



# A grace worth saving: Grace and predestination

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The Historic Faith  
Lecture 6

# Beware of being reactionary



# Instead of irresistible grace, there is a vastly superior option

Grace means “favor”

But specifically with the favor of God’s initiation to save us, there is a term that is even older than irresistible grace:

- Prevenient grace or enabling grace

What passages can you think of that speak of this grace?

# Some passages that describe this prevenient or enabling grace

Titus 2:11-14 (NKJV)

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

John 1:9 (ESV)

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

John 12:32 (ESV)

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

Acts 16:14 (ESV)

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

Romans 1:20 (ESV)

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

# What do you think?

Is it possible to hold both Total Depravity and Prevenient Grace?

# An alternate acronym proposed by non-Calvinists

## FACTS

Freed by grace (to believe)

Atonement for all

Conditional election

Total depravity

Security in Christ

# What about humility?

The Calvinist notion of humility is grounded in that you were arbitrarily (Jonathan Edwards' word) chosen by God and that you played no role in your salvation.

Leighton Flowers:

"A great singer, for example, is a given a rare gift from birth and can often become proud or boastful due to that unique gift. But, if everyone was born able sing equally well, then boasting in that ability would not make any sense. Thus, Calvinism leaves more room for boasting than does our soteriological perspective."

"Humiliation and brokenness is not considered "better" or "praiseworthy" and it certainly is not inherently valuable. In fact, one could argue that it was weak and pitiful of the son to return home and beg his daddy for a job instead of working his own way out of that pig sty. The only thing that makes this quality "desirable" is that God has chosen to grace those who humble themselves, something He is in no way obligated to do (Is. 66:2). God gives grace to the humble not because a humble response deserves salvation, but because He is gracious."

# More on humility

Leighton Flowers:

Calvinists argue, "If a person becomes humble enough to submit to God it is because the Holy Spirit has given that person a new, humble nature..." In other words, Calvinists believe that humility is an effectual result of regeneration. Therefore, one has to be regenerate in order to even recognize and admit their need for regeneration. But, is humility the result of an effectual work of God? If so, then clearly the opposite must also be true. Prideful sin must be the result of an equally effectual work of God (namely His eternal decree to seal all man over into a state of moral inability from birth due to the sin of another, which makes one morally incapable of humbling himself). It may surprise some to hear that I do believe God effectually humbles some people. I just do not believe those people will be saved. If you wait on God to effectually humble you, it will be too late! This is one of the dangers of the Calvinistic worldview. If taken consistently it removes the responsibility that Scripture clearly places on man and puts it onto God. Look at what Jesus taught in Matthew 23:12, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." Let's consider the first phrase of Christ's teaching, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled..." This is "effectual humility!" God will effectually humble those who exalt themselves and notice that these "effectually humbled" people will be eternally separated from God. God does not effectually humble everyone! He only effectually humbles those who refuse to humble themselves.

# Defining predestination

Ben Witherington III:

“It means, just as the word says, that the destiny has already been set; and that destiny is the final redemptive transformation of reality.”

Pre-destination: the destinations have been set; God hasn't decided for you, but He has decided what are the destinations of the elect and the reprobate.

God has by his favor (grace) predestined the elect to eternal life. This is no arbitrary decision for no apparent reason. One becomes among the elect by faith.

# To understand predestination, we should start in Romans 8

Romans 8:29-30

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Origen:

“His aim is to show that those who are foreknown by God are those upon whom God had placed his own love and affection because he knew what sort of persons they were.”

Does God’s foreknowledge imply that God causes something?

# Ephesians 1

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

# Eph 1:11

Roger Olson:

The two wills are: God's decretive will by which he designs, ordains and renders certain everything that happens without exception and even "compels" the reprobate to obedience to his will, and God's prescriptive will by which he commands people not to sin. Only this device, so Calvinists say, explains Ephesians 1:11. God secretly works even disobedience, evil, in sinners, compelling them to it by means of "secret impulses" implanted in them and yet they violate his will, his prescriptive will, when they sin. According to Calvin (and most modern conservative Calvinists) a single human act can be both according to God's will and against God's will—once this distinction is observed.

Now Calvin (and most modern Calvinists) think this distinction does three things. First, it preserves God's absolute sovereignty and providence. Second, it explains why sinners are guilty while God is not (even though their sins are decreed and compelled by God). Third, it preserves God from being the author of sin. Arminians (but also Eastern Orthodox, many if not most Roman Catholics, Anabaptists and others) think this Calvinist device simply fails to accomplish the second two things it's supposed to accomplish. It only accomplishes the first. The result is that, as Arminius said, this account of God's sovereignty and providence in relation to sin: 1) makes God a sinner, 2) makes God the only sinner, and 3) makes sin not sin.

# Eph 1:11 (continued)

1 Cor 12

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.  
6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

Roger Olson:

Ephesians 1:11 means, according to Arminian theology, that “all things” refers especially to God’s redemptive plan and purpose for his people. The context makes that clear. All good is accomplished by God and God will carry to completion the plan to redeem and restore creation in spite of human sin and evil and in response to it—somehow (in a way we cannot see or understand) incorporating it into his unfolding work in and for the world.

# John 6: Controversial verses

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (v. 37)

“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.” (v. 39)

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day” (v. 44)

# Homework

Re-read Ephesians 1 and John 6 in light of what we learned today.

Add John 10:1-30

Read an article by John Piper called "For Whom Did Christ die?"

[https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/piper/piper\\_atonement.html](https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/piper/piper_atonement.html)

Come prepared tomorrow to discuss how you agree or disagree with his points.