

EFFECTUAL CALL/IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

INTRODUCTION

- Definition: God's irresistible grace that effectively draws elect men to Himself

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.

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.

- From Romans 8:29-30, we learn that before space and time, God committed Himself to a certain group of people whom He would redeem in history
- So the doctrine of calling follows naturally that of the doctrine of election and predestination
- Within the framework of time and space, God calls individuals through His efficacious grace
- All who are the recipients of efficacious grace respond to it and become believers (that is the definition of "efficacious" grace; "effective" grace)

VIEWS OF CALLING

Pelagianism

- Man accepts God of his own free will, without the necessity of grace → "I came all by myself"

Semi-Pelagianism

- By availing himself of a small amount of divine grace man can accept God's call → "I started to come and God helped me"
- This is the position of the Roman-Catholic church and is based on the wrong view that the mind and the heart are not completely depraved, therefore partial grace is needed

Arminianism

- By means of a universal helping grace or other prevenient grace God coaxes man by giving him the possibility of a free choice → "God started me and I cooperated"
- Prevenient grace was won at the cross of Christ and helps to quicken or help the will

Calvinism

- Man comes to Christ by the effective, effectual working of God's grace → "God irresistibly brought me to Christ"

TWO DIFFERENT CALLS IN SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:14 ~ For many are called, but few *are* chosen

General Call

- The general or external call is a call, which invites all men to come to God for salvation (all men without exception)
- The general call of God falls under the moral will of God which represents His moral desires for mankind
- It is embodied in His Word and explains the morality by which God is pleased when obeyed

2 Peter 3:9 ~ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- The word for “wishing” is the Greek word *boulemai* which is used of God’s will
- Yet many will perish! So how does this “wishing” come to pass if God is sovereign? How can a “wish” on God’s part not come to pass if in fact He is sovereign?
- Therefore, there are two wills of God and this general call falls under His moral will. Not everything that falls under God’s moral will will be accomplished⁴

- This is different from His sovereign will which is His will of decree and cannot be thwarted whatsoever and will take place just as God has purposed (cf. Ps. 115:3; Dan. 4:35)

God does invite all men (without exception) to come to Him for salvation

Isaiah 45:22 ~ Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.

Ezekiel 33:11 ~ “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’

Matthew 11:28 ~ Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

John 7:37 ~ Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

Luke 14:16-24 ~ Parable of a Dinner: “For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.”

- These passages do not evidence any specificity, but are universal calls to all mankind for salvation
- It is God’s moral desire for man to be saved and that none should perish, therefore He extends a moral call to all mankind based upon this part of His will

The general call of God can be resisted

Luke 14:16-24 ~ Parable of a Dinner: “For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.”

Matthew 23:37 ~ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Acts 7:51 ~ You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

All men are responsible for their resistance to this call and therefore are judged

Matthew 22:1-7, esp. v. 7 ~ Parable of the Marriage Feast: “But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.”

Hebrews 12:25 ~ See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven.

1 Peter 4:17 ~ For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

2 Thessalonians 1:8 ~ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

- The Scriptures are clear that man is ultimately responsible for his unbelief and his resistance to the general call, even though God is sovereign over His election.

Is the general call a legitimate call then?

- Two objections are brought against the sincerity and genuineness of this call:

1) This call is incompatible with the inability of the sinner to obey

- **Reply 1** ~ It is no more unreasonable for God to extend an invitation to those that one knows will not accept than for God to demand obedience to the law; or for Jesus to offer an earthly kingdom to those who will not accept.
- **Reply 2** ~ God may will or desire all men to be saved and yet not will to exert special influences to save them (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4).
 - A passive voice verb is used here suggesting that while God would have all men be saved through repenting and believing, yet He does not actively will to save all men.

Exodus 33:19 ~ And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

- **Reply 3** ~ The only obstacle to coming is the perversity of man's will. No one fails to come because he is helpless but because he feels that he can save himself (or doesn't need saving).

2) It is incompatible with God's design to save only the elect

- **Reply** ~ The Gospel offer is made to all, both elect and non-elect

Conclusion

- The universal call of God is given because in God's plan, He has called His people to proclaim the Gospel to the lost (cf. Acts 10; Rom. 10:14). Within this plan, God did not say to preach to the elect only because there is no way for believers to know whom the elect are (cf. Acts 18:10).
- Therefore, the free offer of the gospel is freely proclaimed to all men knowing that whoever believes and repents will be saved because they were elected beforehand
- This would be like a farmer who does not know the extent of his harvest; therefore he is unwilling to sow any seeds
- The general call of God for salvation falls within God's moral will. In other words, it is God's genuine desire that all men be saved.

Special Call

- The special or internal call is the efficacious call, which irresistibly brings all the elect to salvation
- It is similar to a King giving a "summons" to a subject in His kingdom. When the King is the all-sovereign God of this Universe, then that "summons" guarantees a response

The Bible teaches that there is a call of God, which effectually calls men to salvation, a call limited to the elect.

Luke 14:23 ~ And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel *them* to come in, so that my house may be filled.

- Even though there was a general call to all men, only those who were elect were actually saved
- This is the special call of God for the elect only

Romans 1:6-7 ~ among whom you also are the **called** of Jesus Christ; 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.

Romans 8:29-30 ~ 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; and these whom He predestined, He also **called**; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

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:

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 ~ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are **the called**, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

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. 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,

Hebrews 9:15 ~ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been **called** may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

1 Peter 1:15 ~ but like the Holy One who **called** you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

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;

Revelation 17:14 ~ These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him *are the called* and chosen and faithful.

- These verses all speak of the call of God that actually brings sinners to salvation. This call is limited only to those who are elect.

The Necessity of the Call

- Men do not come unless God calls them with His irresistible call of salvation because original sin renders all human beings naturally dead (unresponsive) to God
- If men are dead in sin, helpless, and cannot believe in Christ, then the salvation of sinners of necessity involves much more than Christ dying for all men and then waiting to see who will accept His gift
- If unsaved men are unable to choose or to will any spiritual good, then apart from a spiritual rebirth, no man would choose Christ
- Men don't need a gentle push; they need a spiritual resurrection, a quickening

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.

John 6:65 ~ And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father'

- "no one can come" = a moral inability to come because of a corrupt will
- It is not as if there is a rope keeping a will that wants to come...they can't come because of corrupt will

- These texts teach that God’s call is an effectual call...when God calls an individual, they WILL come
- He changes their hearts of stone, renews their will, and effectually draws them to Christ so that they do respond in faith
- “granted” = given...shows that what is necessary to be saved (faith, repentance) are gifts:

Ephesians 2:8-9 ~ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

2 Timothy 2:25 ~ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth

- Examples:

Acts 11:18 ~ And when they heard this, they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life”

Acts 16:14 ~ And a certain 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 New Covenant promises grace that will triumph over resistance

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ~ Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. “And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances

The Operation of the Call

1) The place of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the effectual call

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, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling

Romans 1:6 ~ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ

John 6:65 ~ And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

- God the Father calls the elect through the agency of the Holy Spirit into fellowship with His Son

2) The role of the Word of God in the operation of the call

Romans 10:17 ~ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

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.

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 Spirit illuminates and animates the Word of God. As we listen to the Scripture, we come to the conviction that we hear the very Word of God itself.
- God does not save us “automatically” without our mind, emotions, and will being affected by the Gospel

3) The effectual call compels the human will to believe and be saved

- Men choose according to their own desires, yet God is the One who is at work in them

The Results of the Call

1) It cannot be resisted

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,

Romans 8:30 ~ and these whom He called, He also justified

- The call of God is based on His irresistible grace. Those whom God has called will be justified. Therefore, the special calling of God cannot be resisted but will ultimately lead to the salvation of the elect.

2) It is intrinsically glorious: It is a call to glory

Romans 8:30 ~ foreknew → predestined → called → justified → glorified (aorist tense)

Hebrews 2:10 ~ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory

John 17:22 ~ The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

- This refers to the believer's participation in all of the attributes and essence of God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:21 ~ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God

- The ultimate end of God's calling is the glorification of His saints for all of eternity

3) The various practical ends to which each believer is called:

1 Corinthians 1:9 ~ God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Peter 3:9 ~ for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing

- This refers to God's undeserved blessings of forgiveness and salvation in Christ, therefore we should forgive others

Galatians 5:13 ~ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 ~ For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

- God has called us to be holy men with our minds and with our bodies.

SUMMARY

- Men do not come unless God calls them with His irresistible call of salvation
- 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.
- There occurs when the Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the gospel to convict a sinner and bring him/her to faith. Those who are chosen by God receive this special call. An unbeliever cannot thwart God's effectual call in their hearts, but this does not mean that people come into the kingdom "kicking and screaming" against their will. Rather, their choice is genuine, but it is brought to fruition by the Spirit.