

Q31. What is effectual calling?

A31. **Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.**

Scripture References: 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Ephesians 1:18-19; Acts 2:37, 26:18; Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26-27; John 6:44-45; Ephesians 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Philippians 2:13

DQ1: Whose work is effectual calling?

DQ2: What does the work of God's Spirit look like in effectual calling? Describe the five areas of the work of God's Spirit in effectual calling.

DQ3: What does the first area, convincing us of our sin and misery, look like?

DQ4: What does the second area, enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, look like?

DQ5: What does the third area, renewing our wills, look like?

DQ6: What does the fourth area, persuading us to embrace Jesus Christ, look like?

DQ7: What does the fifth area, enabling us to embrace Jesus Christ, look like?

DQ8: What is the cost of effectual calling to us?

DQ9: What is the work of man in effectual calling?

Notes:

We already know that effectual calling is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. As we discussed, effectual calling is a redemptive and relational concept so it can only be properly understood in such a context. Therefore, it would be improper to say that God has effectually called me to shop or travel. God's effectual calling of us into the redemptive relationship with Him does shape our behavior, however. So, let us examine how effectual calling works.

A while back, we discussed the doctrine of total depravity. Sinners suffer from total depravity. Total depravity is a condition of being gripped by sin and sinful nature such that man cannot and will not acknowledge his sin. When God calls a sinner, the dead heart is quickened to life as faith works in him. Effectual calling of God insures that the sinner becomes acutely aware of his sin and misery resulting from it. This is the beginning of the process from our perspective. Without this triggering event, no man could possibly come to know God.

When we become awoken to our sin and misery, we begin to see the ugliness of our nature and behavior in light of the holy God. The contrast and juxtaposition is so great that we can only declare "woe to me" or "what a wretched man that I am." When we finally come to realize our sin and misery, we can safely say God has called me. So, effectual calling of God awakens the sinner to the reality of his true condition. This is a wonderful start.

Effectual calling then takes the sinner to a point of seeing the light of God. He finally emerges from darkness into light, i.e., comes to know the person and work of Jesus Christ. To know Christ is to have entered into a relationship with Him. It means that we are touched and transformed by who Christ is and what Christ has done. We, not only come to hate our sin nature and misery brought by it, but we also come to delight in the renewing of our mind in Christ.

This transformation refers to the change of the worldview. Effectual calling allows us to see sin as sin. This is a complete overhaul of the worldview in man. So, when the sinner views the world with a changed worldview, he is enlightened and delighted because he is now filled with the worldview of Christ, not the devil. This is what the Bible describes changing the heart of stone to the heart of flesh, showing a dramatic and profound change.

When the mind is renewed, it moves the will of man. The will of man guides his behavior. The sinner no longer desires to live the prior life as a sinner because he has tasted the goodness and beauty of Jesus Christ. The will of man is like the rudder that guides and shifts the direction of a ship. The sinner now has a new picture and vision in his mind. His life is beginning to be filled with renewed sense of hope and excitement. The sinner discovers that the sin issue, which has been weighing him down has been, removed by the person and works of Jesus Christ.

With the renewing of the will, the sinner experiences the love of God and how compelling Christ's love is. And, the sinner is persuaded by effectual calling that it is okay to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ. While the sinner recognizes that he does not deserve the opportunity to embrace the Holy One, he will embrace Him because God's Spirit will relentlessly pursue and persuade him.

In persuading the sinner, no brute force is used. Think about it! God does the work, as we learned before, by planting the seed of faith, which then allows the man to respond. As he responds, he sees the ugliness of sin and misery. At the same time, he is hit by the brightness of the light of Christ as Paul was stricken by it. In that light, the man's mind is changed because of the impact of the light. The man's will is then tamed and turns to the source of that light. He is drawn to it for it is beautiful and magnificent. In fact, the universe declares it. The sinner knows that he can now safely run to the Savior.

Finally, the sinner will come to the point of embracing Jesus Christ with his whole heart, mind, soul and strength. He is only too delighted to embrace Jesus. After all, he was lonely and in search of very elusive meaning of life. When the light bulb goes off, there is a whole different world in Christ. That world is so much better than the world from which the sinner came. It is like a little child who runs to the mother and embraces her after being scared off by something at night.

All is done by the work of God's Spirit as He applies the effectual calling to each and everyone in Christ. Because Christ has paid for and purchased the redemption, it is offered to us free of charge. It is a gift of immense proportion. We can never pay it back. That is why it is only possible by grace.

Effectual calling means that God's redemptive work and desire has touch the heart and every time that happens, the sinner will respond without fail. God will pursue His elect and close the "deal" or

consummate the transaction with His elect. Without effectual calling, sinners do not stand a chance at redemption.