

THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF
FAITH
X. OF EFFECTUAL CALLING

Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC

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I. GOD'S SAVING CALL

All those whom God has predestined unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually, and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

I. GOD'S SAVING CALL

- The elect are called by God to salvation
 - God chose a people in eternity past, Christ died for the people given to him by the Father, so that the Holy Spirit applies God's will and Christ's work to these and no other people.
 - "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).
 - "as many as were appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).
- The Trinity in Salvation:
 - The Father *ordains*
 - The Son *accomplishes*
 - The Spirit *applies*

I. GOD'S SAVING CALL

- Effectual calling
 - Through God's Word:
 - "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 11:17).
 - "You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but through the living and abiding Word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23).
 - By God's Spirit
 - "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:7-8).
- The importance of Word-centered ministry
 - Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." (Eze. 37:9).

I. GOD'S SAVING CALL

- How the call works
 - Enlightening their minds
 - “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:17-18).
 - “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).
 - Spiritually & savingly to understand the things of God
 - Illuminating work of the Holy Spirit
 - “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12).
 - “When the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (Jn. 16:13).

I. GOD'S SAVING CALL

- How the call works
 - Changing their hearts & renewing their wills
 - “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Eze. 36:26).
 - “The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul” (Acts 16:14).
 - This is what we have experienced as our “conversion.”

I. GOD'S SAVING CALL

- By God's Almighty power
 - "As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him" (Mt. 9:9).
 - "God puts forth infinite power in calling home a sinner to himself; he not only puts forth his voice but his arm. . . God rides forth conquering in the chariot of his gospel; he conquers the pride of the heart, and tames the will, which stood out as a fort-royal, to yield and stoop to his grace; he makes the stony heart bleed. Oh, it is a mighty call!" (Thomas Watson).
 - While the general call cannot save, God's effectual makes use of the general call and makes it effectual.
- So that we come "most freely, having been "made willing."
 - "Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power" (Ps. 110:3).
 - "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).
 - "For it has been given to you in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29).

2. GOD'S SOVEREIGN CALL

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

- It is a sovereign call of those who possess no advance qualification or inclination.
 - Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1).
 - "who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace" (1 Tim. 1:9).
 - "In the way God called Abraham, God calls all who become His children. God comes to us when we are hopelessly lost in sin and without knowledge of Him (Eph. 2:1-7), This is a universal fact in the spiritual biography of Christians" (James Montgomery Boice).
- Being totally depraved prior to conversion, we have no ability to contribute to or cooperate with God's grace *until we have been sovereignly called*.

2. GOD'S SOVEREIGN CALL

- The unregenerate experience the outward call of the gospel. This outward call will not effect salvation unless the call is heard and embraced in faith. Effectual calling refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Here the call is within. The regenerate are called inwardly. Everyone who receives the inward call of regeneration responds in faith” R. C. Sproul.
- It often seems to believers that they are Christians because they have made up their minds that this is the way they want to go. They may indeed have done this, but on Paul's view this would be only because there has already been a divine work within them. It is important for the apostle that God is always the initiator in the work of salvation. God took the initiative in sending his Son to die to put away our sins, and God continues with the initiative in calling us out of our self-centered lives into lives of service. (Leon Morris).

3. THE SALVATION OF ELECT INFANTS

Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word

3. THE SALVATION OF ELECT INFANTS

- Elect Infants
 - All the biblical evidence gives us confidence of the salvation of covenant children who die in infancy.
 - “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you” (Gen. 17:7).
 - “I shall go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:23).
 - They are saved apart from having exercised saving faith, by the special call of God and operations of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:8).
 - If there are non-covenant children who are saved, the same is true regarding them.
- Others impaired so as not to be able to exercise faith normally are considered in the same way.

4. NO OTHER WAY

Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they do profess. And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

- There is only one way of salvation, through Jesus Christ by faith.
 - “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6).