

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 67 & 31.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #67. *What is effectual calling?*

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace,¹ whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto)² he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit;³ savingly enlightening their minds,⁴ renewing and powerfully determining their wills,⁵ so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.⁶

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #31. *What is effectual calling?*

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit,⁷ whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery,⁸ enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ,⁹ and renewing our wills,¹⁰ he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.¹¹

Question 1—*What is the origin and necessity of effectual calling?*

Answer—Effectual calling is specifically confessed to be the work of the Holy Ghost because, as it relates to the application of redemption, it is the special work of God's Spirit, John 16:14. The necessity of this effectual calling appears from the natural case of those therein called: 1.) They are far off, far from God, Christ and all that is good, Eph. 2:12, 13. Our nature is contrary to his, and our will is set against his will, Rom. 8:7. Thus, there is no bringing us to him but by a powerful and effectual call, whereby the sinner is irresistibly drawn, John 6:44. 2.) They are hard and fast asleep, in great need of this call, Eph. 5:14. All their spiritual senses are locked up, they can neither see nor hear, Matt. 13:15. 3.) If they are awakened, they do not know where to go, Acts 2:37. Though Christ is preached and pointed out in the Word, they cannot avail themselves of any help until the Spirit of the Lord call them by his power, 1 Cor. 2:14. 4.) Should they know where to go, they are not willing to go, John 5:40. They are naturally unwilling to leave their lusts and unwilling to come unto Christ, and will not be made willing in a day of power, Ps. 110:3. 5.) If they were willing to come to Christ, yet being awakened, they dare not for the great guilt that appears

¹ John 5:25; Eph. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9.

² Tit. 3:4, 5; Eph. 2:4, 5, 7-9; Rom. 9:11.

³ 2 Cor. 5:20; 2 Cor. 6:1, 2; John 6:44; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.

⁴ Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 2:10, 12.

⁵ Ezek. 11:19; 36:26, 27; John 6:45.

⁶ Eph. 2:5; Phil. 2:13; Deut. 30:6.

⁷ 2 Tim. 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.

⁸ Acts 2:37.

⁹ Acts 26:18.

¹⁰ Ezek. 36:26, 27.

¹¹ John 6:44, 45; Phil. 2:13.

before them, Jer. 2:25. Hence it is that so many words of grace are heaped on one another in the gospel invitation, Isa. 55:6-9. 6.) Even if they would come, they cannot come, unless they are drawn by the Spirit, John 6:44. Sinners are dead in their sins and it requires the power to raise the dead to call them from their inability, John 5:25. The product of this call from spiritual death is a new creation, Eph. 2:10; Rom. 4:17.

Thus, this calling requires a work of almighty power and greatness in order to move men from death to life, Eph. 1:18-20. This calling, being the working of the power of God to salvation, is also holy being wrought by the Spirit of holiness, 2 Tim. 1:8, 9. Furthermore, this effectual calling does not arise due to anything in those so called, whether good or evil, but is according to his decree of election, Rom. 9:11. It arises from his mere kindness and love toward the elect, Tit. 3:4, 5. Therefore, it is said to be wholly of grace and leaves no room for the boasting of those effectually called, Eph. 2:4, 5, 7-9.

Question 2—*What is the nature of this effectual calling?*

Answer—This effectual calling exerts a twofold working upon the souls of the elect:

First, there is the working on the understanding, which is the leading faculty of the soul, which by sin has been overspread with darkness, Eph. 5:8. This results in the enlightening of the mind in the knowledge of Christ, Acts 26:18. This illumination results in a twofold conviction: 1.) Of sin, John 16:8. The Spirit of the Lord convinces man that he is a sinner, and sets his particular sins in order before him, Ps. 50:21. Then sins that are out of mind, as dead and buried, have a fearful resurrection, Rom. 7:9. 2.) Of misery, Ezek. 7:16. The Spirit of the Lord convinces him, that he is a lost and undone sinner, Luke 15:17. The effects of which produce remorse, as their consciences do gall them, Acts 2:37; terror, as they see they have to do with a just and holy God, Acts 16:27; and, anxiety, as the soul is moved to inquire if there be any hope, Luke 3:10. This conviction is wrought by the commands, by which the Spirit convinces of sin, Rom. 7:7; and by the threatenings and curse of the law, by which the Spirit convinces of misery, Gal. 3:10.

This illumination also brings with it that knowledge of Christ which convinces of both his ability to save, Heb. 7:25; together with his willingness to save, John 6:37. For now, the mind is *savingly* enlightened, 1 Cor. 2:10, 12. So, they who are effectually called do now hear the invitations of the Gospel drawing them, 2 Cor. 5:20. They are moved to respond to these invitations as in God's accepted time, 2 Cor. 6:1, 2. Thereby, by the Word and Spirit, they are enlightened to a belief of the truth, 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.

Second, there is the work of the Spirit on the will of the sinner, which is hitherto fixed upon accomplishing that which is evil continually, 2 Tim. 3:13. The Spirit works upon the will to renew it, Ezek. 36:26, 27. The Spirit endues in the will new qualities, removing and breaking the power of the old ones, Eph. 4:23, 24. These qualities are chiefly two: 1.) A flexibility or pliability to good, Ezek. 11:19. 2.) A proneness and bent of the will to good, Jer. 31:18. In this, the natural aversion is conquered, and the will is inclined to the will of God, John 6:45. This is what David prays for himself, Ps. 119:36; and what the apostle seeks for all Christians, 2 Thess. 3:5. The Holy Ghost working like fire, softens the hard heart, and then bends it according to his will, Ps. 110:3.

Question 3—*What is the effect and happy issue of this effectual calling?*

Answer—This effectual calling results in the Spirit of God working upon the soul of the elect so that he is persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered in the Gospel, Eph. 2:5. This is what makes this calling effectual calling, that the souls of the elect are thereby made to close with Christ, Deut. 30:6.

There are several things which we must consider in this effectual calling: 1.) There is the effectual closing with the call, which is the sinner's embracing of Christ by faith, John 1:12. The call of the Gospel comes to poor sinners as one of invitation, Matt. 11:28, 29; when it is effectual, the soul echoes back to that call, Jer. 3:22. 2.) The warrant the sinner has to embrace Christ, for it would be presumption indeed for guilty creatures to embrace Christ, if he were not offered unto them, Prov. 8:4. However, we are bidden to this marriage, Matt. 22:4; indeed, we are commanded to believe, 1 John 3:23; and that command is given on our highest peril should we refuse, Mark 16:16. Furthermore, do what we will, we cannot please God, if we do not do that, Heb. 11:6. After all, that is what the Lord mainly requires of us, John 6:29. 3.) How the elect soul is effectually determined to this closing by the Spirit of the Lord persuading him to it, John 6:45. The soul has an intimate counsellor who will not leave until it is won over to give consent to the happy match in the Gospel offer, Isa. 54:13. 4.) How the sinner is helped to comply with the call by the Spirit enabling him, Eph. 1:19, 20. The necessity of this is absolute because no sinful man can move himself to this embrace, John 6:44. Thus, the Lord, with the call, sends forth to his elect a power that enables them to answer it, for the soul gets life from the Spirit of life, Phil. 2:13.