

From Your Pastor
A Study of the Shorter Catechism
Effectual Calling

Question 31: What is effectual calling?

Answer: Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, (1) whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, (2) enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, (3) and renewing our wills, (4) he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel. (5) (1) 2 Tim 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:13,14 (2) Acts 2:37 (3) Acts 26:18 (4) Ezek. 36:26,27 (5) John 6:44,45; Phil. 2:13

Scripture Memory: "*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).

An Explanation: God calls sinners to Himself with a general call as well as a specifically *effectual* call. Both are the works of God's Spirit. The general call is a work of God's Spirit in the sphere of common grace and this call can be resisted by sinners (Acts 5:33; 7:51-54). The effectual call is a work of God's Spirit in the sphere of special grace that always results in powerfully making dead and sinful hearts alive (Ezek. 36:26-27; Eph. 2:4-6), and beginning the work of restoring the image of God in man in the sinner's union with Christ (Col. 3:10; Acts 2:37-39). Effectual calling can be illustrated in Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead. Until Jesus called Lazarus, he was dead and unable to respond to Jesus' call. Once Jesus called Him, the dead Lazarus could *not* resist (cf. John 6:44), for the Spirit had made Him alive, and thus He willingly responded to His master's voice (John 11:40-43; cf. John 10:4).

God the Father particularly calls sinners by the Spirit through the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 2 Th. 2:13-14). As the Apostle Paul testifies of the power of God through the Gospel: "... *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...*" (2 Tim. 1:9). Effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit that is not because of our works, but because of God's "*own purpose and grace*" in Christ Jesus. The effectual call is completely the initiating and sovereign work of God, but sinners truly respond to this call. Note four things that the Spirit of God does in this work of effectual calling.

The Spirit convinces sinners of our sin and misery (John 16:8-11). We are convicted of our sins, and realize our need for a Savior (Acts 2:37: "*What shall we do?*"). **The Spirit enlightens our minds** (Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 2:10,12; Eph. 1:17,18). The natural man does not understand the things of God; the unregenerate sinner is blinded to the glory of God and "*darkened in their understanding*" (Eph. 4:18). The enlightening work of the Spirit is described in this way: "... *To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*" (Acts 26:18; cf. 2 Cor. 4:6). **The Spirit renews our wills** (Ezek. 11:19; Phil. 2:13; Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 37:27). By nature our wills are in bondage and slavery to sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 6:16-18). The Spirit frees our wills by His power, so that we will freely choose the grace held out to us in the Gospel of Jesus (Phil. 2:13: "... *To will and to work for His good pleasure*"). The Spirit works powerfully in granting us freedom and we respond with the obedience of faith and repentance (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; cf. Acts 5:31-32): "*But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness*" (Rom. 6:17-18). **The Spirit persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ offered in the Gospel.** This is real Holy-Spiritual power! The apostle describes it as "... *The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might...*" (Eph. 1:19). (John 6:44,45; Ps. 110:3; John 6:37; Rom. 6:16-18).

A Prayer: Father, you predestined me from the foundation of the world. You sent your beloved Son to accomplish my redemption through His blood. In real history, you come by your Spirit to apply that completed redemption on my behalf and effectually call me to yourself by your Sovereign power. Let me live in your love, and dependent upon your power. Amen.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Biggs

"We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

- Acts 5:29-31