

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Irresistible Grace

### or The Efficacious Call of The Spirit

DAVID N. STEELE & CURTIS C. THOMAS

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Each member of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—participates in and contributes to the salvation of sinners. As was shown above, the Father, before the foundation of the world, marked out those who were to be saved and gave them to the Son to be His people. At the appointed time the Son came into the world and secured their redemption. But these two great acts—election and redemption—do not complete the work of salvation, because included in God’s plan for

**Biblical Support for the “Five Points” of Calvinism<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The question of supreme importance is not how the system under consideration came to be formulated into five points, or why it was named Calvinism, but rather *is it supported by Scripture?* The final court of appeal for determining the validity of any theological system is the inspired, authoritative Word of God. If Calvinism can be verified by clear and explicit declarations of Scripture, then it must be received by Christians; if not, it must be rejected. For this reason, Biblical passages are given below in support of the five points.

After each point has been introduced, some of the more important verses in which it is taught are quoted. All quotations are from the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible. In each case, the italics within the verses are ours. Apart from the remarks contained in the headings under which the verses are given, there are no explanatory comments as to their meaning. This procedure was necessary because of the limited design of this introductory survey. To compensate for this, we have recommended a number of works in Part Three which deal with these as well as with many other passages of Scripture related to Calvinism.

Although the “five points” are dealt with below under separate headings, and texts are classified in support of each of them individually, they must not be evaluated on a purely individual basis. For these five doctrines are not presented in the Bible as separate and independent units of truth. On the contrary, in the Biblical message they are woven into one harmonious, interrelated system in which God’s plan for recovering lost sinners is marvelously displayed. In fact, these doctrines are so inseparably connected that no one of them can be fully appreciated unless it is properly related to, and viewed in light of the other four; for *they mutually explain and support one another*. To judge these doctrines individually without relating each to the others would be like attempting to evaluate one of Rembrandt’s paintings by looking at only one color at a time and never viewing the work as a whole. Do not, therefore, merely judge the Biblical evidence for each point separately, but rather consider carefully the collective value of the evidence when these five doctrines are viewed together as a system. When thus properly correlated, they form a fivefold cord of unbreakable strength. (Steele, D. N., Thomas, C. C., & Nicole, R. (1963). *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented* (p. 24). The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co.)

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recovering lost sinners is the renewing work of the Holy Spirit by which the benefits of Christ's obedience and death are applied to the elect. It is with this phase of salvation (its application by the Spirit) that the doctrine of Irresistible or Efficacious Grace is concerned. Simply stated, this doctrine asserts that the Holy Spirit never fails to bring to salvation those sinners whom He personally calls to Christ. He inevitably applies salvation to every sinner whom He intends to save, and it is His intention to save all the elect.

The *gospel invitation extends a call* to salvation to every one who hears its message. It invites all men without distinction to drink freely of the water of life and live. It promises salvation to all who repent and believe. But this outward general call, extended to the elect and non-elect alike, will not bring sinners to Christ. Why? Because men are by nature dead in sin and are under its power. They are of themselves unable and unwilling to forsake their evil ways and to turn to Christ for mercy. Consequently, the unregenerate will not respond to the gospel call to repentance and faith. No amount of external threatenings or promises will cause blind, deaf, dead, rebellious sinners to bow before Christ as Lord and to look to Him alone for salvation. Such an act of faith and submission is contrary to the lost man's nature.

Therefore, the *Holy Spirit*, in order to bring God's elect to salvation, extends to them a *special inward call* in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ. The inward change wrought in the elect sinner enables him to understand and believe spiritual truth; in the spiritual realm he is given the seeing eye and the hearing ear. The Spirit creates within him a new heart or a new nature. This is accomplished through regeneration or the new birth by which the sinner is made a child of God and is given spiritual life. His will is renewed through this process so that the sinner spontaneously comes to Christ of his own free choice. Because he is given a new nature so that he loves righteousness, and because his mind is enlightened so that he understands and believes the Biblical gospel, the renewed sinner freely and willingly turns to Christ as Lord and Saviour. Thus the once dead sinner is drawn to Christ by the inward supernatural call of the Spirit who through regeneration makes him alive and creates within him faith and repentance.

Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and of God's grace in saving sinners as being "efficacious," "invincible," or "irresistible." For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ!

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The doctrine of Irresistible or Efficacious Grace is set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith in the following words. "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."<sup>2</sup>

A. General statements showing that salvation is the work of the Spirit as well as that of the Father and the Son.

- Romans 8:14: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
- 1 Corinthians 2:10–14: For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.
- 1 Corinthians 6:11: But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.
- 1 Corinthians 12:3: Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.
- 2 Corinthians 3:6: ... the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18: Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
- 1 Peter 1:2: ... chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood ...

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter X, Section 1.

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B. Through regeneration or the new birth sinners are given spiritual life and made God's children. The Bible describes this process as a spiritual resurrection, a creation, the giving of a new heart, etc. The inward change, which is thus wrought through the Holy Spirit, results from God's power and grace, and in no way is He dependent upon man's help for success in this work.

1. Sinners, through regeneration, are brought into God's kingdom and are made His children. The *author* of this "second" birth is the Holy Spirit; the *instrument* which He uses is the word of God.

- John 1:12, 13: But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; *who were born*, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but *of God*.
- John 3:3–8: Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is *born anew*, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter* the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is *born of the Spirit* is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit."
- Titus 3:5: ... he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of *regeneration* and *renewal in the Holy Spirit*.
- 1 Peter 1:3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been *born anew* to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- 1 Peter 1:23: You have been *born anew*, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding *word of God*.
- 1 John 5:4: For whatever is *born of God* overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

2. Through the Spirit's work the dead sinner is given a new heart (nature) and made to walk in God's law. In Christ he becomes a new creation.

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- Deuteronomy 30:6: And the Lord your God will *circumcise your heart* and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.
  - Ezekiel 36:26, 27: A *new heart* I will give you, and a *new spirit* I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Compare Ezekiel 11:19.
  - Galatians 6:15: For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creation*.
  - Ephesians 2:10: For we are his workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
  - 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18: Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he *is a new creation*; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.
3. The Holy Spirit raises the sinner from his state of spiritual death and makes him alive.
- John 5:21: For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son *gives life* to whom he will.
  - Ephesians 2:1, 5: And you *he made alive*, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins.... even when we were dead through our trespasses, [God] made us *alive* together with Christ ...
  - Colossians 2:13: And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *God made alive* together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.
- C. God makes known to His chosen ones the secrets of the kingdom through the inward personal revelation given by the Spirit.
- Matthew 11:25–27: At that time Jesus declared, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one

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knows the Son except the Father, and no one *knows the Father* except the Son and any one to whom the Son *chooses to reveal him*."

- Luke 10:21: In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and *revealed* them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will."
- Matthew 13:10, 11, 16: Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "To you it has been *given to know the secrets* of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.... But blessed are your eyes, for they *see*, and your ears, for they *hear*."
- Luke 8:10: "To you it has been *given to know* the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."
- Matthew 16:15–17: He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not *revealed* this to you, but *my Father* who is in heaven."
- John 6:37, 44, 45, 64, 65: "All that the Father *gives me will come to me*; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me *draws* him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be *taught by God*.' Every one who has *heard and learned from the Father* comes to me.... But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that should betray him. And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is *granted him by the Father*."
- 1 Corinthians 2:14: The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are *spiritually discerned*.
- Ephesians 1:17, 18: ... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may *give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation* in the knowledge of him, having *the eyes of your hearts enlightened*, that you may *know* what is the hope to which he has called you, ...
- See also John 10:3–6, 16, 26–29.



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D. Faith and repentance are *divine gifts* and are wrought in the soul through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 5:31: “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to *give repentance* to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”
- Acts 11:18: When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has *granted repentance* unto life.”
- Acts 13:48: And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were *ordained* to eternal life *believed*.
- Acts 16:14: One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God. *The Lord opened her heart* to give heed to what was said by Paul.
- Acts 18:27: And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who *through grace had believed*.
- Ephesians 2:8, 9: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, *it is the gift of God*—not because of works, lest any man should boast.
- Philippians 1:29: For it has been *granted to you* that for the sake of Christ you should not only *believe* in him but also suffer for his sake.
- 2 Timothy 2:25, 26: ... God may perhaps *grant* that they will *repent* and come to *know* the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

E. The gospel invitation extends a general outward call to salvation to all who hear the message. In addition to this external call, the Holy Spirit extends a special inward call to the elect only. The general call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, but the special call of the Spirit cannot be rejected; it always results in the conversion of those to whom it is made.

- Romans 1:6, 7: ... including yourselves who are *called* to belong to Jesus Christ; To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are *called* to be saints ...
- Romans 8:30: And those whom he predestined he also *called*; and those whom he *called* he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

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- Romans 9:23, 24: ... in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has *called*, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?
- 1 Corinthians 1:1, 2, 9, 23–31: Paul, *called* by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, *called* to be saints. ... God is faithful, by whom you were *called* into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. ... but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are *called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your *call*, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.”

- Galatians 1:15, 16: But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had *called* me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood.
- Ephesians 4:4: There is one body and one spirit, just as you were *called* to the one hope that belongs to your call.
- 2 Timothy 1:9: ... who saved us and *called* us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago.
- Hebrews 9:15: Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are *called* may receive the promised eternal inheritance ...
- Jude 1: To those who are *called*, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.
- 1 Peter 1:15: ... but as he who *called* you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.



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- 1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who *called* you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
  - 1 Peter 5:10: And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has *called* you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.
  - 2 Peter 1:3: His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who *called* us to his own glory and excellence.
  - Revelation 17:14: "... they will make war on the Lamb, and the lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are *called* and chosen and faithful."
- F. The application of salvation is all of grace and is accomplished solely through the almighty power of God.
- Isaiah 55:11: "... so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall *accomplish* that which *I purpose*, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it."
  - John 3:27: John answered, "No one can receive anything except what is *given* him from heaven."
  - John 17:2: "... since thou hast given him power over all flesh, so that he might *give* eternal life to all whom thou hast given him."
  - Romans 9:16: So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon *God's mercy*.
  - 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7: I planted, Apollos watered, but *God gave the growth*. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who *gives* the growth.
  - 1 Corinthians 4:7: For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not *receive*? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a *gift*?
  - Philippians 2:12, 13: Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for *God is at work in you*, both to *will* and to *work* for his good pleasure.

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- James 1:18: *Of his own will* he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.
- 1 John 5:20: And we know that the Son of God has come and has *given us understanding, to know* him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Steele, D. N., Thomas, C. C., & Nicole, R. (1963). *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented* (pp. 48–56). The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co.