

# God's Call To Sinners

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There is much said about a gospel call these days. Some speak of an efficacious call and others talk of an external call and yet others refer to a well-meant call. There are some, too, who believe in calling sinners to exercise their duty to God and accept His call, thus making it efficacious. Some, such as myself, believe in a general call which comes as a savour of life to some and a savour of death to others according to their position regarding the Covenant of Grace drawn up between the Father and the Son.

**This brings condemnation for some and deliverance for others.**

More and more preachers today are emphasising human abilities to accept God's call, so what the Bible teaches on the matter is apparently of little importance to them. After being in Christ for a year short of seventy, I sadly feel that many of our pastors, preachers and evangelists have no idea whatsoever of what God's call to sinners is.

**What do the Scriptures say about all this?**

Well, the word mostly used for a call in Scripture, including the Greek Old Testament (LXX) is *kale*, which basically means to call into one's presence or invite someone to do something such as partake of the gospel.

Here, we must ask, Who is calling whom. Romans 8:26-32 tells us that it is God only who does the calling and inviting and the call is to those who love God and are thus predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. But who are these predestined lovers of God who are re-created in the image of Christ? We read in verses 26 and 27 that the predestined by God are those in whom the Spirit dwells making intercession for them even to the point of 'groanings which cannot be uttered'. I understand this as saying that the Spirit works in God's elect bringing them to conversion. I take this also to mean that the pleas of the Spirit for the sinner in whom He dwells are just too strong for words. What language can express true love? It is something known and felt. It is this pleading of the Spirit which makes us sensible of our sins, a thing we would not notice of ourselves.

Today's scoffers in the evangelical fold, tell us that people made sensible of their sins are the already saved so we who preach the full gospel do so only to Christians. I cannot follow such theorising. Indeed, one brother, now in glory, told me that I only preached to the saved, seemingly because I preached too much of the gospel. He, for instance, refused to preach

predestination which I found a comforting doctrine, and very much part of my Christian testimony. My brother, however, had cut out God's choosing of a people for Himself from his gospel and called me publicly an ignoramus for believing otherwise. This brother explained why He kept the gracious acts of God out of his gospel in a magazine called Reformation Today in which he argued that election and predestination were part of God's secret will but not of His revealed will. He further added that as God had not revealed His secret will, we should not meddle with thinking how God's will works because nobody knew God's secrets.

Paul is certainly not of this notion and tells us that the Spirit's work is to draw us to Christ through the gospel call which includes election, predestination, justification and glorification. Fancy preaching a gospel without these demonstrations of it! Paul tells us that this electing, justifying, glorifying call of grace through the gospel is the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It comes to every man who hears the true gospel and some are given to accept it and some are not.

Our critics get round this self-set problem by claiming that God has two different, contradictory, wills on the matter: what our Lord God in Christ, moved by the Spirit's intercession, wants to do and what God wills to do. What God allegedly wants they see described in their so-called general call and what God wills is described in what they call the efficacious call. In other words, they argue that God has a split personality. What a blasphemous insult this is, and unworthy of any acceptance.

Quite contrary to this, Paul gives us in Romans Chapter 8 the whole gospel, which is what God wants, wills and does. Here God shows His unity in His triune work, quite free of fallen human fantasies, theories and speculations. In the Old Testament, Moses tells us that God will call out a Holy Go or Nation (Exodus 19:6) and this is confirmed by the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:9). Paul, in Romans 8, shows us how He does it. In Chapter 9:11, Paul adds adamantly that the election of such a People of God, is not according to that people's works but according to that people's calling. Cut out God's personal call and you cut out the gospel. God is as true as His Word. He does not say to us that He merely wants to save a Bride for His Son, or that He merely wills it, but He tells us that He does it.

Now I know that big-business evangelical and Reformed publishing houses are pouring out bad books which deny the effectual calling of God. Good theological books do not sell as well. Fancy titillates more than faith for many. Who likes to be reminded he is a sinner unless God in Christ and in the Spirit intervenes? Such people want a say in their own salvation. It is what they might want but salvation is of God alone. His call is that we who are heavy-laden should come to Him for rest. This is the promised work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the only promise that truly works.

**What alternative to God's calling do our gospel-less critics offer us?**

They speak of a general call which encloses a free, well-meant offer to all who are willing to exercise faith whether produced by duty or will. When the sinner exercises such faith, he is pronounced saved. I remember preaching in Foster Square, Bradford whilst still in my teens, backed by my old school mate Tom Edmonson who was in Christ before me. Of course, my message was the gospel of salvation. I was constantly interrupted by the drunken cry of a man. He kept saying that he had been 'saved' five times but it had not helped him. I learnt that his salvation had been his duty-faith acceptance of the pseudo-gospel preached by Fullerite and Free-Willer followers. As we have seen; greatly do they err.

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