

Introduction-

As we began Systematic Theology 2 several weeks ago, we began by focusing on God's provision of salvation in Christ.

We first studied His person and then studied His work. Here we covered the atonement Christ provides- *the sacrifice of Himself*- its necessity, its nature, its perfection, and its extent. We then looked at Christ's work through the lens of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King.

This is known as Christology.

Over the past two weeks we have looked more closely at the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

This is known as Pneumatology.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked features of the Spirit's work is how He was present and active in Christ's earthly ministry. The incarnate Christ's life and work cannot be understood apart from the Spirit's empowering. The Spirit was integrally involved in Christ's conception, baptism, temptations, preaching, mighty works, death, and resurrection. These Christological mysteries or moments are pneumatological or Spirit-empowered moments as well- demonstrating the indispensable working of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ.

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Now, if we were to step back and take in what we have covered thus far in this class- *what we see*, to borrow from John Murray, is none other than *redemption accomplished*.

And this understanding redemption accomplished, as we looked more closely at what the triune God has done in the person and work of Christ, sets the stage for a better understanding of redemption *applied*- that is, *the application of Christ's saving work to sinners like ourselves*. And that will be the scope of our study over the next few weeks.

As we seek to bridge the gap between redemption accomplished and redemption applied, the study of the Holy Spirit is actually quite fitting. As I just mentioned, the Holy Spirit empowers Christ's obedience as Christ himself *accomplishes* our salvation. But the work of the Holy Spirit doesn't stop there.

The Holy Spirit is then poured out by the ascended Christ himself on all those who believe. And as Christ pours out the Spirit, He brings us into this union with Christ

Himself, making us partakers of Christ of all the saving benefits that are ours in Him. *This is redemption applied.*

Redemption applied will be the lion's share of what we will cover over the remaining weeks in this section of systematic theology.

It is here that we seek to answer the question-*what does it mean to be joined to be savingly joined to Christ? What happens when we are savingly joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit?*

*Christian thinkers throughout the centuries often discuss these matters under the heading of the ordo salutis, a Latin expression meaning "order of salvation". Some of you are familiar with this expression. **When we use these terms we simply mean those events that occur in every believer's life by virtue of his union with Christ, as Christ saving work in applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit.***

Sometimes the order of salvation is treated a little differently from one theologian to another- but for our purposes we will be using this basic approach:

We will cover-

1. *Election, effectual calling, and regeneration (which are today's subject matter)*
2. *Faith, repentance and justification*
3. *Adoption*
4. *Sanctification and perseverance*
5. *Glorification.*

There is Scriptural precedence for thinking about our salvation in these categories. Most of us are familiar with Paul's words in Romans 8.29-30. If you would, please turn to that text.

Romans 8:29–30 (ESV): 29 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. 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.

Puritans, like William Perkins, would refer to this text as the golden chain of salvation. Clearly this text does not specify everything that God does when He saves us. But if we look closely at the text, we actually see many of the primary categories here.

Explicit is this idea of election- "those whom he foreknew he also predestined".

Explicit is effectual calling- "those whom he predestined he also called".

Explicit is justification- "those whom he called he also justified".

Implicit is adoption- “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”.

Implicit, I think, is sanctification- “those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son”.

Explicit is glorification- “those whom he justified he also glorified”

And implicit throughout the text is perseverance or better, preservation- because no one falls out of this golden chain. Paul never writes “some of whom” he predestined, or “some of whom” he calls, or “some of whom” he justifies, he then glorifies. They all persevere, they are all preserved and kept by God, and reach the destination of glorification.

As we look at the text, God is the one who is forging each unbreakable link in the golden chain- not us. All along the chain “he” is the one doing something, not us.

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This brings rich comfort to the believer, because it shows us that salvation, from start to finish, is the work of God. God does not initiate our salvation, only to hand over the reins, ultimately leaving it up to us to bring it to completion.

*Philippians 1.6: **he** who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

He starts the work and finishes the work, all the way to glory. And the idea is that each link of the chain is inseparable from the next and together they form a chain that cannot and will not be broken.

And this is how I want us to think about the things that we will study over the next few weeks. Each aspect of our salvation, if we think about it correctly, is ultimately the work of God and the gift of God- and these things are ours because he has brought us into this saving union with Christ that is indissoluble, that will not be broken.

Our union with Christ hangs over, and shelters, the order of salvation like a canopy. It is all a part of our union with Christ.

So let’s begin in earnest now with the first doctrine that I mentioned- the doctrine of election.

I want to briefly define this doctrine. The doctrine of election-simply stated- is that God chose whom he would save. Election simply means "choice." The doctrine of election is this: ultimately, it is God's choice that determines whether someone will be saved.

Now to understand this, it is essential that we hold firmly to two key doctrines that we have already seen in systematic theology part 1.

1. The doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty- I won't belabor this one- God's sovereignty is God's comprehensive control over everything. "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him" (Ps. 115:3). Another text- "The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths" (Ps. 135:6). We must hold this doctrine firmly if we are to grasp the doctrine of election.

Another reality that we must hold to firmly-

2. The doctrine of God's decree- we spoke about this briefly last semester- this doctrine teaches us that nothing happens in the world unless God wants it to happen. The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines God's decree as "His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." His decree and his sovereignty are very closely related. But sometimes it is helpful to think about the decree of God as God's eternal divine blueprint or plan- for whatsoever comes to pass.

A key text teaching this is Isaiah 46:9-10: I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'. This is his decree. Nothing happens in the world unless God wants it to happen. If something comes to pass it is because God has decreed or ordained it- and his decree is all-encompassing.

So when we consider God's sovereignty, and the Biblical doctrine of God's decree- it paints a picture of God's profound control over everything that takes place, bringing to pass what he has ordained- even our own salvation. Our salvation is not exempted from these things. God is sovereign in our salvation, and our salvation is part of his eternal divine blueprint that existed in the mind and will of God before the world began. And as we put these things together, it makes sense that God must have chosen to save us. Otherwise we would have never been saved.

Now- I want us to see the doctrine explicitly stated in Scripture. Because I don't want us to simply logic or reason our way to this doctrine apart from God's infallible word. If we do not see it, as it emerges from the text of Scripture itself, it actually loses something of its flavor and preciousness, and it will seem too clinical, too detached.

Our first text is the one we just looked at a minute ago-the golden chain, Romans 8.29-30.

In that text Paul begins the chain with this statement- "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son"-

This text is talking about the sovereign, unconditional, electing grace of God from eternity past.

Before anything was created, the world- our first parents- angelic beings- before anything was created there was the triune God- God alone- and there were His eternal purposes and plans. And that is where the golden chain begins.

A chain is only as strong as the object it is attached to. So what is the chained attached to? The golden chain of salvation begins, not with ourselves, or our choice or our will, but with God himself, his choice and will- the chain begins with and is firmly anchored to God- and his sovereign electing purposes.

Paul firmly attaches God's election to his sovereignty and decree in Ephesians 1.11, where Paul writes: "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him- who works all things- according to the counsel of his will".

The doctrine of election traces the "decision" to save back to God himself in eternity past and affirms that he, not man, determines who will be saved.

Earlier in Ephesians, chapter 1 verses 4-6, Paul writes- "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace."

Notice that this doctrine is not hidden away, in the back of his epistles, or implicitly taught, or alluded to vague or cursory type of way. This doctrine is front loaded.

When we consider the golden chain of Romans 8.29-30, this doctrine is attached to perhaps the most precious promise in all Scripture-

Romans 8.28- 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.

Here, God's electing grace is somehow firmly attached to his loving omnipotent purpose to work all things for good.

*In his opening words to the Thessalonians, Paul writes, unashamedly- saying "For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; **for** our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess. 1:4-5).*

*Here Paul says that the fact that the Thessalonians believed the gospel when he preached it ("for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with **full conviction**") is the evidence or the outworking of God choosing them. As soon as they came to faith, receiving the gospel in power, in the Holy Spirit, with full conviction, Paul's natural conclusion was that God had chosen them. There is one other aspect of that text I do not want us to miss as we discuss God's electing grace- he ties electing grace to the love of God. "For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you". Election doesn't spring from this cool, clinical, unfeeling, detached motion of God's will in eternity. It springs from his sovereign, inexplicable love toward us.*

*When Paul writes to Timothy- Paul talks about the reason why God saved us and called us to himself. 2 Timothy 1.9- speaking of God- "who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began". Paul explicitly denies that it was because of our works, but points rather to God's own purpose and **his unmerited grace** in eternity past.*

In Peter's opening salvo to believers throughout the region that is now modern day Turkey- he writes: 1 Peter 1:1-2- "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:" He later refers to them as "a chosen race" (1 Peter 2:9).

Clearly this is a doctrine, a reality that the authoritative apostles did not try to hide or downplay. It is fundamental and essential to believers' understanding of themselves and their understanding of God's love and grace toward them.

**How Does the New Testament Present the Teaching of Election?
How are we to respond to this doctrine?**

Here Wayne Grudem offers a helpful analysis. He explains that we are to view it the way the New Testament authors viewed it-

1. As a Comfort.

I have already addressed this upfront- election firmly fixes each believer within this unbreakable golden chain. God's purpose to save us stretches from eternity past in His electing love and grace to eternity to come, in our glorification with him. He keeps His people from start to finish. This brings rich comfort to the believer, because it shows us that salvation, from start to finish, is the work of the Lord.

Again- God does not initiate our salvation, only to hand over the reins, leaving it up to us to bring it to completion. If it were left up to us in the final analysis- we would fall away. Our hearts are treacherous still. Our remaining corruption is a present and persistent influence. The magnetic pull of the world, flesh and the devil are too strong unless God has purposed to see this thing through, from beginning to end.

2. We are to view it as a Reason for Gratitude and Praise to God.

*(Ephesians 1:5-6)- "he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **to the praise of his glorious grace.**"*

*Similarly, he says in Ephesians 1.11-12: "having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ **might be to the praise of his glory.**"*

In chapter 9 of Romans, when God speaks of choosing God's choosing Jacob and not Esau, Paul says it was not because of anything that Jacob or Esau had done, but simply in order that God's purpose of election might continue. Romans 9:11-13.

*"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— **12** she was told, "The older will serve the younger." **13** As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*

This passage is there to teach us that election is unconditional, unconditional election, as Reformed theologians like to say. God chooses us for salvation, a choice not based on anything in us, not based on any conditions we have fulfilled.

Therefore- if we understand the doctrine as we ought, the doctrine of election will produce praise to God for his unmerited grace and love toward us. It will simultaneously diminish the pride that we might feel if somehow we thought that our

salvation was due to something good in us or something for which we should receive credit.

It should produce a genuine sense of "Why me?" in the best possible way. It should make us feel constantly and undeservedly blessed- disproportionately upheld and provided for- as we enjoy a saving relationship with God that he has purposed from all eternity to see through to the end despite our relentless failures and flaws.

The words of Isaac Watts are fitting- (How Sweet and Awful is the Place)

While all our hearts and all our songs, Join to admire the feast, Each of us cry with thankful tongues "Lord, why was I a guest?"-"Why was I made to hear Thy voice, And enter while there's room, When thousands make a wretched choice, And rather starve than come?"

3. *It is to serve as an Encouragement to Evangelism.*

*Paul says in 2 Timothy 2.10- Therefore I endure everything **for the sake of the elect**, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

Paul knows that God has chosen some people to be saved, and he sees this as an encouragement to preach the gospel, even if it means enduring great suffering. Election is Paul's guarantee that there will be some success for his evangelism, for he knows that some of the people he speaks to will be the elect, and because he has chosen them, they will believe the gospel and be saved.

We will talk about this a little more in a few minutes.

I want to address various misunderstandings and objections surrounding the doctrine of election-

Some object that election portrays life as overly fatalistic and mechanistic; and they hold that if God elects, our choices have no real significance.

Yet the New Testament consistently portrays salvation as something applied to us by a personal God, in a relationship with real persons.

There is no coldness in it.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?).

Jesus invites all people to come to him.

Matt 11:28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Christ says that those who reject him have done so out of their own hardness of heart.

Matt 23:37- "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

Others have argued that God looks forward and sees saving faith in a person's heart and that he chooses to save based upon that foreseen faith; in other words, God saves because he foreknows a person's faith.

But the Scripture never talks about faith in this way.

And when the Scriptures mention God's foreknowledge, they speak of him not merely as knowing facts about people- but as knowing individuals themselves- in this way brings with it this personal, relational, intimate and even loving dynamic.

1 Cor 8:3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

So this idea of foreknowledge speaks of how God views us and knows us in his eternal mind, before we were even born, or had done anything good or bad. And it is a mystery.

Now, and this is important to grasp, if we affirm election on the basis of a foreseen faith, we actually begin this steady slide into salvation by merit and works. We would be teaching that God somehow saved us in exchange for our faith. It could then be said that we had faith because we had a more pliable disposition, or more savvy intellect, a better upbringing, or that we were raised under the sound of the gospel. This, however, would make salvation contingent on something else other than God's sheer grace and his own good pleasure. And, it bears mentioning that faith itself- is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2.8: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Moreover, if God elects because he foresaw our faith, this does nothing to address the issue of fatalism. If God knows some event will happen in the future, then it is as certain as if he had absolutely determined it himself. Our destinies remain determined. And we are forced to conclude that some other personal or impersonal force determines them. And that is not a comforting, much less biblical thought.

Some object saying- asserting that election is unfair. But we must always keep in mind that it would be perfectly fair if God did not save anyone.

Paul answers a similar objection in Romans chapter 9: Paul teaches explicitly that God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden. And then anticipates a certain type of response:

Romans 9. 19-20:

*You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” **20** But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” **21** Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? **22** What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, **23** in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—*

The vision of God as absolute in all things is simply astounding in this passage. He is God and we are not. And here Paul reminds us that the creature has no right to question the Creator’s choices or justice. God can do whatever he desires with his creation.

I will say a few more things about this dynamic in a moment.

Some may object that Scripture describes God as desiring to save everyone- for instance-

1 Tim 2:4 (speaking of God); “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

2 Pet 3:9 -The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Yet, from the Reformed perspective, God’s revealed will or prescriptive will (essentially what he commands) is distinct from his hidden will or will of decree (what actually happens). And this is simply a biblical tension that we must learn to appreciate and live with.

*On this point I think it is helpful for us to hold **two undeniable biblical givens** together as we come to terms with the mystery of God's electing love, salvation, and how it meshes with our experience of it.*

1. We must never lose sight of the fact that God is absolutely sovereign. The biblical evidence is without controversy. Again- "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him" (Ps. 115:2–3). "The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths" (Ps. 135:6). God is the one who "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1:11).

2. We must never lose sight of the fact that human beings are morally responsible creatures. This is the other absolute given. God's sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is minimized or mitigated or of no consequence. We as humans can and will choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, and so forth, and we are rightly held accountable for our actions-

This reality is easily demonstrated from the text of Scripture as well.

"Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. . . . But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:14–15).

The Ten commandments bring a felt gravity to them, not only because of Who has given the commandments, but also because we will make a choice either to obey or disobey them and subsequently God who gave them.

*The gospel call itself lays down profound responsibility: "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. . . . As Scripture says, '**Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame**'" (Rom. 10:9, 11).*

The biblical testimony is that humans can and must make real choices- but this reality never functions so as to make God, and his sovereign will take a back seat while our choices drive the bus of ultimate reality. God is always in absolute control.

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I want us to appreciate how this plays out in the Bible:

*In the book of Acts- Peter can earnestly plead- "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (Acts 2:40), and then describe the response of the crowd, the crowd's real choice and decisions: "Those who **accepted** his message were baptized" (2:41).*

Yet elsewhere in Acts, without any hesitation, Luke describes the conversions this way: *“When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; **and all who were appointed for eternal life believed**” (13:48).*

God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are simply assumed in the book of acts. They are not pitted against each other. We are called to accept the message- and those who accept are appointed by God.

In Acts 18:9–10, as Paul arrives in Corinth, apparently he is tired and somewhat discouraged. His missionary efforts, as he makes his way through parts of Europe, have included a severe beating and imprisonment at Philippi, various mobs and uproars and agitations in Thessalonica and Berea, as well as mockings in Athens. Paul has seen considerable fruit in God’s kindness. Even so, he is likely emotionally and physically drained on some level.

And then he arrives in Corinth- and this will present another array of challenges: Corinth was known throughout the empire as a notoriously immoral city. And it is in this context that God graciously speaks to Paul in a night vision, and reassures him with these words: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”

Clearly, certain responsibilities are laid on Paul. He is to keep on speaking, and not be silent.

*God uses means in evangelism- and Paul’s labors will be part of those means. Nevertheless the encouragement that God showers on Paul depends **on the doctrine of election**. Somehow, God has “many people in this city” even before they are converted. That is because they are the elect. Thus election in this passage functions as a powerful incentive to evangelism.*

Let’s move on to Effectual Calling-

*God and his sovereign electing purposes are where the golden chain begins. And ultimately it is God and his eternal wise purposes that are the proverbial immovable rock that the chain is attached to. *But as we look closer at the ordo salutis, we now see the doctrine of Effectual Calling emerge.**

*Romans 8.30- **And those whom he predestined he also called.***

The Bible often talks about God calling people, in various senses.

Sometimes God calls us to a particular vocation, the particular position in which he has placed you- “let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him”. 1 Corinthians 7.17

He may call a person to marriage or to singleness, to live in a specific place, to be joined to a particular body of believers. All of these callings are important, but this is not what is meant by Effectual Calling. What is Effectual Calling?

Well, to understand Effectual Calling, we must first distinguish between the Effectual Call and the Gospel Call. They are similar, they are related. But there are some very important differences.

First, let’s look at the gospel call. This call is the gospel message proclaimed and extended to sinners. The gospel call is issued whenever Jesus Christ and him crucified and resurrected is preached and proclaimed, shared in conversations or read about in His word or books that contain the truth of the gospel.

This gospel call is indiscriminate, meant to be spread to anyone and everyone who will hear it. It knows no barriers but goes out freely and universally to all. Therefore, it has sometimes been labeled as God’s general call.

This gospel call invites sinners to repent and trust in Christ, promising that anyone who does will be forgiven and receive life everlasting, which only Christ himself can give.

For example, Christ proclaims to his hearers [John 7:37](#), “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.” It is this gospel call that so famously defines [John 3:16](#), “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

This general gospel call can, however, be resisted, and it is resisted by everyone who hears the gospel but does not believe in Christ. Stephen, just before he was martyred, said this much. “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you” ([Acts 7:51](#)). But this is not the only type of call Scripture describes.

Then there is the Effectual Call, or what is sometimes referred to as God’s special call or internal call.

It has been described by John Murray as a sovereign, efficacious summons. That word “summons” highlights God’s sovereign power. The idea is that you might be able to refuse an invitation, but refusing a summons is another matter. A summons is an offer you cannot refuse. Why is this inability to refuse this call true?

With God's effectual call, as the word is proclaimed, heard, or read (the gospel call that we just spoke about), God works within the heart of the listener, as the Father calls them to his Son by the power of his Holy Spirit.

Repeat- With God's effectual call, as the word is proclaimed, heard, or read, God powerfully works within the heart of the listener, as the Father calls them to his Son by the power of his Holy Spirit

Three components of this second type of call deserve attention.

1. This call is not a universal call but a particular call.

Unlike the gospel call, which goes out to all people, the effectual call is specific, taking place within the hearts of God's elect alone. Like the wind, the Spirit "blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes," [John 3:8](#)- this dynamic in effectual call highlights the sovereignty of God.

2. We must appreciate that the general gospel call and the particular effectual call are not at odds with each other. It is through the general gospel call that God powerfully works in His effectual call.

3. Not only is the effectual call particular to God's elect, but it is effectual in its power and outcome. In other words, God's call of his elect does not fail. Just as his electing choice in eternity is not conditioned on the will of the sinner, so too is his special call not dependent on the will of the sinner.

In fact the Bible teaches that the sinner's will is in bondage to sin.

*[Rom. 8:7-8](#): For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. **8** Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Apart from a miraculous, saving work of God that originates outside of us, and then brought to bear upon us, apart from this, we are all characterized by spiritual inability.

But when a sinner is Effectually Called and Regenerated by God, this spiritual inability is overcome, so that the sinner can and will repent and trust in Christ.

As we move further along the ordo salutis, the order of salvation- we will see that God's effectual call, and with it regeneration, logically and naturally precedes conversion (that is faith and repentance) in the order of salvation. Unless God calls his elect with this omnipotent, effectual calling, they cannot, and they will not, exercise saving faith.

One of the key texts concerning effectual calling can be found in [John chapter 6](#).

As you read through John chapter 6, there is an undeniable predestinarian- doctrine of election- tone present in the words of Jesus. The doctrine of election is presented in terms of a people (God’s “sheep”) “**given**” by the Father to the Son and the Son as coming to save them.

(John 6:36–39).

... you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father **gives me** will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 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.

Notice, Jesus does not say “whoever will come to me the Father will give to me” but whoever the “Father gives me will come to me.”

This is election. It is God’s electing choice that results in sinners coming to Jesus. Unless he draws the sinner, no sinner will come to Jesus at all.

However, the Jews who heard his words did not believe in him, no matter how many miracles he performed. They are spiritually blind. They think they are free, but they live in bondage. They take offense at Jesus and start grumbling when Jesus says he is the “bread that came down from heaven” (6:41). And as they grumble Jesus responds, “Do not grumble among yourselves. **No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him**” (6:43).

Jesus goes on to say yet again in John 6:65, when the Jews still do not believe in him, “**This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.**”

And here we see the main pieces to the doctrine of Effectual Calling-

(1) we see sinners’ inherent inability to come to the Father, and

(2) the efficacy of God’s call- **for no one can come unless he is drawn or it is granted him by the Father**

Therefore- In light of [John 6](#), it is no wonder theologians have labeled this call “effectual.” Man does not cooperate with God in this call (i.e., synergism), nor is man able to resist this call and defeat God’s grace.

This call is one that cannot and will not fail in bringing God’s elect into union with Christ. It is utterly effective. —And we can take no credit for this call. All credit and

glory must go to our triune God. If he did not summon us with his irresistible power, we would still be spiritually lost.

Many other passages uphold the doctrine of effectual call, both in Paul's letters (e.g., [1 Cor. 1:18-31](#); [Gal. 1:15-16](#); [Eph. 4:1-6](#); [Col. 3:15](#); [1 Tim. 6:12](#); et al.) and in Peter's letters ([1 Pet. 1:14-15](#); [2:9-10](#), 21; [5:10](#); [2 Pet. 1:3-5, 10](#)).

In light of what we have seen concerning effectual calling- it should not be surprising that many theologians have seen effectual calling and regeneration (new birth) as two sides of the same coin.

Let's, therefore, talk briefly about Regeneration.

Matthew Barrett offers a helpful definition of regeneration describing it as that "work of the Holy Spirit to unite the elect sinner to Christ by breathing new life into that dead and depraved sinner so as to raise him from spiritual death to spiritual life, removing his heart of stone and giving him a heart of flesh, so that he is washed, born from above and now able to repent and trust in Christ as a new creation."

Using this very good description as our guide I want us to notice 2 truths about regeneration-

1. Regeneration is the supernatural work of the Spirit.

Jesus himself attributes regeneration to the Spirit when he says to Nicodemus, "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" ([John 3:5](#)).

2. Regeneration is not the work of man- but the work of God alone.

The imagery of birth really drives home this point. In birth a new life comes into this world. But it would be out of place to think that the newborn somehow deserves credit for this momentous act. The newborn is helpless and passive.

*This reality is even more applicable to our spiritual birth. The new birth is the work of God and God alone; the sinner is not only passive in this new birth, but is in fact **spiritually lifeless**. It would be wrong to think of regeneration as a work in which God and the sinner must cooperate with one another. The sinner needs new life- the sinner is spiritually lifeless.*

Perhaps the most compelling biblical picture **effectual calling and regeneration and regeneration** together is the account of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead.

Lazarus had been dead for four days and the only way he would ever walk out of the tomb is if the life-giving power of God, and God alone, is brought to bear on him. Lazarus was in no condition to cooperate or contribute to Christ's call and Christ's work of giving his lifeless dead, decaying body new life.

John 11:38-44:

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. **39** Jesus said, **“Take away the stone.”** Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” **40** Jesus said to her, **“Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”** **41** So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, **“Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”** **43** When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, **“Lazarus, come out.”** **44** The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, **“Unbind him, and let him go.”** And in similar fashion we "were dead in the trespasses and sins" Ephesians 2.1; **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

This is the life giving- omnipotent power of God in regeneration.