't know what to say to the man. But you know, I was thinking about it, that's what the Spirit does with the Word of God.

He convicts us of our sin and misery. He convinces us of our lost state without Christ. And when he does that, he brings us to a point of confession.

He brings us to a point of confession. And that's a third stage of what happens when a sinner is irresistibly drawn, when they're being reeled in or drawn in by God's gracious work of the Spirit.

[19:46] There is confession. There's confession of sin and confession of the Saviour. So call conviction and confession.

Confession. Look at verse 3. The psalmist says, If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

And so what we see is this progression. When the sinner is inwardly and effectually called by God's grace in the Gospel, there is conviction of sin.

Like a fish, the sinner takes the bait. And they bite down on the hook and as soon as the hook is in there, the sinner is effectually called and they're being drawn. And there's no going back because they're being irresistibly and effectually called.

And from that moment, the Spirit is drawing them to Jesus. Because as the Spirit works through the Word of God, the sinner is convicted of their sin. They're convinced that they've sinned against a holy God.

[20:50] And as they're being reeled in more and more and more, they're being drawn to Jesus.

And that conviction then leads to confession. But before a sinner confesses Jesus as their Saviour, they first of all confess, confess, I'm a sinner.

And that's what we see here in Psalm 130. The psalmist confesses that if the Lord were to mark his iniquities and judge him according to his sin, he could never stand.

He would be condemned to hell for all eternity. The psalmist is saying, I could never withstand the righteous judgment of the Lord. I would never be able to defend myself against his accurate description of my heart.

I'm not able to endure the wrath and hell that my sin deserves. The psalmist is saying, if I had been called to the bar of God's judgment in the state that I was in and the Lord looked at my soul and he saw all my sin, all my thoughts, all my words, my actions, my gossip, my anger, my backbiting, if the Lord had seen it all there before him, I could never stand.

And he even asked the question, who could stand that? Who could stand? And he confesses about himself, I would have been condemned under the righteous judgment of the Lord.

[ 22 : 17 ] And you know, what we have to see with the psalmist is that his confession, it's not remorse. It's not that he's just sorry for being a sinner and for sinning against a holy God and thinking and saying and doing wrong things.

Yes, it's good to have remorse. It's good to have remorse when we do wrong. But it's not good enough because there needs to be repentance.

There needs to be repentance. Remorse is when you're sorry for your sin but you don't turn to Jesus. Repentance is when you're so sorry for your sin that your only option is to turn to Jesus for forgiveness.

And that's what it means to repent. The word repent is to have a change of mind. It's to turn away from the sin that you love to Jesus seeking his forgiveness.

Confessing your need of him. And you know, that's what we see here in verse 4. But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

[ 23 : 27 ] So when the spirit is working in the heart of a sinner, when the spirit is irresistibly drawing them to Jesus, their conviction leads to confession.

They confess their sin and they confess their saviour. And this is what the Bible reminds us. If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

And when we're brought to that point in our lives, whether it's gradually or immediately, we confess our sin. And when we confess our sin, we confess Jesus as our saviour.

And the Bible promises us that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved.

And the Bible says that with the heart one believes and is justified. With the mouth one confesses and is saved. And you know, what a confession the psalmist is making here.

[ 24 : 37 ] But with you there is forgiveness. that you may be feared. With you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. In a sermon on the psalm, Spurgeon explains what it means to fear the Lord.

And he explained it very simply by translating verse 4 as in the words, But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be loved, worshipped, and served.

There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be loved, worshipped, and served. And you know, what we're being reminded from the psalmist experience is that when conviction leads to confession, confession of sin and confession of the saviour, that in turn leads to commitment.

Leads to commitment where our response to the Lord's forgiveness is that we should love him, worship him, and serve him. Our response to the Lord is a response of commitment to the Lord.

And this brings us to our fourth stage of what happens when the sinner is irresistibly drawn by God's gracious work of the Spirit. There is commitment.

[ 25 : 58 ] Commitment. So there's the call, conviction, confession, commitment. Commitment. Look at verse 5. The psalmist says, I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.

My soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen for the morning. More than watchmen for the morning. So when a sinner commits their life to Jesus Christ, they don't do it unwillingly.

They don't do it because they have to do it. They don't even do it because they need to do it. A sinner commits their life to Jesus Christ because they want to. They want to do it.

But that's what effectual calling is. That's what the catechism teaches us and emphasizes to us. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit whereby convincing us of our sin and misery and enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ.

He renews our will and he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as he's freely offered to us in the gospel. And so when the Holy Spirit is working in the heart of a sinner, he

changes the will.

[ 27 : 13 ] where, well, where we're unwilling to embrace Jesus Christ. We want to resist God's grace and yet it's the Spirit who makes us willing.

He makes us more than willing because, as we said, we're not dragged into the kingdom kicking and screaming. No, he persuades us and he enables us to run to Jesus.

We run to him and we joyfully embrace Jesus as he's offered to us in the gospel. And we do that and we want to do that because the Spirit has changed our heart.

He's taken our heart of stone, a heart that was cold and indifferent, resisting the commands of God and resisting the invitation of the gospel. But when the Spirit began to do that good work in our heart, he melted our heart.

He changed our heart of stone to a heart of flesh. And because of our total depravity of being dead in sin, we were in the dungeon of sin and yet the Spirit breathed new life.

[ 28 : 19 ] Breathed new life into us. He resurrected us from the dead. He freed us from our spiritual bondage. And like it was for Charles Wesley, we can say, Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night, and I diffused a quickening ray.

I woke the dungeon flame with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth and followed thee.

My friend, we came to Christ because we wanted to come to him. We wanted to come and we wanted to come to Christ because the Spirit opened our eyes to see the beauty of Jesus.

He opened our ears to hear the voice of Jesus. Say to us where Jesus said, Come unto me and rest. And the Spirit opened our heart to love Jesus and commit our lives to the one who has become for us the lover of our soul, the fairest among ten thousand, and one who is altogether lovely.

And you know, my friend, it's when we commit our life to Jesus Christ that the Word of God which used to convict us and convince us of our sin and misery, it's that same Word that now comforts us.

[ 29 : 44 ] Isn't it amazing? It's that same Word that comforts us. And you know, that's what the Psalmist is saying here in verse 5. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His Word I hope.

And you know, it's amazing to think that the same Word which brought conviction now brings comfort. Where we can say tonight, my hope is in His Word.

And as the Psalmist goes on to say in verse 6, more than the watchmen who long for the morning light, we now depend upon this Word. We hope in this Word because this Word, it's now a lamp unto our feet.

and a light unto our path. That's commitment when we can say my hope is in His Word. And when you have hope and comfort in God's Word, when you know that this Word has changed your life, you also know that it's able to change the lives of others too.

So what do you do? What do you do? You communicate it. You communicate it. That's the last stage of what happens when a sinner is irresistibly reeled in or drawn in by God's gracious work of the Spirit.

[ 31 : 13 ] There's communication. Communication. Call, conviction, confession, commitment and communication. Communication.

He says in verse 7, O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love and with Him is plentiful redemption. And He will redeem Israel from all His iniquities.

And so having been inwardly and effectually called by God's grace in the Gospel through the work of the Holy Spirit, the psalmist experienced conviction where he was convinced of his sin and misery by the Word of God.

And this led to his confession of sin and his confession of Jesus as his Saviour, which in turn brought him comfort when he committed his life to Jesus Christ and submitted his heart to the Lordship of Christ.

And now as a Christian who has been irresistibly drawn into the Kingdom of God by God's grace, the psalmist wants to communicate all this to others.

[ 32 : 22 ] He wants to, first of all, communicate to others that he's a Christian. He's a follower of Jesus. He doesn't want to keep this to himself. He wants to make it known to everyone who his Saviour is.

He wants to profess his faith and proclaim the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. He wants to communicate to everyone around him that Jesus Christ is his Lord.

But more than that, he wants to communicate to others that if the Lord is able to work in his life, then the Lord is able to work in their life too.

And as a Christian, the psalmist wants to communicate the gospel to others. He wants to give the outward call to others. He wants to be a fisher of men. That's why he says in verse 7, O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love and with him is plentiful redemption.

And you know, applying it to ourselves as those who have been elected in Christ, loved in Christ from all eternity, those for whom Christ died on the cross, and now as those who have been inwardly and effectually called by God's grace, our responsibility is to communicate to others not only what he's done for us, but also what the Lord is able to do for them.

[ 33 : 56 ] We're to communicate communicate the gospel by both word and witness, praying that whosoever we're speaking to, praying that they're in the elect and that Christ died for them and that the Holy Spirit is drawing them.

We know that only the elect will come, but that shouldn't stop us going to the whosoever. It should actually give us a boldness and a desire to witness for Christ in whatever way we can and remind this world that has been totally depraved by sin.

We're to remind them as the psalmist says here, there is plenteous redemption ever found with him. That's our responsibility.

You know, we have a wonderful gospel to live out and to proclaim. And as I said earlier, whenever I think about irresistible grace, I always have in my mind what Jesus said when he called Peter and Andrew to be his disciples.

Jesus said, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. And my friend, Jesus has called us to himself. He has called us by his irresistible grace he's drawn us and he's called us and drawn us so that we will be fishers of men.

[ 35 : 24 ] and in turn call others to come and follow him. And so I, I is for irresistible grace.

There are five stages. Well, this is the way I looked at it in a way. Five stages of when a sinner is irresistibly reeled in by God's gracious work of the spirit.

Call, conviction, confession, commitment, and communication. So may the Lord bless these thoughts too.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we stand in awe of thy salvation.

We marvel that thou wouldest work in our heart at all, that we were elect and even loved from before the world began. We marvel that Christ died for us even whilst we were still sinners.

[ 36 : 25 ] We marvel even more that thou are the one who has drawn us from darkness unto thine own marvelous light. Help us never to forget the wonder of salvation. Help us never to lose sight of it or become proud because of it, but to realize that we have a great responsibility to call others like Jesus called Peter and Andrew, that we're to call others to come and follow this Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us.

O Lord, we pray that thou wouldest give to us a boldness, a boldness with thy word and a boldness in our witness, that we would faithfully serve thee and bring glory to thy name, that thou wouldest use us, Lord, to bring in the elect those, Lord, whom thou hast called and loved from all eternity.

Use us, we pray, for the furtherance of thy kingdom to lift up the name of Jesus, that thou, Lord, wouldest have all the glory, that Christ would have the preeminence and that we would receive the blessing, oh, not because we deserve it, but solely, Lord, because thou art one who is gracious.

Keep us then, we pray, go before us and guide us and do us good, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing in that psalm, Psalm 130.

Psalm 130, the Scottish Psalter, page 421. Psalm 130, Psalm 130, from the beginning, Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice, Lord, do thou hear, unto my supplications voice, give an attentive ear.

[ 38 : 24 ] And we'll sing on to the end of the psalm, where it says, and plenteous redemption is ever found with him, and from all his iniquities he is real, shall redeem. The whole psalm to God's praise.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice, Lord, do thou hear, unto my supplications voice, give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, should try iniquity, but yet with thee forgiveness is that fear the mayest be.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word, more than they not, for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord.

I say more than they thought to watch, the morning light to see.

[ 40 : 46 ] Let Israel open the Lord, for with him mercies be.

plentiful redemption is ever found within and from all his iniquities he is shall redeem.

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.