

Is. 55:1 – *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come ye to the waters . . .*

Matt. 11:28 – *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden . . .*

This is an open invitation to all. It is an honor that God should condescend to us in this way, but we are able to refuse this call.

God's Summons

In another sense, the gospel is a summons. When a lord calls his servants (cf. Lk. 19:13), it is not merely an invitation. When a judge summons a witness to appear in court, it is more than an invitation. If you do not appear on said day at said time, a warrant for your arrest will be issued. Even so, God's call to repent and believe is a summons.

Act 17:30 – *God . . . commands all men every where to repent . . .*

When a king invites you to a banquet, it is also a summons. It would be advisable to be present (cf. Matt. 22:1-7)! To reject the invitation of the King of kings, is rebellion of the highest order.

Man's Response

Many who hear the gracious call of God ignore it, openly reject it, or even mock it. Cain rejected it (Gen. 4:3-8); the Jewish nation refused it (Matt. 11:20-24); Felix put it off (Acts 24:24-25). Those who refuse it are proud (1 Tim. 6:3-4), blind (2 Cor. 4:4), and ignorant (Eph. 4:18). But some meekly receive God's call, believing in the Lord and repenting of their sin. What can be said of these? The Bible teaches that where the

invitation is genuinely received, the external call of the gospel is accompanied by an internal, efficacious work of the Holy Spirit. God opens their heart to receive the truth (Acts 16:14). This is the effectual call.

Joh 10:25-27 – *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

When Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb, he came! When God calls His sheep, they come. They come because He quickens them (Eph. 2:4-5).

THE EFFECTUAL CALL OF THE ELECT

Rom. 8:30 – *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also **called**: and whom he **called**, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Notice here the unbreakable chain from those predestinated to those glorified. It is the same group. Not one predestined soul is lost. Everyone that God calls, in the sense here referred to by Paul, is justified, and everyone justified is glorified. It is obvious that the call here is not merely a reference to the universal call of the gospel. Rather, it is speaking of the certain, internal work of the Holy Spirit that accompanies the outward hearing of the Gospel.

Charles Hodge commented on this verse:

Those whom he had thus foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . he effectually calls, i.e., leads by the external invitation of the gospel, and by the efficacious operation of his grace, to the end to which they are destined.

Jesus spoke of the same truth:

John 6:37 – *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

John 6:44 – *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . .*

For this reason, C.E.B. Cranfield wrote:

[Effectual] calling and conversion might be likened to the obverse and reverse of the same coin.

God's effectual call always results in the conversion of the soul. For this reason God's children are often referred to in the New Testament as those who have been called (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:9).

God Calls the Elect in Time

Although God's elect are chosen from all eternity (Eph. 1:4), they are called in time. All are born dead in sin, including the elect, and remain so until God calls them. God calls some as children, some in old age, but all, in time, will hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him.

God Calls the Elect Through His Word

God calls His children through the Word of God, whether preached or read. Therefore, the elect are known by their response to the Word of God, a response that is summed up in one word: *faith*.

Rom. 10:17 – So then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

(1) The Elect Hear the Word of God

Only God's elect hear the Word in the sense that they truly understand it. Jesus said:

John 8:43, 47 – *Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

(2) The Elect Believe the Word of God

God's children not only understand His Word, they believe it, unto salvation.

2 Thess. 2:13-14 – *God hath . . . chosen you to salvation through . . . belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel . . .*

(3) The Elect Receive the Word of God

That is, they meekly submit to it as the authority in their lives (1 Thess. 2:13).

James 1:21 – *. . . receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*

(4) The Elect Obey the Word of God

True faith in the Word of God can never be divorced from obedience. The called of God obey the truth because they believe it.

1 Pet. 1:22-23 – *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit . . . being born again . . . by the word of God . . .*

(5) The Elect Continue in the Word of God

God's chosen people do not continue in His Word for a time, but persevere unto the

end, bearing fruit (cf. Matt. 13:19-23).

John 8:31 – *. . . If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*

God Calls the Elect Out of the World

Through the Word of God, the elect are called out of the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18), out of sin (2 Cor. 7:1), and out of darkness (1 Pet. 2:9). For this reason, the true people of God are known as those who separate themselves from the world, hate sin and evil, and abhor error and false teaching.

God Calls the Elect unto Himself

Through the Word of God, God's people are called unto fellowship with His Son (1 Cor. 1:9), unto holiness (1 Thess. 4:7), unto light (1 Pet. 2:9), unto glory and virtue (2 Pet. 1:3), unto eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12), and unto His eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10). Therefore, His people are known as those who love Christ, walk in holiness and purity of heart, delight in truth, and long for eternity.

Seeing that all these things are accomplished by God in His children through the Word of God, why would any true shepherd of God's people concern himself with anything other than preaching, teaching, explaining, and proclaiming the written Word of God? This work, accompanied by prayer, in the spirit of humility, is the only means ordained by God for the effectual calling of His people.

Acts 6:4 – *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

THE EFFECTUAL CALL OF GOD

By Dean Good

When churches and pastors resort to worldly gimmicks, marketing schemes, carnal music, business strategies, emotional appeals, and other such skulduggery, in order to 'lure' people to the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is evident that they have rejected the Biblical doctrine of the effectual call of God. For the Bible teaches that God effectually calls His children through the preaching of the Word of God.

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21).

THE UNIVERSAL CALL OF THE GOSPEL

God calls all people to be reconciled to Himself through the gospel. This call is both an invitation and a summons.

God's Invitation

In one sense, God's call to us in the gospel is an invitation (cf. Lk. 14:13). An invitation is generally considered to be an honor from the standpoint of the one invited. When a couple invites you to the wedding of their son or daughter, it is a reflection of their esteem for you as a friend or relative. If you are invited to the home of an important statesman or a celebrity, it is considered to be an honor. But our attendance at such an event is optional. We may refuse. God's call to all mankind is first of all an invitation: