

Salvation Belongs to the Lord (Effectual Calling)

How many of you have said, or heard these words from someone else “*He got saved, or She got saved.*” This is often what we say when someone becomes a Christian, when there is an obvious life change. You may tell you friend or your neighbor, “*You just need to get saved.*” Well, in the sermons that follow I want to use the Word of God to explore the topic of SALVATION. I want to expand our understanding of ALL the ways the Bible speaks of salvation, or what must happen for a person to “get saved.” And in this way, I hope God will be bigger, greater, more glorious to us. You may say, I know how someone gets saved, Rom. 10:9 says, “**if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**” This is certainly true. Here, we see CONFESSION with the mouth and BELIEF in heart. But, if we stop here, salvation can become very man-centered. Some may even be inclined to think that in some way we “cooperate” with God to bring about salvation. But, this is not at all what the Bible teaches.

In Ps. 3:8 David praises God for sparing his life during Absalom’s rebellion. He doesn’t take any of the credit, saying, “**Salvation belongs to the Lord.**” When Jonah recalls being delivered from the belly of the big fish, he gives credit to God, saying, “**Salvation belongs to the Lord**” (Jonah 2:9). In Rev. 7:10 a great multitude cries out: “**Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne . . .**” When we think of our salvation, we say the same: “**Salvation belongs to the Lord.**” It is very clear the Bible teaches that salvation, from beginning to end, belongs to God. In eternity past, before the foundations of the world, God desired this salvation. And He didn’t merely desire it. He also planned the means to accomplish this salvation. And, God will finish this great work of salvation as He will bring his people ALL THE WAY TO GLORY. God WILL do this! Look with me for a moment at Rom. 8. Look at v. 18. “**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**” Here we see that our future is glory. It is something we wait for. Look at v. 24: “**For in this hope we are saved.**”

If we look down to the end (in a manner of speaking) with the consummation of all things, which is the end of salvation, and then look backwards to the decree of God in eternity, there are a lot of things that must take place in order for this SALVATION to be accomplished. There are a lot of ways the Bible speaks about salvation, or at least the “parts” or “components” of salvation. Think of an umbrella. We might call it the “umbrella of salvation.” But, there are various parts of this umbrella like the handle and the button that opens the umbrella as well as all the metal rods that hold the umbrella together. All these parts make up the umbrella and cause the umbrella to function properly. In the same kind of way, from beginning to end, salvation is made up of so many parts that must go together in working order. We see this truth in vv. 28-30: “**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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.” Some theologians call these verses the “golden chain” of salvation.

All these parts are bound together. And, all of them find their origin with God. SALVATION BELONGS TO THE LORD! For our purposes, I want to skip past (for now) the motive of God (love) and the will of God in foreknowledge and predestination and begin with HOW this work of God in salvation finds its way to us. If we say, “*Jon got saved*” we must go back a bit and work this out. I want to begin with the topic of “Effectual Calling.” In v. 28, God works all thing for the good of those who are “called” according to his purpose. In v. 30, “And those whom he predestined he also “called.” Today, if you are “saved” it is because God has called you. With this in mind, I have 6 questions to answer: 1) What is the Scriptural basis of the effectual call? 2) Why do I call this an “effectual” call? 3) What are the means God uses in this calling? 4) From what does God call us? 5) To what does God call us? 6) Why teach this doctrine? (Applications)

1. What is the Scriptural basis of the effectual call? I want us to see how many times the Scriptures use this term in the context of salvation. Besides what we’ve seen already in Rom. 8:28-30, I want to mention other places. In Rom. 1:1 Paul says, “**To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints . . .**” 1 Cor. 1:2: “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints . . .” And in v. 9: “**God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**” In vv. 23-24: “**but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and follow to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**” In Gal. 1:15 Paul says: “**But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace . . .**” Eph. 4:1 “**I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . .**” And then in 4:4: “**There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call . . .**” Heb. 9:15: “**Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance . . .**” 2 Tim. 1:8-9: “**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 . . .**” Rev. 17:14: “**They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.**” There are many more verses in the Bible that speak of God’s people as “THOSE WHO ARE CALLED,” those who are “SAVED.” Now, this “calling” is not synonymous with the word “salvation.” But, a person cannot be saved without this “call.” And this is clearly a biblical truth.

2. Why do I call this an “effectual” call? I think the answer is obvious from what I’ve read so far. This “calling” results in salvation. Therefore, this calling is powerful; it is EFFECTUAL. Rom. 8:30, “***those whom He calls, he justifies, and those he justifies he also glorifies.***” For a moment, I want to speak of another kind of call, a call that is not effectual or necessarily

powerful. Some distinguish this “effectual” call from a “general” call, or an “outward” call. In other words, there is a “call” that goes out into the world that does not, in and of itself, result in salvation. So, what is this “general” call? I think of creation. Ps. 19:1, 4: **“The heavens declare the glory of God . . .” “Their voice goes out through all the earth . . .”** I also believe this “call” of creation causes mankind to be without excuse (See Rom. 1). I also think of conscience. Rom. 2:15 says, **“They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.”** Another way we see this general call is in the preaching of the Gospel. When I preach the gospel, I cannot compel a person to believe. All we can do is be faithful to give this call. (if time, give exs here.) Do you see how this call is “general” and not “powerful”?

The “call” of which I speak that leads to salvation is an “internal,” “powerful,” “effectual” call. I think we see the difference with Jesus’ words in Matt. 22:14. He says, **“For many are called, but few are chosen.”** In this context, the “man” are merely called “outwardly,” they are not chosen. I think of calling your cat. You put the call out there. You make it loud, you make it clear, you say it over and over, you make it sweet. And your cat just looks at you, puts up his tail and goes about his business. In this way, you can’t powerfully make your cat come, but the call goes out. Such is the case with creation, with conscience, and with the preaching of gospel.

Now consider another example: the raising of Lazarus from the dead at the word of Jesus. In John 11 one of Jesus’ good friends, Lazarus, died. And 4 days after his death Jesus goes to his tomb. And what does he say? In 11:43 he says, **“Lazarus, come out!”** And what happened? Verse 44: **“The man who had died came out.”** I must ask, *“Was there any possibility Lazarus, the dead man, could have refused this call?”* NO! I have heard it said that if Jesus had not specified Lazarus, every dead person in the history of the world would have been raised! This call is NOT “kitty, kitty, kitty.” This is not the outward call of creation or conscience or preaching! This is the EFFECTUAL call of God: “many are called, but few are chosen.”

I think many get mixed up on these two calls by not distinguishing between them, as the Scriptures do. And if we do this, we see only one call, as if God is calling everyone in the same way and it is up to us to respond. And when we do this, we may attribute salvation to ourselves (in some way). Now, we do respond, we do answer the call, but this topic will come later when I preach on faith and repentance. But, calling precedes faith and repentance; faith and repentance are the work of God’s calling that results in salvation.

3. What are the means of this effectual call? In other words, what does God use to call his people. We see this “effectual” call of God in Scripture. But, uses means to accomplish this calling. Think of building a fence. In my mind, I know I need a fence. But, the fence does not just appear. I must purchase the materials (cement, wood, nails, tools, etc.) In the same kind of way, God uses two particular means in calling his people. (What are they?) 1) The Word of God, particularly the preaching of the Word of God. Do you remember Samuel the Prophet. He was living with the previous judge and prophet Eli. And while he was sleeping, he heard a voice. He

thought it was Eli's voice. But Eli knew better. It was the voice of God, coming to him in power to reveal himself and his will (1 Sam. 3:6)

In the same kind of way, God calls through the preaching of the Word. Paul says, **"Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of Christ"** (Rom. 10:17). In that same chapter Paul says that none one will be saved if they do not hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:14-17). This is why I believe that natural revelation is not enough to save. The Word of God must be preached! This is why Jesus, over and over, says, **"I send you into the world."** Brothers and sisters, this is exactly what I do on Sundays. But, this principle and this command is for ALL believers. If we are not preaching and teaching and sharing the Word of God, there is no means for people to be saved. (This is like the "Fence in my mind." We need the wood, the nails, the tools, etc. Otherwise, no fence.)

2) The Holy Spirit is the 2nd powerful means God uses to call his people. Thomas Watson says the ministry of the Word is the bagpipe; the Spirit is the wind blowing into it that causes the sounds to come out. Preachers knock on the door of men's hearts; the Spirit comes with the key and opens it up. In the context of preaching in Acts 10:44 we read: **"While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word."** In Acts 16:14 we also read: **"One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."**

Brothers and sisters, these are the means God uses to call us: The Word and the Spirit. And they always go together. (Think of my own calling. Think of yours. This is what happened to us!)

4. From what does God call us? I will mention three truths taught in the Bible: 1) God calls us out of our sin. In 1 Pet. 1:13-14 we read: **"Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."** As children of Adam, we are natural sinners. This is our nature. But, God calls us from this former state. He calls us from darkness to light. He takes us from the dungeon of sin and makes us children of the light. 2) God calls us from danger. As God sent his angels to call Lot and his family from the danger of Sodom and Gomorrah, so God calls us in much the same way. Before I became a Christian, I was heading to the greatest of dangers. For those who are Christians and consider where you were heading, you know what I mean. 3) God calls us out of the world. In John 15:18-19 Jesus says, **"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."** And in 17:14-16: **"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."**

5. To what does God call us? I will mention two truths before applying what we've heard this morning. 1) God calls us to holiness. 1 Thess. 4:7: **"For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness."** How do you know you are called? Because over time, you are becoming more and more godly in the way you live your life. 2) God calls us to glory. Do you remember where we started in Romans 8? The goal of salvation is glorification. God will one day complete He began. And, He will lead you to glory. Rom. 8:30 **"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also . . . GLORIFIED!"**

6. Why teach this doctrine? (applications or uses)

1. Teaching this doctrine helps us understand there is more to salvation than just "he got saved." God is working his plan to save his people and bring them to glory. Go back and read Rom. 8 this week in this context, paying particular attention to vv. 29-30.

2. From start to finish, salvation is powerful. EVERYTHING from start to finish depends on the power of God. Everything you do is dependent on the power of God. Paul says in Phil 1:6: **"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."** I think of the words of John who says, **"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"** (1 John 4:4). God's call is a powerful call that will you fast til the end. So, as you fight for holiness, press on. As you sacrifice for the cause of Christ, press on. As you try to love your enemies, press on. As the world seems too much, press on! As you try to love God more and spend more time praying, knowing you fall short, press on! You have been called.

3. At the same time, examine yourself. The Apostle Peter warns with some very important words. Look with me to 2 Pet. 1:5-11: **"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"** (2 Peter 1:5-11). The fruits of the Christian life ARE the fruit of God's effectual call. So, test and see if these qualities are "yours." If not repent, look unto Christ!

4. The power of God in "calling" is meant to display his work, not ours, his greatness, not ours. Yes, we "call upon the name of the Lord." But, God gets the glory. And, This power, this effectual call, depends on the entire Trinity. God is the One who calls, Christ is the One who does the work to accomplish this calling, and the Holy Spirit applies this calling.