

Effectual Call

- Definition
 - “That act of divine power, mediated through the proclaimed word, by which the Spirit illumines darkened minds, softens stubborn wills, and inclines contrary affections toward the living God, thus leading the unregenerate to trust Christ in a saving relationship.”¹

- Biblical teaching

- There are 2 different “calls” as it pertains to salvation:

- The **universal call** to salvation by which all are commanded to repent

Isaiah 55:1 “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Acts 17:30 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent”

Matt 22:14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

→ Not everyone will respond savingly to the universal call.

- The **effectual or special call** to salvation by which only the elect will repent

Romans 8:28, 30 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose...³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

¹ Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, p. 221.

Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called

John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

Acts 9:1-8 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ² and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He *said*, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, ⁶ but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." ⁷ The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

Acts 16:12-14 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a *Roman* colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. ¹⁴ A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

→ Everyone will respond savingly to God's effectual call. All whom God calls with his effectual call will be saved.

- Described
 - The effectual call to salvation is needed if anyone is to be saved
 - The reason for this is because of our naturally depraved condition
 - In our spiritually dead condition, we were not running towards God, but away from him:

Romans 3:10-11 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD

- Since none seek for God, we must be sought out and saved by God's doing.
- The initiating of this is God's effectual call to salvation whereby the sinner is saved.
- All who are elect/predestined before the foundation of the world will experience God's effectual call

Romans 8:30 these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- "Those in time effectually called to a relation with Christ are identical to the number of elect believers – i.e., those in eternity past chosen by grace."²
 - John Calvin: "The [special] call is dependent upon election and accordingly is solely a work of grace."³
 - Charles Spurgeon: "There is a fountain filled with blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall constrain them to come."⁴
 - Every seeking soul who comes to Christ shall become a finder. This is so, because behind the seeking soul is the all-powerful God who enables that person to search and to find.⁵
- Timing
 - The timing of effectual call differs from the timing of election (before creation) and propitiation and the atonement (when Christ died on the

² Demarest, p. 216.

³ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Book 3, 24, 1).

⁴ *God's Will and Man's Will*, Metropolitan Tabernacle, 8:185.

⁵ Demarest, p. 215.

cross).

- God's effectual call occurs the moment which he decrees in history. Only he knows when he will call the elect sinner to salvation.
 - It is the moment that the previously unsaved sinner receives the Holy Spirit and is thereby born again, or regenerated.
 - Therefore, we cannot plan our own effectual call. We cannot cause our effectual call. It is solely the work of God's sovereign grace.
 - At the moment of effectual call, the previously spiritually dead sinner is made alive in Christ for the first time in their life, such that they will immediately put faith in Christ for salvation.
- Blessing
 - Without God's effectual call unto salvation, no one could be saved. We would remain dead in sin (Eph 2:1-3), darkened in our minds and hearts .
 - By God's sovereign grace in his effectual call, he ensures that we are savingly brought to him. This he does by his grace and power, not ours. All whom are called will respond by putting faith in Christ.
- Recommended resource:
 - *The Cross and Salvation*, Bruce Demarest, chpt. 5 (Crossway, 1997).
 - Sermon:⁶ John MacArthur, *The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call*, 90-296, September 18, 2005

⁶ <https://www.gty.org/sermons/90-296/the-doctrine-of-gods-effectual-call>