

Salvation Belongs to the Lord (Effectual Call Part 3: Does Jesus Teach Effectual Calling)

Today, I want to continue our theme of effectual calling. I believe we have seen clearly that the Bible distinguishes between a general call that goes out through creation, conscience, and the preaching of the gospel. And though this call renders sinful men and women without excuse, this call is not effectual; in and of itself, this call does not lead to salvation. In order for someone to be saved, in order for the mind and the heart to hear and believe there must be a powerful call, another call, a call that comes with great power, power that leads to salvation. (Example: Kitty, kitty, kitty, vs. Lazarus come forth) As we've seen from Rom. 8:28-30: **"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."** I want to continue this week with the question, *"Does Jesus teach this effectual call?"* Yes! We saw this last week from John 10 as Jesus, **"My sheep hear my voice and they come to me."** Today, I want to look primarily at John 6 to continue this theme. I have two truths affirming the effectual call of God as taught by Jesus.

1. The call of God must be effectual because it includes a specific number who are called. (All) Now, I do not make this truth up. I get it directly from the teaching of Jesus. Look with me to **John 6:36-40**. In this chapter Jesus speaks with many people as the crowds come from all over the countryside to hear him teach. And there are many unbelieving Jews in the audience. Jesus had given the people a great sign, the miracle of feeding the five thousand. And in v. 28 they ask him, **"What must we do, to be doing the works of God."** After seeing his miracles and hearing him teach, they want to know what Jesus says. And since Jesus had just fed them, he starts talking to them about food. He says there is a food that will perish and there is food that will lead to eternal life (v. 27). And so they refer back to the time of Moses and say, **"Moses gave us bread from heaven . . . What sign will you do to show us your authority?"** And instead of giving them another sign, he says, **"I . . . AM the BREAD of HEAVEN."** In v. 35 Jesus says, **"I . . . AM the bread of life; whoever comes to ME shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."**

Brothers and sisters, the mana, the bread in the desert was physical food that fed the people. Today, Jesus is the real deal. He IS the true nourishment we need. He is the true substance to which the mana in the desert point. And "to do the works of God" or to have "eternal life" Jesus says in v. 53: **"Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the Living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me."** Brothers and sisters Jesus did not need to give them a sign. HE WAS THE SIGN! He was standing before them. And he says, **"Believe in me!"** Today,

there is only one way to do the works of God; there is only one way to have eternal life. A person must believe in the Son of God. As the Apostle John says, **“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”** (John 20:31).

Now, back to our truth concerning the effectual call of God . . . I must ask WHO believes? We are not universalists. Every person in the world does not believe in the Son of God. So, WHO believes? Now, we don’t know who will believe and who not believe. We must sow the seed abundantly and leave this work to God. But Jesus, knowing the hearts of those who asked the question about the sign, says in vv. 36-40: **“But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.”** Why? The answer comes in vv. 37-40: **“All that the Father gives me will come to me, . . .”** Here Jesus specifies those who believe, those whom the Father gives to the Son. And then he continues: **“and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”** And then tells us WHY he came. In v. 38: **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”** Do you remember from last week in John 10? He tells the religious leaders, **“My sheep hear my voice”** (call) **“and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life”** *“My Father has given them to me.”* (John 10:22-30)

So, who believes? Those who “hear” and “respond” to the God’s call. This is not a random number (though we do not know it). It is specific! Jesus knows his own and the calls them and the come. So how do we know someone is effectually called? They BELIEVE Jesus is the Son of God. They follow him. And I must ask, *“Why do others walk away and not believe?”* Look over at John 8:45-47 for our answer: **“But because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. 46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?”** In v. 47 Jesus answers his question (and ours): **“Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”** As we will see later with Nicodemus, Jesus says, if you will inherit eternal life, **“you must be born from above, born from God”** (John 3). And those who are powerfully “born from above” are those the Father gives to the Son. This is a specific number. Brothers and sisters, YES, we must believe. YES, we must call on the name of the Lord to be saved. YES, we must repent of our sins. YES there must be a conversion. This is what Christians do to be saved. But, as we’ve seen, there must be an effectual “call” if we are to be saved. And I have given very little explanation besides just reading the words of Jesus. God is sovereign! Man is responsible! I am merely being honest in my attempt to deal with some very simple, clear, teachings from Jesus. I admit there is a tension (even a great tension). And many preachers try to explain away this tension in their use of “free will,” which usually results in a very man-centered understanding of salvation and what it means to be “called” by God. I choose to live with the tension! Salvation Belongs to the Lord!

2. The call of God must be effectual because it cannot fail. I think we've already seen this truth in John 10. Jesus' sheep hear his voice and they come. Jesus also taught this truth in John 6 when he says in v. 40 that God's will is to raise a particular people from the dead on the last day. In other words, those He effectually calls, he raises them up on the last day. We've seen this also with the Apostle Paul in 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."**

Well, for a moment, let's look at John 6:41-51: **"So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' 42 They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."**

Let me remind us of the truth I am making. The effectual call of God cannot fail. We saw this in our example two weeks ago with the picture of Lazarus. Jesus called him from the dead. We saw this last week as Jesus' sheep hear his voice and they follow him. We saw this also a moment ago in John 6:37: **"All that the Father gives to me will come to me . . ."** This is a specific number that will not fail to come. Now, in this passage we see another aspect. God "draws" those who are called. Now, I believe this "drawing" of God is synonymous with God's effectual call. This "drawing" is not like the general call; it is powerful and always works. We see the same word used with the woman at the well in John 4, to "draw" water from the well. When I drop a good bucket down into a well full of water and bring it forth, I will always bring forth water. It is the same with our "kitty kitty" call vs. Lazarus. I can't just "draw" my cat. But when Jesus speaks to Lazarus, he is certainly "drawn" from the dead. This means God's effectual call does not fail!

Let me give one more reason from this passage to show that God's effectual call cannot fail. It is the fact that those God calls will be "raised on the last day." Look again at v. 44: **"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."** We see this truth also in v. 51 (and the rest of the Bible). Jesus says those who believe in him, those who **"eat of his flesh"** will have eternal life. In other words, those whom God effectually draws have eternal life (now) and will be raised on the last day. This means God's effectual call cannot fail.

With this in mind, let me make two comments.

Perspectives. I like to think in terms of perspectives. What do I mean by this? Well, from one perspective, it is true that God is sovereign in salvation. God is the ONE who works and brings things to pass. Rom. 8:29-30: ***“Those whom he foreknew, he predestined, he called,*** etc. But, from another perspective, man is responsible. Over and over in the Bible we see invitations for sinners to “*come,*” to “*believe,*” to “*trust*” God, if they are to be saved. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.*” Jesus says, “follow me; sin no more.” This is our responsibility. This is also true. There will always be tensions in the Bible. It is ok to live with tensions. We must never forget that we are not God. We are creatures. And we are always thinking through things and doing our best to understand the Scriptures. And, often over time with much seeking and digging, we do come to more and more understanding.

This can be a difficult topic. To the world and to many Christians, the fact that God doesn’t call all in the same way may seem unfair. But, no matter what we think, we see the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation. “Salvation Belongs to the Lord!” Let me finish this morning with a passage in Rom. 9. Paul is speaking about Jacob and Esau, particularly God’s blessing of Jacob and not Esau. In 9:9-13 we read: **“For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” And then some say in v. 14: “What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part?” To which Paul answers: “By no means!” And then in vv. 15-19: “For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.”**

At the end of the day “Salvation Belongs to the Lord!” As Eph. 2:8-10 says, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** Brothers and sisters, God does not have to save anyone! But he does! This is why He sent his Son, the Lord Jesus, that we would be saved!