



# The Five Points of Calvinism 5

## Irresistible Grace (John 6:35-40)

o The Holy Spirit's work of regenerating the elect unto salvation is incapable of failing.

### 1 The Holy Spirit is involved in salvation.

- All three persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation (Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:2).
- : The Holy Spirit is the agent who applies the work of Christ to the elect (1 Pet. 1:22-23; Isa. 44:3).
- : He does so by the instrument of the hearing of word of God (Rom. 6:17; 10:17) and, in particular, the gospel of "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 1:6-9).
- The Holy Spirit is irresistible, or invincible (cannot be overcome) in His work (Eph. 1:19-20; Rom. 8:11).
- : Irresistible Grace is considered under the chapter on Effectual Calling in the 1689 Confession (Ch. 10).

### 2 It is good to be clear about the order of salvation ("Ordo solutis").

- The 1689 Confession (3:6) gives the order of salvation as: Election (from eternity), Redemption (in Christ's death), Effectual Calling "to faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season", Justification (God declaring the person not guilty), Adoption, Sanctification (the process of growing in holiness), Glorification (preservation unto salvation). This is based on Rom. 8:29-30.
- : Together with 1689:10:1, it is clear that Effectual Calling includes the doctrine of Irresistible Grace.
- : Logically speaking, the three important steps of salvation are: (i) the work of the Spirit in Conception; (ii) the effect of this in the person in Conversion; (iii) the result of this in the person's Reconciliation. Each of these stages consists of two elements.
- We receive the Spirit "by the hearing of faith" (Gal. 3:2 cf. Rom. 8:9). By the hearing of the word (Internal Calling) and the indwelling of the Spirit, or Initial Regeneration, takes place in which new life is planted in the soul (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 3:9).
- : Internal Calling together with Initial Regeneration may be called Conception.
- The elect responds to the call of the gospel in Repentance and Faith, which together constitute Conversion (Rom. 6:17; 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23).
- : However, there is a period of Awakening and Conviction before there is Conversion (Luke 15:17-19; Acts 2:37; 9:5-9; 16:29), which might be prolonged or short. Awakening and Conviction together may be called Gestation.
- Reconciliation with God is accomplished when He justifies us upon faith in Christ, and adopts us as His children (Rom. 3:28; 8:15; 2 Cor 5:18-21). Justification and Adoption constitute Reconciliation.
- : Also, there follows Assurance of forgiveness, leading to the experience of love, joy, and peace after conversion, distinct from growing in holiness, which is Sanctification (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 5:22).

### 3 A possible complete order of salvation.

- Predestination, Redemption, Conception, Gestation, Conversion, Reconciliation, Assurance, Sanctification, Glorification.
- : Effectual Calling covers the work of the Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word, in giving new

life in Christ. It includes Conception, Gestation, and Conversion. This is to be “born again” (John 3:3, 5). As noted already, the Gestation period may be short or drawn out. (See 1689:10:1 cf. para. 4 & 15:3)

- Some Reformed people (e.g. Prof. John Murray) leaves out Gestation, or places it before Conception, therefore treating Gestation as the work of the Spirit that is not yet saving, as happens in the non-elect who hear the gospel.

: “Regeneration”, i.e. to be “born again” (John 3:3, 5; Tit. 3:5), may be used in the broader sense to refer to the work of the Spirit in the elect throughout the whole process of Effectual Calling (1689:15:1 & 10:1, 2).

#### **4 Relationship between Effectual Calling & Irresistible Grace.**

- Irresistible Grace looks more closely at the work of the Spirit in applying the word to the elect.

: In Conception, the word is heard as the Spirit comes to dwell in the person (John 5:25; Gal. 3:2).

: In Gestation, the sinner is awakened to his spiritual condition and convicted of his guilt before God (1 Cor. 1:23-24; Acts 2:37; 16:29).

: In Conversion, the convicted sinner is enabled to come to Christ in repentance and faith (John 6:37; 10:27; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8-9).

- There might be resistance against the truth along the way, but the elect will finally be saved. God’s grace is irresistible/invincible (Isa. 55:11; Jer. 31:18, 33).

: Throughout, as the word is proclaimed and applied by the preacher, the Spirit is at work.

= In the church, trust the Spirit to save by preaching the word in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2).

= In outreach, preach until they are converted, or you unwanted (Luke 10:10-11; Acts 18:4-11; 19:8-10).

#### **Review Questions**

1. What is meant by Irresistible Grace?
2. State the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation and the instrument used.
3. State the two elements in each of this stages of salvation: (i) Conception; (ii) Conversion; (iii) Reconciliation.
4. What stage lies before conversion and what elements are included in it?
5. What stages follow Reconciliation?
6. What stages are covered under Effectual Calling, where the Holy Spirit works by the instrumentality of the word?
7. What is the broader sense of the word “regeneration”?
8. How is Irresistible Grace related to Effectual Calling?
9. Why will the elect be saved despite resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in him?
10. What is the role of the preacher throughout the work of the Spirit in regeneration?

#### **Assignment/Discussion**

The idea of instantaneous regeneration as taught by Professor John Murray in his book “Redemption Accomplished and Applied” has been challenged by Dr. Peter Masters in his book “Physician of Souls”, who advocate an elongated view of regeneration. What are the merits and demerits of each view? Could it be that the differences are relatively minor if the terms used are properly understood?

#### **Memory Passage (John 6:35-40)**

35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him

who sent Me. 39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

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