

Elder Bill Allen



Prevenient Grace Falls Short

I was raised as a Southern Baptist, and as one would expect, Arminian in doctrine. While they strongly proclaimed the security of the believer as "once saved, always saved", I found it hard to find security in the process they also taught of getting to the point of being saved, that is Prevenient Grace. They called it the "wooing of the Spirit" and as an enabling act of grace by the Spirit of God that made it where one, who was as yet not born again, able to act in faith towards Christ in order to be born again. As a teenager, the following passages of scripture, when combined, led me directly into the Irresistible Grace/Holy Spirit Only Regeneration position.

Jhn 10:28-30 KJV 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.

1Jo 5:7 KJV 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

The first two verses in John 10:28-30 clearly describe the tremendous, unshakable security we have in the Father and the Son. We simply cannot be removed from their hands. The Father and Son are also described as being One. Then 1 John 5:7 states plainly that this Oneness of the Godhead is also characteristic of the Holy Ghost. It dawned on me that I should expect that the security that I had in the hands of the Father and the Son should be the same with respect to the Spirit of God on the basis of the doctrine of the Oneness of the Trinity. I saw that God's character as expressed in each member of the Godhead does not change. However, Prevenient Grace describes an insecure behavior on the part of the Spirit due to

the potential be only temporarily enabled by the Spirit. It was not a permanent work. If the sinner, while under this enabling activity of the Spirit, made the wrong decision (i.e. did not accept Christ as Savior), then the Spirit would actually let the sinner go, removing the enabling grace. This was contrary to what I understood about the members of the Godhead being equal in attributes such as love and equal in the results of their activities, in this case eternal security. Once I saw this, I was persuaded that if the Spirit of God ever changed the heart of a man, giving him faith, that this was more than enabling but the New Birth itself, which is permanent. To me, this was a tremendous revelation and brought great comfort to my heart. I did not know at that time the phrases Irresistible Grace or Holy Spirit Only Regeneration but it was indeed what I was from that point forward believing, and continue to believe. Prevenient Grace falls short of the promise to never be removed from the hands of God, but Irresistible Grace upholds this promise, and guarantees it.