

EFFECTUAL CALLING & REGENERATION

Effectual Calling is the first act of application in the process of personal redemption. It can also be viewed as that *complex of events* within which regeneration, faith and repentance occur. All other aspects of salvation hang upon effectual calling. It is an effectual call because it actually unites the believer with the saving graces, which are hidden in Christ.

We properly speak of a call that is not efficacious, commonly referred to as the universal call of the gospel. The claims of the gospel address all mankind without any distinction at all. Moreover, all are held responsible for what is implied by the message of the gospel. It is likely that this distinction between effectual and universal call is in view when Jesus says, **“For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matt. 22:14.** There are other passages that clearly suggest that effectual calling occurs in the *context* of universal calling.

At that time Jesus answered and said, “I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For my yoke is easy and My load is light.” Matt. 11:25-30

A contemporary analogy may be found in our understanding of court appointed summons or subpoenas. There are cases where the summons comes merely requiring presence in the court. It obligates but does not come in such a way that effectually compels. This would correspond to universal calling. If the subpoena were to be delivered by sheriffs with orders and sufficient powers to arrest and forcibly escort to the court, this would correspond to effectual calling. Granted the illustration is homely and falls far short of accounting for the internal subtleties of what actually take place. **“Many are called but few are chosen.”**

John Murray noted,

But it is very striking that in the New Testament the terms for calling, when used specifically with reference to salvation, are almost uniformly applied, not to the universal call of the gospel, but to the call that ushers men into the state of salvation and is therefore effectual. There is scarcely an instance where the terms are used to designate the indiscriminate overture of grace in the gospel of Christ. Hence the all but uniform

meaning is that which is fixed by the well-known passages such as **Romans 8:30**: “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called,” **1Corinthians 1:9**: “God is faithful, buy whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son,” **2Peter 1:10**: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (cf. **Rom, 1:6, 7; 1Cor. 1:26**). ...With scarcely an exception the New Testament means by the words “call, “called,” “calling” nothing less than the call which is efficacious unto salvation.

The Necessity of Effectual Calling:

1. **Effectual Calling is Necessitated by the Natural Condition of Man.**
It is obvious that all who hear the gospel do not respond. As we have seen the Bible admits of a universal call claiming the allegiance of the whole of mankind, but the whole of mankind does not respond. Several answers have been given as to the cause of the distinction.
 - a. Some suppose that all who hear the gospel have the inherent ability to respond due either to (semi-pelagian) the natural capacity of men or (Armenian) because of a sufficient grace given to all through which inherent depravity can by all be overcome. These views hold in common the belief that the determining factor in human response to the gospel is man. God, though sovereign does not interfere with the free will of His creatures. He simply steps back, having made salvation available and saves those who are wise enough to respond to His overture.
 - b. According to the Reformed view, men are by nature unable to respond, because all are born into a sinful condition (original sin). This condition issues in both a pervasive depravity, resulting in original guilt, actual transgressions and pervasive inability, resulting in complete incapacity to change the sinful direction. This view is supported abundantly by the testimony of Holy Scripture. ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*** John 3:3 ***“...a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”*** 1Cor. 2:14 ***“But God being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”*** Eph. 2:4,5.

The Author of Effectual Calling:

1. **God the Father is the Author of Effectual Calling.** The call that is effectual has its genesis in the sovereign purposes of God. ***“God is faithful through whom you were called into fellowship***

with His Son, Jesus.” 1Cor. 1:9 “And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:43, 44. If it is God who calls then we do not call ourselves. This implies that we are entirely dependent upon God for an invitation and that short of His gracious overture the human race is wholly without hope.

2. **God the Father is the actual Agent in Effectual Calling.** We commonly think of God as the one who planned the constituent parts of redemption, but seldom do we conceive of Him as the actual agent in any separate aspect of the plan. ***Whom He did predestinate, them He also called...Ro.8:30.*** The effective agent in predestination is the effectual agent in calling. This is conclusive, for it is not said here that the Son conforms believers to the Son. A distinction is obviously expressed here between the one who predestines and calls and the one the called are conformed to.
3. **God the Holy Spirit is the actual Efficient Means.** It is the testimony of the Holy Scriptures that the regenerating work, which is necessary to effectual calling is the province of the Holy Spirit and is a work of God alone. Jesus made this poignantly clear to Nicodemus when He said, ***“That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Jn. 3:6.*** As clearly as the agency of God is asserted the agency of man is previously precluded earlier. ***“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Jn. 1:12-13.*** The work of regeneration is monogernistic. Man, though he clearly participates in subsequent elements of the work of salvation is wholly passive in regeneration. One way of describing the relationship of the word in the act is that of the distinction between life and birth. It is the Spirit of God which generates divine life making men partakers of the divine nature and the word of God is the means through which the life becomes manifest.

The Nature of Effectual Calling:

1. **The Call of God is Efficacious.** The call that is unto salvation carries with it the necessary power to infallibly accomplish its purpose. The testimony of the Son of God puts this beyond doubt. ***“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” John 6:37.*** Not only is the efficacious call of God the explanation for those who come; it is also the explanation for

those who refuse. ***“But you do not believe, because you are not My sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”*** John 10:26, 27. Those who were given to the Son are effectually called and those who are not given do not respond.

2. **The Call of God is Immutable.** Those who are the subjects of the effectual call of God are irrevocably called into the fellowship of the Son. They certainly persevere in the faith because of the predetermined purpose of the omnipotent God. ***“...we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose.”*** Eph. 1:11. The roots of effectual calling go down deep into the soil of eternity.

3. **The Call is a Heavenly and Holy Calling.** It is called such by the writer to the Hebrews, ***“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,...”*** Heb. 3:1. Paul states the same explicitly, ***“...according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,”*** 2Tim. 1:8d-9. It is a high and holy calling from the dunghill of sin and shame to the spiritual wealth and riches in the heavenlies.

Finally, effectual calling is the first step in the application of redemption. It is the phase that apprehends the sinner and infallibly ushers him into the wealth repositied in Christ, from before the foundation of the world. The believer is utterly saved by the gracious overture of the Omnipotent God, sealed by the Spirit of God that he might be conformed to the image of the Son of God. These treasures of wisdom and grace enter his life through the effectual call of God the Father.