

“The Doctrines of Grace: Part IV of V”

There are five distinct biblical teachings recovered by Reformers in the seventeenth century that have become known by the acrostic TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. Now, TULIP does not summarize Reformed theology, but it does capture important biblical teachings in a simple way. My intent is to explain each of the five teachings for you to gain familiarity with these doctrines of grace.

Irresistible grace refers to the way God calls a person to Jesus Christ. When God calls a person to faith in Jesus, He doesn't fail. God “saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Tim. 1:9). He calls His people by the Word and Spirit: “God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. To this he called you through our gospel” (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

Now, what happens when a person ignores a call? Is the call resisted? For example, two people walk down the road and someone else calls them. Only one of the people turns around. Does the other person resist it?

Scripture reveals two kinds of calling. The first is a general calling to all person to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37). This is an example of general calling. It is an open invitation. The second is a specific calling. Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb by raising him from the dead. Because of his helpless condition, Lazarus could not respond by his own will. Instead, the call of Jesus to come out of the tomb included the power to come alive. “God's gift and his call are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). This is the specific calling that is also effective. The term irresistible grace is the way to capture God's effective purpose to save His people. He does not fail.

How do you know if God has specifically called you? You do not peer into the eternal counsel of God, “for the secret things belong to the LORD our God.” Instead, “the revealed things belong to us and to our children” (Deut. 29:29). So, you know if God has specifically called you if you respond to the gospel: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Have you responded?

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