

Lesson 15: 2LCF Chapter 10: Of Effectual Calling

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

In our last lesson, we considered the state of man's will after the fall. And, as we did so, we concluded that man's will, apart from the intervention of God, was altogether set against everything that good of Godward. The framers of the confession wrote in 2LCF 9:3...

“Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

Having looked at this paragraph, some might then ask, “If man has lost all ability to do any spiritual good and is dead in his sin, how can anyone be saved?... If man's will has been so totally corrupted, as to render him unable to turn to God, who can rescue humanity from such a hopeless situation?” In paragraph 10, the framers answer this question by asserting that only God can come to man's rescue.

Sam Waldron has provided the following outline of chapter 10 of the confession:

Introduction: Outline

I. The Overview of Effectual Calling (Paragraph 1)

- A. Its Recipients: Those...predestinated unto life
- B. Its Author: God (The Father)
- C. Its Occasion: In his appointed and accepted time
- D. Its Efficacy: effectually to call
- E. Its Means: by His Word and Spirit
- F. Its Transition: out of...sin...to grace
- G. Its Operation: enlightening...taking away...renewing

II. The Issues about Effectual Calling (Paragraphs 2-4)

- A. The Issue regarding Its Agency (Paragraph 2)
- B. The Issues regarding Its Instrumentality: The Instrumentality of the Word and
 - 1. ... the Mentally Incompetent (Paragraph 3)
 - 2. ... its Non-elect Hearers (Paragraph 4a)
 - 3. ... the Ignorant Heathen (Paragraph 4b) ¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 175.

Paragraph 1.

Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, 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 to them a 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.

Rom. 8:30, 11:7; Eph. 1:10,11; 2 Thess. 2:13,14; Eph. 2:1-6; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:17,18; Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27; Eph. 1:19; Ps. 110:3; Cant. 1:4

Exposition

Chapter one of the Confession offers a general overview of the doctrine of effectual calling. Here the basic elements of this doctrine are outlined in a logical order. Here we will consider this paragraph as it has been divided above.

However, before we consider the Confession's outline of this doctrine, it may be helpful to flesh out a biblical definition of effectual calling.

Charles Spurgeon once reflected on how he was saved and came to understand that God alone was the author. He said:

I remember sitting one day in the house of God... when a thought struck my mind—how came I to be converted? I prayed, thought I. Then I thought how came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? ... And then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of all, and that he was the author of faith.¹⁵¹

Herman Witsius has offered this helpful definition:

The first immediate fruit of eternal election, and the principal act of God by which appointed salvation is applied, is effectual calling. Of which the apostle [says]: 'whom he did predestinate them he also called' (Rom. 8:30). And this calling is that act by which those, who are chosen by God and redeemed by Christ, both externally and internally are sweetly invited and effectually brought from a state of sin to a state of communion with God.¹⁵²

Joel Beeke and Paul M. Smalley provide this further elaboration:

The heart of the doctrine of effectual calling is the idea that God calls his elect so powerfully that they are saved. Frequently in the New Testament Epistles, to be called is to be saved. Thus, in the New Testament, "call" (*kaleō*) is often "a technical term for the process of salvation." This calling is not merely an offer but a powerful act of God that applies redemption. Paul teaches the doctrine of effectual calling: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," for "whom he

¹⁵¹ Charles Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, 1:384.

¹⁵² Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, 3.5.1 (1:344), punctuation and word order adjusted by Beeke and Smalley.

did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:28, 30).¹⁵³

A. Its Recipients:

The Confession first identifies the recipients of effectual calling as: "*Those...predestinated unto life...*" While these may be 'fighting words' for those who are of the "free will" persuasion, here the framers of the confession take their language directly from the Apostle Paul who wrote: "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Romans 8:30)

The recipients of this effectual call are not all people everywhere, but only God's elect, who have been predestined to eternal life from before the foundation of the world.

Matthew 22:14

For many are called, but few are chosen.

1 Corinthians 1:22-24

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

B. Its Author:

Here the Confession rightly asserts that "*God hath predestinated unto life...*" The Apostle Paul identified God the Father as the author of effectual calling in 1 Corinthians 1:9: "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jim Domm comments on this reality:

God the Father is the Author of the effectual call, not God the Son, and not God the Holy Spirit. This is important to note as it serves as a safeguard against an improper emphasis upon the Holy Spirit in the application of salvation. It shows that God the Father is directly involved in the application of salvation, not just the Holy Spirit. Recognizing this should provide a check against robbing God the Father of the glory that is due Him. It should also assist believers in properly directing their prayers to God the Father with respect to the application of salvation.¹⁵⁴

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.
14 To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵³ Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2021), 351.

¹⁵⁴ Jim Domm, "Chapter Ten: Of Effectual Calling," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 185.

C. Its Occasion:

As we will see below, God is pleased to use ordinary means to effectually call His elect to Himself, but man plays no part in determining the timing of his effectual call. God effectually calls his own to Himself “*in his appointed and accepted time...*”

John 3:8

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.”

D. Its Efficacy:

Unlike the general call of the gospel, that graciously goes out to all people, the effectual call of the gospel goes only to the elect and effects the required response. This truth can be seen when we evaluate the end results of this call (Romans 8:29-30) and the hardened state of the recipients of this call (Galatians 1:15-16):

Romans 8:29-30

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Galatians 1:15-16

But when he who had set me apart before I was born,[a] and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone

E. Its Means:

God’s effectual call comes by means of “*His Word and Spirit...*”

The Means of the Word:

2 Thessalonians 2:14

To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James 1:18

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

The Agency of the Spirit:

John 3:3, 6

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

This is very instructive for the evangelistic ministry of the church, as it highlights the importance of both the proclamation of the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit as God’s appointed means for the effectual calling of His elect. Jim Domm comments: “The Word and Spirit must never be separated in the experience of the application of salvation. Religion that emphasizes the Word over the Spirit tends to dead orthodoxy. Religion that emphasizes the Spirit over the Word tends to mysticism.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

F. Its Transition:

The Confession also states that the elect is called: “out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ...”

This echoes the Words of the Apostle Paul:

Ephesians 2:1,4,5

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved

G. Its Operation:

“enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving to them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills...”

Jim Domm again observes:

In the effectual call of God, the mind is enlightened, the heart of stone is removed and replaced with the heart of flesh, and the will is renewed. God works upon the whole person—mind, emotions, conscience, and the will—to bring about a profound transformation. By this transformation, those who are effectually called by God are made willing to come to him in the day of His power. These, then, are the operations that are involved in the effectual call: enlightenment, removal, replacement, renewal, alignment, attraction. We must not think of these as disconnected processes. They all occur simultaneously. They are all part of the great transformation that God brings about in those whom he effectually calls.¹⁵⁶

Paragraph 2.

This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, 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, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.

2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:5; John 5:25; Eph. 1:19, 20

Exposition

Paragraph two goes on to explain that the effectual of call is unconditional and monergistic.

John Hendryx provides this detailed and helpful summary of God’s monergistic work:

Definition:

"In theology, [monergism is] the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in regeneration [the new birth] - that the human will possesses no inclination to holiness until regenerated [born again], and therefore cannot cooperate in regeneration."

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Etymology:

The word "monergism" consists of two main parts. The Greek prefix "mono" signifies "one", "single", or "alone" while the suffix "ergon" means "to work". Taken together it means "the work of one".

Very simply, then, monergism is the doctrine that our new birth (or "quickening") is the work of God, the Holy Spirit alone, with no contribution and without the cooperation of fallen man, since the natural man, of himself, has no desire for God and cannot understand spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14, Rom 3:11,12; Rom 8:7; John 3:19, 20). Man remains resistant to all outward callings of the gospel until the Spirit comes to disarm us, call us inwardly and implant in us new holy affections for God. Our faith comes about only as the immediate result of the Spirit working faith in us in the hearing of the proclamation of the word. But just as God does not force us to see against our will when He gives us physical eyes, so God does not force us to believe against our will when giving us spiritual eyes. God gives the gift of sight and we willingly exercise it.

Application

Monergism strips us of all hope to ourselves, reveals our spiritual bankruptcy apart from Christ, and thus leads us to give all glory to God alone for our salvation. As long as we think we contributed something, even a little bit (like good intentions) then we still think deep down that God saves us for something good he sees in us over our neighbor. But this is clearly not the case. Only Jesus makes us to differ from anyone else. We are all sinners and can boast in nothing before God, including the desire for faith in Christ (Phil 1:29, Eph 2:8, 2 Tim 2:25). For why do we have faith and not our neighbor? Please consider that. Did we make better use of God's grace than he did? Were we smarter? More sensitive? Do some naturally love God? The answer is 'no' to all of the above. It is God's grace in Christ that makes us to differ from our neighbor and God's grace alone that gave rise to our faith, not because we were better or had more insight. No other element but Jesus mercy alone.¹⁵⁷

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

2 Timothy 1:8-9

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

¹⁵⁷ John Hendryx, *A Simple Explanation of Monergism*: https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/monergism_simple.html.

Paragraph 3.

Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who works when, and where, and how He pleases; so also are all elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

John 3:3, 5, 6; John 3:8

Paragraph 4.

Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither will nor can truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men that do not receive the Christian religion be saved; be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess.

Matt. 22:14, 13:20,21; Heb 6:4,5; John 6:44,45,65; 1 John 2:24,25; Acts 4:12; John 4:22, 17:3

Exposition

Paragraphs three and four deal with instrumentality of the Word in mentally incompetent, non-elect, and ignorant.

Speaking on paragraph three, Waldron has noted that he regrets the presence of this paragraph in the confession. In fact, their church notes 2LCF 10:3 as an exception in their adoption of the confession.

Instead, because God's Word does not speak to this matter, Waldron concludes that the Christian must instead be guided by these comforting truths:

- Our knowledge of the character of God
- Our knowledge of the sinful condition of infants
- Our knowledge of the purpose of God

Paragraph four deals with the indispensability of God's effectual call. In the salvation of man, nothing else can avail, save the effectual call of God.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5a

4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Our Puritan Ancestors summarized our necessary response to these truths with these words:

Seeing that God was graciously moved, of his own good Pleasure, to contrive the Redemption of Sinners by his Son Christ; and seeing that Jesus Christ had given Satisfaction to the Divine Justice, and finished his Work; and seeing it is the Office of the Holy Spirit to apply the Benefits of Redemption to miserable Sinners, in the Work of Effectual Calling, be instant with him, that he would be pleased to convince thee of thy Sin and Misery, and to enlighten thee in the Knowledge of Christ, and renew thy Will, and to perswade and enable thee to embrace Jesus Christ, who is freely, and as he is freely offered to thee in the Gospel. Beg earnestly to be taken into the Covenant of Grace, and to be taken into the number of Elect Children.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ *An Explanation of the Assembly of Divines Shorter Catechism*, 95.