

GRACE AND THE CALL TO SALVATION

LESSON #6

Memory Verse: John 6:37

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

Man is thoroughly and helplessly corrupt. He does not have the capacity to seek, believe in, and love God (lesson #3). In this depraved condition, no man ever can or will, in his own strength and wisdom, turn to God and be saved. Therefore, God, in His great love, elected to save some (lesson #4) through Christ (lesson #5). But how does this result in their salvation? In this lesson we will examine saving grace, general calling, and effectual calling.

I. Saving Grace

Apart from the grace of God, there is no hope for man. The only way for sinful man to be reconciled to God through the appropriation of Christ's atoning work is to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, apart from the God's grace, it is utterly impossible to do so.

A. Saving grace is given to the elect.

1. Read Ephesians 1:3-7. This passage says that the elect are (1) blessed "*with every spiritual blessing*", (2) eternally chosen in Christ, (3) designed to be holy, (4) predestined to be adopted, (5) redeemed through the blood of Christ, and (6) forgiven of trespasses. All of this is "*according to the kind intention of His will to the praise of the glory of His _____*" and "*according to the riches of His _____*".

2. In Romans 11:5, according to what did God leave a remnant? _____

B. Saving grace is a free gift of God.

1. How are sinners justified by God (Romans 3:23-24)? _____

2. How is salvation / eternal life described in Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:4-7? _____

3. What is spoken of as a gift in Romans 5:15-17? _____

C. Grace is neither merited nor secured in part or in whole by any virtue or work of man.

1. How are grace and works contrasted in the following passages?

a. Titus 3:3-7 _____

b. Romans 4:3-5 _____

c. Ephesians 2:8-9 _____

d. Romans 11:6 _____

e. 1 Corinthians 15:10 _____

2. Why is it crucial to understand the difference between grace and works (Galatians 2:21)? _____

D. Grace enables sinners to believe the gospel and be saved.

1. How did the grace of God impact the faith, hope, and love of the Colossian believers (Colossians 1:3-6)? _____

2. According to Titus 2:11-14, what effect does the grace of God have on the elect?

3. How did Luke describe the brethren from Achaia in Acts 18:27? _____

4. By God's grace, He gives saving faith (i.e. belief and repentance) to the elect as a gift.¹

E. Grace leaves no room for boasting.

1. According to Paul in Romans 4:1-2, what right would Abraham have if he was justified by works? _____

2. Why did Paul argue that boasting has no place (Romans 3:27-31; Ephesians 2:8-9)?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and answer the following questions.

a. Why does God choose foolish and weak people (vv.26-28)? _____

¹ Please see lesson #7 for more details.

- b. Based on this, how many of the chosen can boast (v.29)? _____
- c. By whose will are the elect “*in Christ*” (v.30)? _____
- d. What is the one thing of which we are permitted to boast? Why? (vv.30-31)? _____

II. The General Call

Despite the fact that man is thoroughly corrupt and therefore cannot or will not ever independently choose to exercise faith in Jesus Christ, he is still responsible to do so. God genuinely stretches out His hand and offers salvation to every person, and every person is accountable to God for believing or rejecting God’s offer.² This invitation / offer / command is known as the *general call* or *external call*.

A. The general call is offered to all people.

- 1. According to John 7:37, Isaiah 45:22, and Revelation 22:17, who is welcome to take the water of life? _____
- 2. Is everyone who is invited to be saved considered to be elect (Matthew 22:14)? _____

B. The general call is both an invitation and a command to which all are accountable.

- 1. What command is given in Acts 17:30-31? _____

- 2. To whom is eternal life freely offered (John 3:16)? _____

The Spirit’s enlightening, wooing, and subduing work vis-à-vis the elect enlightens darkened minds, frees stubborn wills, and inclines contrary affections toward Christ. In short, the Spirit’s effectual call opens sinners’ hearts, thereby creating a new desire and hunger to know Christ. The general call meets with a variety of responses in the unconverted, whereas the effectual call effectively draws sinners to Christ. Expressed more directly, the preacher’s word in the general call is made effective by the Spirit’s work in the special call. The general call is a legitimate offer to “whosoever will,” even though its efficacy depends on the gracious power of God’s Spirit.³

² Please see lesson #4 for more information on human responsibility.

³ Bruce Demerest, *The Cross and Salvation*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway Books, 2006), 211.

III. The Effectual Call

The *effectual call* or *internal call* is distinguished from the general call in that it is an irresistible call extended only to the elect. Through the effectual call, God supernaturally draws those chosen for salvation to Himself and grants them saving grace through the gospel by which He changes their hearts to make them both able and willing to believe.

A. Effectual calling is the prerogative of God alone.

1. Read John 6:37, 44, 63-65 and answer the following questions.
 - a. Who will come to Christ (v.37)? _____
 - b. Who can come to Christ (v.44)? _____
 - c. Who gives life (v.63)? _____
 - d. How much can the flesh contribute (v.63)? _____
 - e. Can everyone come to Christ (v.65)? _____
2. Who wills the elect person to believe the gospel (James 1:17-18)? _____
3. Who causes the elect person to be born again (1 Peter 1:3)? _____

B. The purpose of the effectual call is to save the elect.

1. According to the following passages, to what or by what does God call His elect?
 - a. 1 Peter 2:9-10 _____
 - b. 1 Peter 5:10-11 _____
 - c. 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 _____
 - d. 2 Peter 1:2-3 _____
 - e. Hebrews 3:1 _____

C. The gospel is the medium through which God effectually calls the elect to salvation.

1. Through what means were those chosen to salvation called in order that they may gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)? _____

2. Through what means does God cause the elect person to be born again (1 Peter 1:23-25, c.f. v.3)? _____
3. How is the message of the gospel described in Romans 1:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 1:18? _____
4. What guarantee does God give regarding His Word (Isaiah 55:11)? _____

D. God reveals Himself to the elect through the effectual call.

1. According to Matthew 11:27, who can know the Father? _____

2. Given what you have just read in Matthew 11:27, how do the elect respond when Christ reveals the Father to them (John 17:4-8)? _____

3. Re-read Romans 1:16-17. What is revealed to the elect through the gospel? _____

4. Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 and answer the following questions.
 - a. What kind of wisdom is contained in the gospel (vv.6-7)? _____

 - b. Can natural man understand this wisdom (vv.8-9, 14)? _____
 - c. Who reveals the truth of the gospel and how can one know this truth (vv.10-13)? _____

 - d. What else are the elect given (v.16)? _____

E. God grants saving grace to the elect through the effectual call.

1. Why did Paul thank God for those who were “*saints by calling*” (1 Corinthians 1:2-4)? _____
2. How did Paul describe his own election and calling (Galatians 1:15-17)?⁴ _____

3. What is given to each person who is effectually called (Ephesians 4:4-7)? _____

4. According to what are the elect called with a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:8-10)? _____

F. Effectual calling is God’s work of changing the heart of the elect so they will freely, willingly, and gladly believe.

1. According to 1 John 5:20, what does Christ give to the elect that enables them to enter into a saving relationship with Him? _____
2. What must God do to the hard and stony heart in order for the elect to love Him and live (Deuteronomy 30:6)? _____

⁴ Compare Paul’s election/calling to that of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-5) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:11ff).

3. How does God's work on the human heart and mind affect the will (Philippians 2:13)? _____

4. Why did Lydia receive the gospel message spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14)? _____

5. Why does anyone confess Christ as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3)? _____

“No one was ever saved against their will. No one was ever brought into the kingdom kicking and screaming, protesting. No one was ever saved who was dragged against the grain of having dug their heels in. That is not what Scripture teaches. No one has ever been saved against his will. No one ever will be. Everyone who is saved is saved because they will to believe the gospel. In fact, they will with all their heart and soul to believe the gospel. No one is ever saved without being willing. It is an act of the will to believe. The question is, ‘What made them willing?’ Or better, ‘Who made them willing?’”⁵

G. Effectual calling infallibly ensures that the elect will believe and be saved.

1. According to John 6:37-40, _____ that the Father gives to the Son _____ come to Him, because Christ perfectly fulfills the Father's will to lose _____
2. Why can the one called be sure that he will be entirely sanctified and blameless before God (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)? _____

3. Read Romans 8:28-33 and answer the following questions.
 - a. What does God do for those who He calls (v.28)? _____
 - b. How many of those who are effectually called will be saved (v.30)? _____
 - c. How are the called identified in v.33? _____
4. According to Acts 13:48, how many people who have been appointed to eternal life will believe the gospel? _____

⁵ John MacArthur, “The Doctrine of God's Effectual Call,” <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/90-296> (September 18, 2005).

5. According to Romans 11:7, how many of the chosen will obtain salvation? _____

6. Read John 8:32-26. What guarantee did Jesus give in verses 32 and 36? _____

7. To whom does God promise the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39)? _____

IV. Personal Application

- A. How does it make you feel to know that you have no hope apart from God's grace? How would you explain to an unbeliever that grace is a gift from God that cannot be earned?

- B. Have you been impacted by the knowledge that you have nothing to boast about before God? How does embracing the doctrines of grace (i.e. depravity, election, effectual calling, etc.) accentuate the fact that no one can boast before God? How does denial of these doctrines leave room for boasting? _____

- C. How does the knowledge that the general call should go out to all people motivate you to be faithful in doing evangelism? _____

- D. What are some of the specific ways in which God has changed your heart? _____
