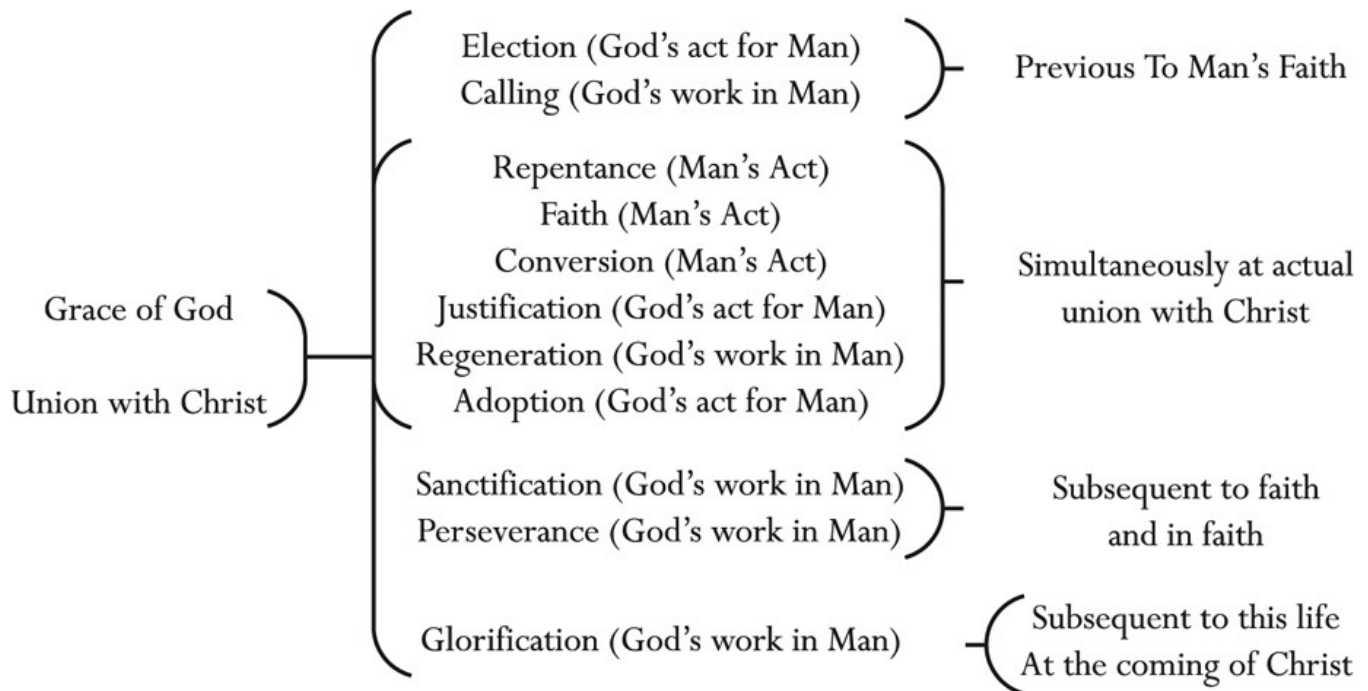


## EFFECTUAL CALLING

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### Review of the Eternal Works of God

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- Up until this point, we have been discussing God's acts in eternity past which we do not have knowledge of in our present context.
- In other words, we have no idea who God has elected, predestined, or who he has foreknown. Those are in the eternal decrees of God and done before the foundation of the world.
- **Ephesians 1:3-4** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, {4} just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."
- **1 Peter 1:1-2** "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen {2} according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."

- **Romans 8:28-30** “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. {29} For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; {30} and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”
- **2 Thessalonians 2:13** “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.”
- **Acts 13:48** “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”
- The list can go on and on, but this is the work of God in man before man was ever created.

## **The 2 “Calls” of God for Salvation**

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- We are now traveling into what is called the application of salvation.
- In other words, how do we know that we (or anyone) have been foreknown by God and elected by His sovereign decree unto salvation?
- “When we think of the application of redemption we must not think of it as one simple and indivisible act. ***It comprises a series of acts and processes.*** To mention some, we have calling, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification. These are all distinct, and not one of these can be defined in terms of the other. Each has its own distinct meaning, function, and purpose in the action and grace of God.”<sup>1</sup>
- **This is important to understand.** Someone is not adopted into the family of God or can call God their Father without first being called unto salvation.
- The sanctification process, the work of the Holy Spirit to make us more like Christ, does not start until someone has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
- Unless and until someone is regenerated, they are not in the kingdom of God.
- While all that God did for us took place outside of time, in fact before time, we are going to see real and tangible evidences, in time, that those things have indeed taken place.

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<sup>1</sup> John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 79–80.

- “With all these considerations in view, the order in the application of redemption is found to be, calling, regeneration, faith and repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification. When this order is carefully weighed we find that there is a logic which evinces and brings into clear focus the governing principle of salvation in all of its aspects, the grace of God in its sovereignty and efficacy. Salvation is of the Lord in its application as well as in its conception and accomplishment.”<sup>2</sup>
- **In order for our salvation to be applied, we must be made alive.** We must be alerted to our own sinfulness and God’s holy and righteous standards.
- Being dead in our sin and our minds darkened, we are unable to come to God on our own. We are unable to see our need before God and Jesus as our only hope.
- There are two calls in the Bible; a general call and an effectual call.
- This may also be called an external call and an internal call.

### **The general or external call is the general call of salvation that goes out to all people everywhere.**

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- “*We may properly speak of a call which is not in itself effectual.* That is often spoken of as the universal call of the gospel. The overtures of grace in the gospel addressed to all men without distinction are very real and we must maintain that doctrine with all its implications for God’s grace, on the one hand, and for man’s responsibility and privilege, on the other.”<sup>3</sup>
- This is ***absolutely necessary*** in order for men to be saved. There must be an external call, a call that is verbalized to all people.

**Romans 10:13–17** “...for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” **14** How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? **15** How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!” **16** However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?” **17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- The proclamation of the gospel is not just important but required for one to be born again. The gospel is proclaimed to all people so that they all can hear the good news.

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<sup>2</sup> Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, 87.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, 88.

- This is the heartbeat of the New Testament and not only how people are saved but also how the church grows.
- This is what Jesus said in **Acts 1:8** “...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”
  - We are to go to all the earth and share the gospel, be a witness for Christ and tell people about the saving message of the cross.

### **There are required elements to the gospel so that people can hear and be saved.<sup>4</sup>**

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- In the first place, the gospel preacher must explain the facts of God’s holiness, man’s sinfulness, and the work of Christ in accomplishing redemption<sup>5</sup>
- ...a second essential element of the external call is the preacher’s earnest call for the sinner to repent and believe<sup>6</sup>
- A third necessary element of the external call is the promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life<sup>7</sup>
- These three elements must be in the presentation of the gospel in order for the true gospel to have been preached. Each person must know of their helpless state and their darkness in sin. They must know that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for a penalty that was rightly aimed at them.
- They must also abandon all hope that they are good enough or that they are able to work to earn some sort of favor from God.
- They must also put their trust in Christ and His work alone to be accepted and reconciled to God.
- Without these basic elements of the gospel, man is unable to truly respond in faith to the work that Christ did on their behalf.

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 572–573.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 573.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 574.

- “Therefore, a God-centered gospel presentation will not only proclaim the magnificent promises of forgiveness and eternal life but will also declare that eternal life consists in the knowledge of and communion with the triune God (John 17:3) and will present him, the Giver, as the gospel’s greatest gift.”<sup>8</sup>
- The external call from God to sinful mankind needs to be proclaimed to all of mankind *without any distinction*. All men everywhere need to hear and respond to the gospel.
- God tells us in Scripture that His desire is that all mankind should repent.
  - **Ezekiel 18:23** “Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?”
  - **2 Corinthians 5:20** “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”
  - **Acts 17:30** “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent.”
- Not only does God desire all mankind to repent, but His offer of the gospel to all mankind is true and sincere. It is not an offer that is without weight and consequence.
  - The problem is not with the call or the gospel. The problem lies in man’s total depravity. God’s grace is not lacking, as if He could not save, man is at the center of his own problem.
- “Some object that because God intends only to save those to whom he has chosen to grant repentance and faith, the universal call of the gospel cannot be genuine on God’s part. This is nothing less than a blasphemous accusation from those who have exalted their own reasoning above God’s revelation.”<sup>9</sup>
  - **Psalms 81:13** “Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!”
  - **Romans 10:21** “But as for Israel He says, ‘ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE.’”
- “The offer of the salvation communicated in the external call of the gospel is conditioned on repentance and faith. For it to be a genuine, well-meant offer on God’s part, he simply has to be

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 575.

sincerely disposed to provide the promised blessings upon the satisfaction of the offer's conditions.”<sup>10</sup>

- This is truly the case with God. If anyone truly repents and believes the gospel, God will forgive their sins and adopt them as His own children.

### **Now to what is called effectual calling.**

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- In our chain of salvation, **Romans 8:30** “...and these whom He predestined, *He also called*; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”
- A good definition is, “The developed biblical idea of God’s calling is of God summoning men by his word, and laying hold of them by his power, to play a part in and enjoy the benefits of his gracious redemptive purposes.”<sup>11</sup>
- “Original sin renders all human beings naturally dead (unresponsive) to God, but in effectual calling God quickens the dead. As the outward call of God to faith in Christ is communicated through the reading, preaching, and explaining of the contents of the Bible, the Holy Spirit enlightens and renews the heart of elect sinners so that they understand the gospel and embrace it as truth from God, and God in Christ becomes to them an object of desire and affection. Being now regenerate and able by the use of their freed will to choose God and the good, they turn away from their former pattern of living to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to start a new life with him.”<sup>12</sup>
  - Different from the external call but not without it first being made is the internal call of God in the heart of the sinner to come to Him for salvation.
- “Because of the deficiencies of the external call, sinners stand in need of a sovereignly efficacious call, inherently powerful to overcome the effects of depravity and to bring them to repentance and saving faith. In his natural state, man is characterized by spiritual death (Eph. 2:1). By nature he is a spiritual corpse, entirely unresponsive to the spiritual truth proclaimed in the external call of the gospel.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 575–576.

<sup>11</sup> Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, vol. 3 (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 37.

<sup>12</sup> J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, Crossway, 2020, 168.

<sup>13</sup> MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 576.

- The internal call to salvation is seemingly and surely synonymous with our regeneration. As the natural man rejects the gospel and it is surely foolishness to him, only the regenerated sinner may know and respond in faith.
- **John 6:44** “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me *draws him*; and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- This verb, *draws him*, is very important.
- It literally means *to draw, drag off...metaphorically to draw by inward power, lead, impel*.
  - The same word is used in **John 21:6** “And He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.’ So they cast, and then they were not able **to haul** it in because of the great number of fish.”
  - **John 21:11** “Simon Peter went up and **drew the net** to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.”
- Peter did not **woo** or **invite** the net to himself or try to convince the net that his way was the best way. Rather, Peter *actually brought the fish to himself*.
- This is what the Father does to the sinner. There is not an “open” invitation where they are able to say yes or no. Man, without God, is dead in his sin and unable to come to God on his own.
  - This is common in the “man-centered” idea of salvation.
  - Mankind desperately desires to maintain their own free will and their own autonomy.
  - One of the main problems is the biblical language of man being dead without God.
- God, through His effectual call upon sinful man, breaks through his sinful heart with His life-changing grace and brings him to repentance and new life.
- What about **John 12:32** “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”
- There are two ways this verse has been misinterpreted.
  - One is universal salvation, or that all men will be saved. Jesus says that he will draw all men to Himself, so that means all men are saved.
    - This is a very poor and dangerous interpretation. We know that not all men will be saved, so this must mean something else.
  - The other interpretation that Jesus calls all men, but all men have the right to say yes or no to the call.
    - Once again, this is a dangerous teaching of the gospel and puts mankind in the driver’s seat of their own salvation.

- This is commonly referred to as libertarian free will. The thought that man is autonomous and operates independently from any outside forces.
  - These people believe in self-government, they do as they wish. They would believe that God's will is dynamic rather than static. That God's will allows for human freedom and responds to what man does.
- **What is the correct interpretation of this verse? Does Jesus plan to save everyone?**
  - No, in the immediate context of this verse, Jesus is speaking to both the Jews and the Greeks.
  - Listen to Spurgeon, "This is the sermon, which has the Greeks for a text. They are already coming, being drawn to Christ: but when he dies, when he is lifted up upon the cross, instead of losing his attractive power, he will have greater drawing force than ever: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."
  - John Calvin, "When He says all it must be referred to the children of God, who are of His flock. Yet I agree with Chrysostom, who says that Christ used the universal word because the Church was to be gathered from Gentiles and Jews alike."
  - Steven Cole, "The context helps us interpret this point. The Greeks have just come to Philip asking to see Jesus. At this point, Jesus announces that the hour has come for Him to be glorified. Part of His glory (as I explained in the last message) is that after the cross, the gospel would now go out to the whole world. So by "all men," Jesus does not mean all without exception, but all without distinction. As Paul put it (Rom. 1:16), "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
  - The list of biblically sound men can go on and on. Instead of looking for a way for everyone to get saved or man to remain independent of God, we need to submit to what the Scriptures say and praise God for His kindness.
- To be sure, I would agree that man is free to make the choices he does according to his own will. The issue is not freedom of choice, but the depth to which a man is totally depraved. In other words, man has the full capacity to choose according to his will.
- **Romans 8:6-8** "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, {7} because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, {8} and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."



- If you are not in the Spirit, meaning born again, it is clear here that Paul writes you are unable to please God. Therefore, to make any decision or action which is pleasing to God, you must be in the Spirit.
- How does one then set their mind on the things of the Spirit? They must be acted upon by God.
- If our salvation is not centered on man but on God, we should be able to see this through the Scriptures.
- We should know that we need God to **call us unto salvation**.
- This is *exactly* what we read.

### Scriptures about God's call to His people:

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- **Romans 1:6-7** "...among whom you also **are the called of Jesus Christ**; {7} to all who are beloved of God in Rome, **called as saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
- **1 Corinthians 1:2** "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, **saints by calling**, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours..."
- **Galatians 1:6** "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting **Him who called you by the grace of Christ**, for a different gospel..."
- **Ephesians 1:18** "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is **the hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints..."
- **Ephesians 4:1** "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of **the calling with which you have been called**..."
- **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. {14} It was **for this He called you through our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- **2 Timothy 1:9** "...**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..."

- **1 Peter 2:9** “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of **Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...**”
- These verses (and many more) speak about **calling and salvation**. You cannot separate the two. Those whom God foreknew, elected, and called, are those who are saved.

## **How does the calling work?**

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**God the Father calls those whom He has foreknown before the foundation of the world.**

- **1 Corinthians 1:9** “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- **2 Timothy 1:8-9** “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, {9} 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,

**The Word of God is central to the calling of God's people to Himself.**

- **2 Thessalonians 2:14** “It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **Ephesians 1:13** “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise...”
- **Acts 16:14** “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”
- The Holy Spirit uses God's Word by illuminating it, convicting our hearts of our sin and pointing us to the holiness of Christ.
- Our entire being, mind, emotions, will, desires, etc. are affected by the gospel.
- **2 Corinthians 4:6** “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One **who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge** of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

**Man's response to the effectual call of the Gospel...or what is the result of God's inward call?**

- As we talked about earlier, when God' opens the hearts of His people, man's desires are now subjected to God's desire and work in his heart.
- A man now **chooses God according to his new desires.**

- “It is important that we not give the impression that people will be saved by the power of this call *apart from* their own willing response to the gospel. Although it is true that effective calling awakens and brings forth a response from us, we must always insist that this response still has to be voluntary, willing response in which the individual person puts his or her trust in Christ.”<sup>14</sup>

## **Helpful Thoughts**

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- Jesus said in **Matthew 22:14** “For many are called, but few are chosen.”
- “We know that two people can listen to the same evangelistic sermon and one will hear the voice of Christ calling him to faith while the other hears only the words of the preacher. Again, we do not know why this happens. We are at a loss to fathom the difference between a general call and this power, effectual call. We only know that the difference is real.”<sup>15</sup>
- The call is real, God’s heart towards unrepentant man is real, the offer of salvation is real. Our job is not to dissect the finer parts of this doctrine, but to be faithful to what we know to be true.
- We have responded to the gospel call, and we know that the gospel saves. Since we have responded in faith, we know that we are commanded to share it.
- “In the first place it clearly emphasizes that the initiative in spiritual experience is God’s, and not man’s. We have neither the claim nor right to his gracious summons...”<sup>16</sup>
- **Proverbs 16:9** “The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”
  - The Lord is directing our steps, he is *arranging them, directing toward something, fixing them*. Man operates within the confines of a sovereign God.
- It is important to never forget that God’s calling us to salvation and our response will *always* “bear fruit in moral conformity.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 693.

<sup>15</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life*, 31.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

- We cannot claim that the holy and righteous Lord of the universe has control over our lives but then live like He doesn't exist.
- Man is not a law unto himself but a slave; either to Satan or to Christ.
- While our lives will certainly be filled with ups and downs, good choices and bad ones, the marks of a believer should become more and more evident as our walk with the Lord progresses through time.
- Both are true; God's calls those whom He has foreknown, those who don't respond are responsible for living in their sin.
- **Isaiah 55:8** "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' declares the LORD."
- Salvation may not be the way you think is best, but God is God and His ways are always right.