

In the teachings of St. Augustine, the concepts of *Irresistible Grace* and *Persevering Grace* stand as profound reminders of the transformative power of divine intervention. They illuminate the truth that once grace is bestowed upon us, it is not something we can resist—it compels us to act, to change, to rise above our limitations. And this grace doesn't leave us after a moment of inspiration; it carries us through the darkest hours, ensuring that we persevere, endure, and ultimately succeed in our calling.

So, how does this apply to your daily life as a scholar or professional navigating the journey of excellence?

How can you see grace as an abstract concept and a *practical guide* for making decisions, taking action, and accomplishing your goals each day?

Let's break down these two types of grace and tie them to actionable, everyday steps you can take to make meaningful progress on your journey:

1. Irresistible Grace: Accepting the Call to Action

Irresistible Grace teaches us that when grace is given, it *must* move us. Just as Augustine believed that the elect cannot resist the grace of God, we can translate this to the way opportunities or inspirations come to us. When you are called to something greater—a doctorate, a leadership role, or a challenging project—there is an irresistible

pull, a sense of purpose that you cannot ignore. The key is *recognizing that call* and taking decisive steps to act on it.

- **Listen to Your Inner Compass:** Be attuned to the moments of inspiration or the *nudges* you feel to pursue something important. These are your moments of grace. If you feel compelled to write, research, or take a new direction in your academic or professional journey, don't resist it—*act on it immediately*. Whether it's writing down a new idea or reaching out to a mentor, taking that first step is crucial.
- **Set Micro-Goals:** To make grace actionable, break large, overwhelming goals into smaller, manageable tasks. If you feel the irresistible urge to complete a research paper, begin by outlining just the first section. Grace will lead you, but

you must give it direction. Don't delay; start with *one small task* today and let momentum build from there.

- **Take the First Step Every Day:** Each day offers a fresh opportunity to lean into grace. When you wake up, ask yourself, *What is the one thing I can do today to move forward?* Whether it's reading one page of research, sending an important email, or simply organizing your workspace, doing something—*anything*—brings you closer to your goal.

2. Persevering Grace: Staying the Course Despite Challenges

While Irresistible Grace compels us to start, *Persevering Grace* ensures we stay the course. Augustine believed that the elect are given the grace to begin their journey and

continue it until the very end. This equally applies to the demanding and often lonely journey of personal or professional achievement, particularly something as challenging as earning a doctorate.

Persevering grace manifests itself not in grand gestures but in the small, consistent actions you take each day—even when you don't feel like it, even when the results seem far away.

- **Create a Routine:** Grace thrives in structure. Create a daily routine that incorporates time for the things that matter most—whether it's writing, reading, or spending time in reflection. If you commit to just *30 minutes* a day of focused work, those minutes add up over time and help you persevere through moments when motivation is low.

- **Embrace Small Wins:** Augustine's concept of persevering grace reminds us that success doesn't come from one massive breakthrough. It comes from small wins accumulated over time. Celebrate the little victories—finishing a paragraph, solving a problem, or even making it through a tough day. Each win is a sign of grace pushing you forward.
- **Find Joy in the Process, Not Just the Outcome:** Perseverance is easier when you shift your focus from *just* the final goal to the process itself. Find joy in the act of learning, of researching, of growing each day. When you enjoy the journey, you're less likely to fall away or give up, and grace becomes a sustaining force.

3. The Importance of the Little Things: Practical Daily Actions

Persevering grace is often experienced in the *little things*—the small, habitual acts that accumulate over time to create monumental change. These little things might seem insignificant on their own, but they are the daily markers of grace at work.

- **Daily Reflection:** Set aside time at the end of each day to reflect on where grace showed up. Ask yourself, *What did I learn today? What challenge did I overcome? What progress did I make, however small?* This reflection helps you recognize that grace is always present, even on difficult days.
- **Gratitude Practice:** In moments when you feel like giving up, remind yourself of the grace you've already received. Keep a daily gratitude journal. Even something as simple as *I had the energy to write one sentence today* is worth acknowledging.

Gratitude aligns you with grace, keeping you focused on what you *have* accomplished rather than what's left to do.

- **Physical and Mental Well-being:** Grace doesn't just show up in the intellectual or spiritual aspects of your journey—it also shows up in your physical and mental well-being. Take care of your body through exercise, good nutrition, and sleep. When your body is well cared for, your mind can focus, and grace can flow more freely through you.

4. Finding Strength in Isolation: You Are Never Truly Alone

St. Augustine's belief in *Persevering Grace* also brings comfort to those who feel isolated on their journey. There are moments when pursuing a doctorate—or any major life goal—feels lonely. Mentors might be distant, peers may seem to have it easier, and the path can feel overwhelming. Yet, Augustine reminds us that grace perseveres, even in solitude.

- **Seek Community, But Don't Depend on It:** While finding a community of like-minded scholars or professionals is valuable, grace also teaches you to be self-sufficient. Reach out for help when needed, but don't rely on others to sustain your progress. Grace sustains you internally. *You are enough*, even when the journey feels solitary.

- **Visualize Success:** In moments of doubt, *visualization* can be a powerful tool.

Imagine yourself at the finish line—whether it’s defending your dissertation, receiving your diploma, or achieving a significant career milestone. Grace keeps you on this path because it knows you will get there. Trust in that vision and let it guide your daily actions.

- **Keep the Faith:** Remember that you are part of the *elect*—those chosen to persevere, even when the road is rough. There is a purpose to your journey, and grace will not abandon you. Keep faith that this grace will lead you exactly where you need to be.

Grace in Action—Making the Most of Each Day

To those walking the path to excellence, whether in academia, your career, or personal growth, know this: *Grace is both irresistible and persevering*. It calls you to action, and it sustains you through every challenge you face. But grace is also practical. It's found in the little things—daily habits, small wins, moments of gratitude, and simple perseverance.

When you take one small step each day, you are aligning yourself with that grace. When you reflect on your progress, you remind yourself that grace is already at work in your life. And when you care for yourself—mentally, physically, and spiritually—you allow that grace to carry you through, ensuring that, like the elect Augustine spoke of, you will persevere to the end.

You *are* chosen. You *are* favored. And you will succeed—not because the road is easy, but because grace will never allow you to give up.