

EFFECTUAL CALLING

When Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. (Luke 19:5)

What if God planned absolutely everything, - He planned the depth of the seas, the heights of the mountains, the vastness of the polar caps, the huge areas of the jungles, the animals and every living creature, the unfolding events of history, - ... what if God had planned all these, and much, much more ... Do you *believe* God planned it all? Do you believe He planned for the kangaroos to be in Australia, the elephants to be in Africa and India, and the sparrows to be in Scotland? Do you believe He planned for the worms to live in the soil, the fish to live in the sea? Do you believe He planned for the snail to live in his shell, and the birds to be born in the nest? ... Do you believe that God has an intricate knowledge of all His creation and an intimacy for everything He has made?

I believe He has. I believe there is not a little bird in the nest that He doesn't know about. I believe there is not a single frogspawn He didn't plan. Nothing would *be* without God being behind it. God is at the commencement and instigation of absolutely everything He created.

Of course, this could get us into a 'problem' sometimes: is God responsible for the little baby born to the thirteen year old girl? Well, you see, if you believe that all life comes from God ... then, regardless of the circumstances, you have got to say, "Yes, the life in that little baby, - despite the circumstances surrounding his/her birth, - was gifted by God". *God is the source of all life.*

Now ... if God is the source and power behind all life, is He also the power behind the giving of spiritual life? Where does true spiritual life come from? According to the Bible ... true, living spiritual life comes through Jesus Christ *from God* alone. God sent Jesus so that we might have spiritual life, - God is the Instigator, the Source, and the Fountain out of which flows 'the streams of living water'. Apart from God there is no real spiritual life; we weren't born with this life, - it is a gift of God, Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

Can you demand it? Is there something about you that entitles you to it? Do you have an automatic right that God is *bound* to offer it to you? Let's look at a frightening and horrifying truth God's Word sets before us ...

NOT ALL WILL BE SAVED

* No-one here this evening disagrees with that. We all know and regret the fact that not all will be saved. It is not that it is not possible ... for if God had set His mind to save all, He could have and would have.

* Nothing can hinder the purposes of God! ... But it is the way God has worked it out; the Biblical fact of the matter is: **not all will be saved**.

* We don't take any delight in saying that ... but it is what God's Word says, [Mt. 7:14 narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it](#).

* The Buddhist follows an agenda that cannot save, the teachings of Islam can never save, the doctrines of Roman Catholicism and Protestant liberalism cannot save. Good works of man's righteousness have never and will never save a soul.

* The Bible teaches plainly and sadly that **not all will be saved**.

* When Saul was sent out to confront the Amalekites ... which of them and how many of them did God tell him to save? ... [I Sam. 15: 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. 3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.](#)

* They had all, - every last one of them, - come under the wrath of God.

* What about the [infant and suckling](#)? Surely a God of love didn't mean for Saul to slaughter the little babies just born!/? Read on ... [v.7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword](#). Yes, he smote them *all*.

* This is an awful God ... sending out the armies of Israel to ransack the villages and towns and even slaughter the innocent, harmless little babies! I have heard people deny God's Word by saying, "No! The babies have got to arrive at the 'age of understanding' before they are liable to be judged by the wrath of God".

* But no, you'll not find that false lie anywhere in Scripture. God's judgement is upon every human being with exception. We are all born under sin and under wrath ... and the most difficult part of this doctrine that I have had to learn to come to terms with is item 3, "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who works when, and where, and how He pleases. The same is true of all elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called through the preaching of the Gospel".

* You see, because a Biblical doctrine doesn't fit neatly with how we think it should work, (or how we would want it to work) ... we don't have the right to formulate our own theologies:

1. "The children *weren't* slaughtered."
2. "*That's* the God of wrath of the Old Testament, - He *changed* to become the God of love in the New Testament!"

* But, you've got to take God's Word as it stands. ... Consider Pharaoh? The Bible says that God [hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them \(Ex. 7:13\)](#) and he refused to let the people go. You read the same thing in [v.22;8:15,19,32;9:7,12,35,etc.](#) *God* hardened his heart. His heart was already dead in sin ... but God hardened even further!

* When the children of Israel wanted to pass through a particular region in the wilderness we read, [Dt. 2:30 But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate.](#)

* In the New Testament, Jesus quoted the words of Isaiah concerning the crowds round Him, [Jn. 12:39 they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted.](#)

* Paul similarly preached, [Rom. 11: Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded 8 \(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear\).](#)

* It is a clear and unequivocal *and unarguable* Biblical truth that **not all will be saved.**

NOT ALL WILL BE CALLED

* This is a point of doctrine over which many disagree. However, it is a fundamental doctrine of the Reformation and of pure Baptist teaching.

* The Arminian says that all have an equal opportunity to be saved. It's up to the sinner alone whether he will believe or not. God can only do so much, - the rest depends on the sinner. When the Gospel preacher makes his invitation everyone under the sound of his voice has the equal opportunity to be saved. All it takes is for them to raise their hand, or come up to the front, and say the prayer!

* But that is not altogether what the Bible says. In John chapter two Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover and there was a group of individuals who were awestruck with Him ... and the Bible says [v.23 many believed in his name.](#)

* *Believers! Christians! ... followers of Christ.* For all intents and purposes, these people were gloriously saved! But no, wait a minute, [v.24 Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, 25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.](#)

* But surely they believed in Him, - He had an obligation to save them ... there and then! All we have to do is believe and Christ will save.

* Now, the devil is tremendously subtle, - he takes a truth and he moves it *slightly* in his own direction ... and it becomes no longer the pure truth of God's Word.

* ... It is the testimony of the Church today and down through the ages that many have a form of faith in a pseudo-gospel that does not have Christ at its centre. There are many who say they are Christians but they have no interest in the Word of God or in the place of prayer ... what does the Bible say, [By their fruits ye shall know them!](#)

* Many through the ages have '*believed*' but yet have not undergone a life-changing experience ... and consequently it is a salvation of man, rather than of God. *They are consistent in their failing testimony!*

* The old argument was: "Because I'm a Jew/Hebrew/Israelite, I'm a member of God's Family". ... "Because I was brought up in a Christian country and taken along to Sunday School and church that makes me a Christian." "Because I prayed the prayer I'm saved."

* No, said Paul, [Rom. 9:6 they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.](#)

* Malachi spoke about the remnant of God's particular choice, [3:16 they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.](#)

* The remnant ... God will save every last one of them. It is blatantly obvious that the Bible says that in the plan of God **not all will be called.**

* [Who then can be saved?](#) Jesus answered this question that was asked by His disciples, [Mk. 10:27 With men it is impossible, but not with God.](#)

* What we are considering this evening is the doctrine of *irresistible grace*, God's *effectual call* to the individual sinner. It is a tremendously God-glorifying doctrine.

* It takes nothing away from Him and instead credits Him with all the glory as He Sovereignly calls the individual believer to salvation by name.

* The Italian Puritan, Francis Turretin (1623-87) said, “This calling is an act of the grace of God in Christ by which He calls men dead in sin and lost in Adam through the preaching of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, to union with Christ and to the salvation obtained in Him.” **Not all will be saved, not all will be called ...**

WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?

- * None can be saved unless God intervenes and calls them personally!
- * There are two types of calls. One is an ‘external call’ and the other is the ‘internal call’ (or the ‘effectual call’).
- * The ‘*external* call’ is the call for *all* to be saved. It is the general invitation given by the Gospel to the unsaved. It is accompanied with pleading and earnestness. It is supported by sincere prayer flowing from the hearts of those who love Christ and their fellow-man.
- * When I preach the Gospel and tell sinners they need to be saved I am presenting the ‘external call’ ... to all who will listen. That is *my* responsibility, - I cannot save anyone, but I must make the Gospel available to all.
- * It is a call that sometimes brings tears to the eyes of the unsaved and a rumbling in their spirits that they should come to saving faith in Christ.
- * This ‘external call’ through the lips of the preacher shows them their need of the Saviour. It confronts them! But then ... they turn and walk away ... time and time again ... just like the young man who came to speak with Jesus and asked that most important of questions, [Lk. 18:18 Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?](#) The Bible even makes a point of saying, [Mk. 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, ... the young man went away grieved and in sorrow. Jesus put it like this, Mt. 22:14 many are called, but few are chosen.](#)
- * The ‘external call’ is extended to all in every place, even, - said Paul to the savages out in the jungle, [Rom. 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.](#)
- * Jesus said, [Lk. 7:32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.](#)
- * What a terrible thing to reject God! Rabbi Duncan, “Men evangelized cannot go to hell but over the bowels of God’s mercies. They must wade to it through the blood of Christ, and trample that blood under foot”.

* **Who then can be saved?** The Bible never says the ‘whosoever’ can be saved; but the Bible says the ‘whosoever *believeth*’ shall be saved ... and sinners only believe when God works to lift the blindness from their eyes, the hardness from the heart and He breaths into them the life of the Holy Spirit.

* Rest assured, you can no more contribute to your spiritual birth than you were able to contribute to your physical birth!

* It is an act *all* of grace, - pure, sovereign, saving grace of God, [Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.](#)

* Paul preached, [Rom. 9:11 \(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;\) 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.](#)

* “But God, that’s not fair! It’s not fair that You should soften the hearts of some to salvation, while You harden the hearts of others!”

* But God replies, [Rom. 9:20 O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. “Who do you think you are that you can dictate to Me and tell Me how I should or shouldn’t save!”](#)

* And Paul brings his readers to Isaiah, [Rom. 10:20 I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. God saves those whom He wills, - if He didn’t, nobody would be saved! ... 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.](#)

* Man’s salvation comes by the effectual call of God alone. Such is the power of Him that called for the heavens and the earth to be created and it was done ... that the sinner is *made obedient* to obey His command.

* It is an awful doctrine, - emanating from blasphemy, (‘the act of depriving God of His character and power’) - to think that the creature can say to his Creator, “No! I won’t have You to Lord over me! I won’t allow You, God!” How foreign to the God of the Bible! ... Such is the irresistible power of His grace, as Isaiah said, [46:11 yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. Eph. 1:11 the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.](#)

- * Nothing in or of man can hinder the hand of God when He calls! The plan He drew up in eternity will *not* be turned by a sinner saying no!
- * ...But the sinner who God sets out to save will not be able to escape, - not even if he/she hides in the pub from dawn to dusk, or languishes in the darkest and most sinful cave!
- * Paul wrote, [Ephesians 2:13 now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.](#)
- * You come to see, - through the grace of God, - the guilt and filth of your sin and the danger and defilement of travelling along a road without Christ. You see the vanity and the emptiness of worldliness. You see your absolute need of Christ and you come in repentance to Him.
- * He changes your mind, He changes your will, He changes your direction. He changes you outside and inside ... and everything in between. The promise of God comes to you, [Ezek. 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.](#) It is a *spiritual resurrection* of the soul! A new creation of the soul. You are God's peculiar and perfect workmanship, - a new creature in Christ, - as new as Adam when God created him in the garden!
- * We were all by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3) ... destined for eternal punishment in Hell, but by mercy and grace God *called* us, breathed into us and made us alive in Christ. We would be dead in sin if He hadn't done it!
- * God calls ... regardless of the stench of our sin; Christ paid such a high price ... the tremendous price that God demanded *had* to be paid. Nothing less would do!
- * God therefore can save any whom He chooses ... out of any circumstance of life. Nothing hinders His work. [I Cor. 4:15 in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.](#)
- * When does it happen? It happens at the time when God decides for it to happen, - not before it and not after it. It is [the day of salvation.](#) *He* gains all the glory. It's a holy calling, a Heavenly calling, a high calling and glorious calling.
- * He calls ... not always with a loud voice, - sometimes it's a gentle whisper ... but all the power of God is *in* the invitation! No-one else might have heard it ... but you heard it ... because God was bringing you to salvation, the place where you would believe.
- * He called you with an irresistible call and He worked in you that you would obey, - of your own will that He gifted you with.

* Yes, in this way, you chose and you decided to believe ... but simply because that was as a consequence of the work He was doing in your soul. ... To say anything else is to take the glory of your salvation away from Him. You chose Him simply on the basis He chose you!

* Also, to say that you would be able to reject Him is robbing Him of the glory and denying Him of His power because you're making yourself more powerful than His call.

CONCLUSION

* I'm sure you can detect that I could go on for another while, - it is a great doctrine of God ... the effectual call!

* It is not only in our *Baptist Confession of Faith*, ... its source is in the Bible and in the mind of Almighty God. It owes its origin and its glory to none save the majesty of the Sovereign God! *Fantastic!*

* Drawing to a close ... I haven't quoted Spurgeon yet 😊 so I'll finish with him now, "My soul, stand thou at that sacred fountain-head, and adore and magnify, for ever and ever, God, even our Father, who hath loved us! In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in the acorn cup; long ere the echoes awoke the solitudes; before the mountains were brought forth; and long ere the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures. Before there was any created being—when the ether was not fanned by an angel's wing, when space itself had not an existence, when there was nothing save God alone—even then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity, His bowels moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart, and then were they dear to His soul. Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world—even from eternity! and when He called me by His grace, He said to me, "I have loved *thee* with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."