

Sermon #99 — Isaiah Series

Title: **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**

Text: Isaiah 30:21

Subject: *Effectual Calling*

Date: Sunday Morning — August 24, 2019

Readings: *Luke 14:16-24*

Introduction:

Madly in sin my course I ran,
Despising all that's good,
My sinful heart, swollen with pride,
All enmity to God!

My guilty conscience pricked my heart
And slight impressions made;
The law of God, with threats of hell,
Filled me with fear and dread.

Still, I pursued my lusts with zeal;
(Satan and sin are strong!)
With hardened heart and stubborn will,
To hell I plodded on!

When first I heard the gospel's call
Inviting me to Christ,
I yet despised the Son of God!

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I would not bow to Christ!

But God the Spirit came with grace
That I could not resist;
He gave me life! He gave me faith!
He made me bow to Christ!

Blest is the man chosen by God
And forced by sov'reign grace
To come to Christ with willing heart
And humbly seek His grace!

As God the Spirit enables me, I want to talk to you about **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**, God's almighty, effectual, irresistible grace, grace that will not take "no" for an answer, grace that you cannot resist — **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**. I am not here to preach about grace that helplessly offers salvation and leaves sinners lost. I am here to tell about God's grace, **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**, grace that saves poor, lost, dead, helpless sinners. — Are you interested? — Is that the grace you need? — If so, give me your attention. I have a message from God for you.

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GENERAL CALL

There is a general call that goes forth to all who hear the gospel. God sends his servants out into the highways and hedges to bid all who will to come to Christ. He commands all men everywhere to repent. It is your duty and responsibility to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you trust Christ, you have everlasting life. But if you refuse to trust him, you are without excuse. Your blood is upon your own head. And your damnation is just. **God has called you...**

- By Conscience.
- By Creation.
- By Providence.
- By the Gospel.

But you have refused. “*Therefore,*” he says, “*shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices*” (Proverbs 1:31). If you go to hell, you will have no one but yourself to blame. You have heard the gospel call. And you have refused.

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We preach the gospel to all men everywhere, calling sinners to Christ and promising, with divine authority as God's ambassadors, eternal life to all who come.

Yet, as he preaches the gospel, God's servant knows that no one will, by his own free will, of his own volition, or by his own choice come to Christ.

The gospel preacher knows that no man can come to Christ by nature. And he cannot, by his own power, persuade anyone to trust Christ. That is the work of the Spirit of God alone. — *“It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing”* (John 6:63).

EFFECTUAL CALL

But there is another call, an almighty call of grace, a call that no one can resist, an effectual, saving call. This call never comes apart from or without the general call. The Spirit of God does not operate upon the hearts of men and women apart from the Word of God. Eternal life and faith in Christ are gifts of God, the result of his sovereign operations of grace by the his Spirit. But eternal life and faith in Christ are

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always produced by the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. — We are “*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever...And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you*” (2 Peter 1:23, 20). — “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing the word of God*” (Romans 10:17).

Proposition: Our faith in Christ is the fruit and result of the omnipotent mercy, irresistible grace, and effectual call of God the Holy Ghost.

That is my subject. I want to preach to you about God’s irresistible grace. That is my subject. — **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**. — My text is Isaiah 30:21. — “*And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*”

Because Judah had refused to believe God and rebelled against him, God visited that nation with judgment. But there was an elect remnant to whom God was determined to be gracious. — “*Even so then*

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at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5).

There is an elect multitude in this world who must and shall be saved, to whom God will be gracious (v. 19).

- He chose them.
- Christ redeemed them.
- God will be gracious to them and save them.

(Isaiah 30:19) “For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.”

Though God gives his elect the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, it is that he may be gracious to them (v. 20).

(Isaiah 30:2) “And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner anymore, but thine eyes shall see thy

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teachers.”

- God in providence forces his elect to call upon him (Psalm 107:1-43).
- The Lord God will send his word of grace to the chosen objects of his grace (Jeremiah 3:15).

Illustration: *The Ethiopian*

Lydia

The Jailer

Onesimus

And at the appointed time of love God will call his elect to Christ by the effectual, irresistible power and grace of his Holy Spirit (v. 21).

(Isaiah 30:21) “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”

This is one of those gracious, unconditional promises upon which the salvation of God’s elect

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depends. When God calls, sinners hear. The Lord God calls the chosen rebel; and by his word of grace the rebel is brought to bow before his throne in heartfelt repentance. This is how God saves sinners. This is how salvation is wrought in the hearts of God's elect (John 6:44-45; Romans 9:16).

(John 6:44-45) “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”

(Romans 9:16) “So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

Divisions: Now let's look at God's saving, **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**, as it is set forth in the text before us. I want to show you four things.

1. The Position of the Sinner.
2. The Call of Grace.
3. The Word of the Call.

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4. The Success of the Word.

THE POSITION OF THE SINNER

1st — Our text describes the position of the sinner to whom God is pleased to be gracious. — Where does God find those to whom he will be gracious? What position are they in when he calls them? Does he find them seeking him? Does he find them searching for him? What do the Scriptures say? — *“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee.”*

Our text declares that when God calls sinners, he always finds them with their backs turned to him (Psalm 14:1-3; Isaiah 53:6). — Grace always finds the sinner with his back turned to God.

(Psalm 14:1-3) “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good.* (2) The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and seek God.* (3) They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become

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filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.”

(Isaiah 53:6) “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The word of grace is heard “*behind thee.*” We have all, by nature gone away from God. We have turned, everyone, to his own way. And our way is away from God. The Lord God complains, “**They have turned unto me the back, and not the face**” (Jeremiah. 32:33).

- We turned our backs upon God. — That is our sin! — In the Fall! — At Birth! — All Our Lives!
- But God would not turn his back upon us. — That is grace!

What matchless grace this is! What stupendous grace! — God calls after sinners, though they openly renounce his rule, flee from his mercy, and spurn his

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grace. Instead of leaving us to our own devices, he would not let us go.

Those God says he will call have not only turned their backs upon him, but are going further and further away from him with every breath. Having turned your back upon God from the beginning (Psalm 58:3), you go further and further away from him with every breath of unbelief.

It was while we were going, as fast as we could, away from God, away from Christ, away from life, rushing headlong into hell that our hearts were arrested by his word of grace.

- I had a will to roam; but God had a will to save.
- I made a covenant with death; but God made a covenant with his Son.
- I was in league with hell; but God was in league with my Substitute.

When the Lord God saved us, when he caused us to hear his gracious call, we were pursuing a course of rebellion in spite of many warnings. God graciously spoke often to us by faithful teachers (v.

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20). But we ran toward hell with such zealous commitment to destruction that one would think we looked upon hell as a prize to be won.

God has given many of you many faithful teachers, who have stood before you and urged you to repent and trust Christ. But you will not hearken to the voice of your instructors.

- Parents
- Sunday School Teachers
- Pastors
- Siblings
- Friends

Those God has sworn that he will call are sinners so bent upon wandering from him that they will choose any way other than his way.

- Some turn to the right-hand road to destruction — Self-righteousness.
- Some turn to the left-hand road to hell — Profligacy.
- The way to life is the other way. — About face!

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(John 14:6) “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

(Acts 4:12) “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

(Acts 5:29-32) Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (30) The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. (31) Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. (32) And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”

(Acts 10:43) “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

(Acts 13:38-39) “Be it known unto you

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therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: (39) And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

You will never find life, grace, peace, and satisfaction for your soul until you turn around, look to Christ and see everything in him (Genesis 22:13). — *“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it!”*

(Isaiah 45:22) “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else.*”

THE CALL OF GRACE

2nd — **The call of God is the call of almighty, irresistible grace.** — Understand what I am telling you. **God always takes the initiative in salvation.** No aspect of salvation is dependent upon, determined by, or accomplished through something you do. — *“Salvation is of the LORD!”*

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- What does the sinner have to do with Election? — Nothing (John 15:16).
- What does the sinner have to do with Redemption? — Nothing (Galatians. 3:13).
- What does the sinner have to do with Regeneration? — Nothing (John 6:63).
- What does the sinner have to do with the Call of the Spirit? — Nothing.

The call of grace, the call of the Spirit, comes to lost, wandering, straying sinners, unsought, unasked, undesired (Isaiah 65:1; Romans 10:20).

(Isaiah 65:1) “I am sought of *them that* asked not *for me*; I am found of *them that* sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that* was not called by my name.”

(Romans 10:2) “But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.”

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God speaks. His word is “Return! This is the way! Walk ye in it!” Maybe you pause for a moment. But you are not interested. You push on toward hell. God speaks again, saying, “This is the way.” You maybe startled by the pricking of conscience, but you are not interested. So you resolutely set yourself against God, determined to go to hell. Unless God stops you in your way and causes you to hear and obey his call, to hell you will go.

Some of you, like Jonah, are trying hard to go down to Tarshish, where the voice of God is not heard. You will gladly pay the fare thereof, if only you could escape the voice of the Almighty. But God has prepared a storm and a great fish to stop his chosen. — He will be heard by those whom he has chosen.

- Grace will force you into the way.
- Grace will teach you to pray.
- Grace will teach you to know and rejoice to confess, — “*Salvation is of the LORD!*”

God has his servants everywhere. — And by them he declares, “*Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.*”

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This “word behind thee” is the voice of an unseen, unknown Caller. It is not the voice of a man that speaks to your heart, but the voice of the unseen God. Though you know him not, though you cannot see him, you cannot stop your ears from hearing his voice.

- It comes with mysterious power.
- It comes at all hours.
- It is as a “*still small voice*,” after the earthquake and fire, the voice of God in your heart and conscience that you can neither escape nor resist.

This is a call that pursues and overtakes the chosen, blood-bought sinner (Psalms 65:4; 110:3).

- It comes at the opportune time. — “*When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*” Just as he is about to turn down Deadman’s Lane and enter the Dungeon of No Return, God overtakes his chosen.
- This call of grace is absolutely necessary. — Without it none would be saved, none can believe, none can ever come to Christ — (John 6:44; Galatians 1:15-16) — (Psalm 80:3, 7, 19).

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(Psalm 65:1-4) “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. (2) O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. (3) Iniquities prevail against me: *as for* our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. (4) Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.”

(Psalm 110:1-3) “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (2) The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. (3) Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

(Psalm 80:1-19) “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth. (2)

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Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us. (3) **Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.** (4) O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? (5) Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. (6) Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. (7) **Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.** (8) Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. (9) Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. (10) The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars. (11) She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. (12) Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? (13) The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. (14) Return, we beseech thee, O God

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of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; (15) And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself. (16) *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. (17) Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. (18) So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. (19) Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

THE WORD OF THE CALL

3rd — The word by which God calls sinners to life and faith in Christ, the word by which God brings salvation to his elect is the preached Word, the gospel of Christ. — I do not say that the only time God saves a sinner is during a public worship service when the gospel is being preached. But I do again affirm that the call of grace, the effectual call of the Spirit always flows from and is connected with the preaching of the gospel. You will never hear the

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voice of God apart from the Word of God. You will not be called to faith in Christ apart from the preaching of the gospel (John 17:17; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:18; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:18-25).

(John 17:17) “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

(Hebrews 4:12) “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

(James 1:18) “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

(Romans 10:17) “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

(1 Peter 1:18-25) “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as*

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silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (21) Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. (22) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: (23) Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, Walk ye in it!”

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The word of the gospel by which God calls you to Christ is a word of specific instruction. — “*This is the way, Walk ye in it!*” — Faith in Christ is not a leap in the dark. It is the believing response of the heart to God’s revelation. The Lord God lays down a specific pathway and says — “*This is the way!*”

- Blood Atonement!
- Perfect Righteousness!
- Christ the Substitute!

I am declaring to you there is but one Way of Life — Christ! He says, “*I am the Door.*” There is no other. “*I am the Way.*” There is no other. The only way to God is Christ.

This is the Way of Blood Redemption. — “*Without shedding of blood is no remission*” (Hebrews 9:22; 10:19-22).

(Hebrews 10:19-22) “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And *having* an high priest

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over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

- This is the way of grace alone (John 1:11-13).
- This is the way of personal faith (Acts 16:31).
- This is the way of heartfelt repentance (Luke 13:3; 1 John 1:9).

Illustration: *The Prodigal!*

The Publican!

The Alabaster Box

- This is the way of self-denial and surrender (Mark 8:35).

The call of God comes by a word of personal direction. — “*This is the way*” — That is the doctrinal instruction. — “*Walk in it.*” — That is the practical direction. Don’t be content to hear about it, think about it, and consider it. “*This is the Way — Walk ye in it!*”

- For Justification.

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- For Sanctification.
- For Comfort and Strength.
- For Reviving and Refreshing.

Let nothing turn you from this way. — “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*” (Colossians 2:6).

The call of God comes as a command. — “*This is the Way — Walk ye in it!*” — That is not an invitation, a proposition, or an offer. It is a command. God commands us to come to his Son, trust him, and look to him as our Lord and Savior. **If the Lord God commands you to come to Christ, you will find his command irresistible.**

- You are responsible to come Christ.
- You have permission to come to Christ.
- You cannot and will not come to Christ.
- You will come to Christ!

You are not told to stand by the way and wait until something happens. — God says, “*This is the Way — Walk ye in it.*”

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THE SUCCESS OF THE WORD

4th — Look at our text again. — **Here is the success of the word when God the Holy Ghost speaks it.** — “*Thine ears shall hear!*” God not only gives us something to hear, but ears with which to hear. He spreads the table and gives an appetite. He makes the garments and gives us a sense of our nakedness. He calls. And he causes us to hear! — “*Thine ears shall hear!*” This is effectual grace! — “*Thine ears shall hear!*” This is God’s irresistible grace! — “*Thine ears shall hear!*” **When God sends this word of grace to a sinner, when God calls one of his elect, he always does these six things.**

- He will make you to see your sin.
- He will reveal his Son.
- He will create in you a desire for Christ.
- He will create in you a resolve and determination to have Christ — to seek him.
- He will bring you to Christ in faith.
- And he will be gracious to you (vv. 18-19).

(Isaiah 30:18-19) “And therefore will the LORD

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wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD *is* a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him. (19) For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.”

Illustration: *Whitefield and the Servant Girl*

APPLICATION

Come now to Christ — “*Why will ye die?*”

- He is able to save.
- He is willing to save.
- He will fully save.
- Without him you cannot be saved.

How I thank God for his sovereign, saving, efficacious, irresistible grace!

There are some sinners who cannot
To Jesus answer, “No.”

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When called by grace, they willingly
To Christ the Savior go.

Chosen by God in cov'nant love,
In time they must be saved.
Predestined to eternal life,
Eternal life they'll have!

For God's elect Christ Jesus bled
And died upon the tree.
Those sinners justified by blood
By grace must be set free!

When God the Spirit comes in grace,
(Grace they cannot resist!),
Those chosen, ransomed, called ones come,
With joy to Jesus Christ.

Bless God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit too!
The triune God has done for us
What we could never do!

When we would not and we could not

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Awake and come to Him,
Our God in sov'reign, saving grace
Caused us to come to Him!

Amen.