

Effectual Calling- Faith and Repentance by Mario Digangi

by Mariano Di Gangi

Effectual calling is the inward call of God that brings about repentance and faith, and is the proof that we have been effectually called.

Duration: 43:14

Scripture: Psalm 32:5, Ezekiel 36:26, John 10:27-28, Acts 16:14, Acts 16:31, Romans 8:28, Galatians 5:1, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Effectual Calling", "Salvation Plan"

Description

This sermon delves into the concept of effectual calling, exploring the multifaceted meanings of the word 'call' and its significance in the context of God's predestination and salvation plan. It emphasizes the inward call of God that leads to repentance and faith, highlighting the radical transformation and new life that occurs when one responds to God's call. The sermon draws from various biblical passages, including Romans 8, Acts 16, and Psalms, to illustrate the process of being effectually called by God and the infallible evidences of repentance and faith.

Transcript

I'd like to announce the sudden and unexpected disappearance of Dr. J. Glenn Allman. If you look on the wall, he's no longer there. I predict that when he reappears, I will also reappear alongside of him.

We are both being pranked. When I was given the topic of effectual calling, I did several things. The first was to check my dictionary.

And under the head of recall, I found no fewer than 52 shades of meaning and definition. Let me just give you a fistful of them now. To call is to ask, for example, call me a taxi.

Or to visit, you call on someone. Or it's a designation or description. You call someone a coward.

Or it has to do with attendance. You call the roll. Or it has to do with sports.

The umpire lets you know when on certain terms. If I call it a ball or I call it a strike, that's where it is. No power on earth, including a screaming manager, can get me to change my mind.

Sometimes the word call is used in the sense of a challenge. Something is called into question. Sometimes it has to do with attraction.

You feel the call of the wild. Sometimes it's a claim that is put on you. Like a call of duty.

Sometimes it has to do with a telephone. I'll give you a call. Sometimes it has to do with inviting a minister to end a vacancy.

I want to comment here that in the past two or three weeks, I have been asked by no fewer than five or six churches to suggest names of men who are true to the gospel and have a pastoral heart and can expound the scriptures and the supply of such persons is dwindling by the day. Calling. Or the matter of demanding.

A bank lends you money and then it calls in the loan. And so there are many meanings for the word call. And today we're going to use it in the sense that is defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith and in its larger and shorter catechisms.

You've got it down in the handout announcing the details of this particular course. All those whom God has predestinated unto life, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time effectually to call by his word and spirit out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature. And there are many passages of scripture that we can deal with along this line.

But the basic one is, of course, found in Romans 8. Would you please turn to Romans, the eighth chapter, beginning at verse 28. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the likeness of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those he predestined, he also called. Every link in the golden chain of salvation is forged by God. God has foreknown.

And that not only means that because he is omniscient, he has advanced knowledge of what is going to happen, what theologians call the pre-science of God. It has rather to do with God's attitude of love. For the verb to know in scripture usually means to apprehend with the mind, to have knowledge.

But occasionally it also means a relationship of intimacy and a depth of love. The King James Version puts it this way, that Adam knew his wife and she conceived in there a son. That doesn't mean he became acquainted with her, but that he loved her with great intensity.

And Mary knew not Joseph, did not live with him as his wife in the intimacy of a married relationship until after the birth of their firstborn. So here it not only means that God knew in advance, but that God loved with a depth of intimacy and love from before the foundation of the world. Whom he foreknew, whom he loved from all eternity, these he predestined.

And when we speak of predestination, we never find a text in scripture that says God arbitrarily predestines people to hell. That is a caricature of Calvinism. What scripture does do when it speaks of predestination is to tell us the end toward which God moves us.

Namely, that we should be conformed to the image of his son. That's what God has in mind at the very beginning of the whole process. Not merely that we should be saved, but that we should be refashioned

into the likeness of his son.

And whom he has predestined, he has also called. The call of God. What does it mean to be called of God? We often distinguish between an outward and an inward call.

The outward call is addressed to all sorts and conditions of people. The inward call is the one that works within the human heart and calls forth a response of repentance and faith. How is the outward call of God seen and heard? Well, the Bible tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork.

The Bible tells us in Romans 1, 19 and 20 that the power, the majesty, and the wisdom of God are revealed in the world that he has made. God also speaks to people in their conscience the matter of right and wrong between what ought to be and what actually is so that someone describes the state of human uneasiness as the gap between the oughtness and the isness of things. God speaks through the world of nature.

God speaks in the human conscience. But mainly, God's outward call comes through his word. And that word reaches people in a great variety of sizes, shapes, and styles.

For example, the call of God can come through an evangelist who is truly an evangelist because he preaches the evangel, the good news of the forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ in a great crusade. I've known the call of God to come to people in just such a setting. The critics pooh-pooh mass evangelism and say that's really not a lasting work of God.

But in Philadelphia, I had an assistant minister who was converted years before in a Billy Graham crusade and switched from a major in economics at Rice Institute to study theology at Dallas Theological Seminary and then became my assistant minister in Philadelphia. And today, 30 years after his conversion, he is now teaching in Reformed Theological Seminary in Mississippi. Genuine evangelistic preaching is one of the ways in which the call of God comes to men and women if the gospel is truly preached.

The gospel comes to people through films. The Jesus film, as we heard from Mr. Walker during missions conference, is reaching hundreds of thousands of people in a great variety of languages. The outward call of God comes not only through what is heard, but what is seen as well as heard.

The call of God comes to people through radio. I know someone who is a bodyguard for a hoodoo and got fascinated by listening to this person's voice and his enunciation over the radio because the person was a gospel preacher, a great Bible teacher. And he listened because he liked the form of articulation that this man used.

And through it, he heard the call of God. Sometimes the call of God comes through seeing a drama that enacts some phase of Christian truth. Sometimes the call of God is heard through music, anything from Handel's Messiah to a country-style rendition of the gospel message.

Sometimes the call of God comes to people through a visitation program like the kind that we maintain here in Knox from week to week. Sometimes the outward call of God comes through one person speaking to another about Christ. That's how the call of God came to my own family many years ago.

God speaks. We do not have a God who is dumb. We have a God who speaks.

He addresses his call, the outward call, to people in a great variety of ways. He makes known his commands that men and women might obey them. He gives his warnings that men and women should take heed.

He offers his invitations that they might be drawn to him. He makes promises that they might be willing to accept them. The outward call of God comes to all sorts and conditions of people in a multitude of ways.

But not everybody who hears the outward call responds. If you've engaged in visitation or literature distribution, you know how people fail to respond appropriately. Sometimes the tactic is delay.

Well, I'm too busy to consider this right now. Eventually I'll get around to it. And that probably means never again.

Or sometimes people respond with doubt. I'm attracted by what you're saying, but I'm not quite convinced. I have questions about this, that, and the other, and therefore I cannot make a commitment.

Or there are those who respond with debate. They love to argue, but never come to the point of commitment. I found this to be the case in my annual ministry in Italy.

People are not at all reticent to discuss religion the same way that they discuss politics, the same way that they discuss soccer, which is the national passion. In that order, soccer first, politics second, and then religion. And you can argue up and down and debate up and down, and they love it.

But don't ever press them to come to a decision, to make a commitment, to put their lives on the line for Jesus Christ. That's something else. There are those who respond with downright denial and will have nothing at all to do with this outmoded, Neanderthal, emotional crutch called God.

And so you have people receiving God's outward call and responding in a great variety of ways that fall short of saying, Yes, Lord. And that brings me to the inward call, the effectual call of God, which brings about repentance and faith. The inward call involves hearing what God is actually saying and responding to it properly.

To be effectually called is to demonstrate the attitude that was found in a young boy. Samuel, speak, Lord, for your servant is ready to listen. Samuel had received an effectual call from God.

It struck a responsive note in his young and tender heart. This is what Jesus speaks about in the 10th chapter of the Gospel according to John. And we're not going to turn to it now, but you can recall the passage.

What's the main theme of the 10th chapter of John? Anybody recall Ophaniel? The shepherd. And what does the shepherd say about those who belong to his flock? They hear my voice. And as a consequence of hearing my voice, they follow me.

And those who do not hear my voice and do not follow me are not of my sheep. They follow strangers. They are misled.

They do not come to a knowledge of the truth. His sheep hear his voice. They are effectually called, and they prove it by following him when he beckons.

And the 10th chapter of John's Gospel has that theme running right through with many variations. But the theme stays the same. If you belong to his flock, you've heard his voice.

And if you've heard his voice, you follow him. Turn to the book of Acts, chapter 16. And here we have the story of a conversion.

There were no shooting stars in the sky. There were no mysterious voices in the wind. But there was effectual calling and a proper response.

Acts 16, beginning at verse 11. Paul has received the vision of the man of Macedonia. He has come to the conclusion that the Lord wants the missionary team to cross over from what today is Turkey into Europe, into northern Greece or Macedonia to preach the Gospel.

All right. Acts 16, beginning at verse 11. From the seaport city of Troas, we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace.

The next day, on to Neapolis. From there, we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony, and the leading city of the district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the 7th, we went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira.

She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. And when she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home, saying, If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house.

And she persuaded us. Notice that the Lord opened her heart, and she heard what the apostle had to say, and she received the message of the missionaries, became a believer, and was baptized as a Christian. That is a marvelous example, personalized, of the biblical doctrine of the effectual call.

God opens her heart. She hears the word. It falls on good ground, and it bears forth fruit, and she is a convert to Christianity.

That's what the Bible means by effectual call. The effectual call of God brings about a marvelous change when it is inwardly heard. It brings about a radical change.

It enlightens us. It persuades us. It affects our mind.

It affects our will. It affects our affections. It is not a matter of pyrotechnics in the sky and excitement, but rather of deportment.

A whole new way of living issues forth from having heard God's effectual call. It brings about a radical change at the heart of our being. This is not a New Testament doctrine exclusively.

It's mentioned in the Old Testament as well. It is nothing more and nothing less than the doctrine of regeneration, of being born again. The word is heard.

The change is effected, and new life begins. Sometimes an evangelist will say, Believe in Jesus Christ, and you will be born again. I appreciate the man's heart and the man's zeal, but technology is all messed

up.

When you are born again, you are able to believe and put your faith in Jesus Christ. Being born again, becoming a new person, happens by the sovereign grace of God. Without our merit of ourselves, we are dead in trespasses and sins.

Of ourselves, we have a heart of stone that is unresponsive to God. It can be polished, it can be chipped, it can be shaped, but it's still a heart of stone. The only way it will become a heart responsive to the word of God, is when God takes the initiative, brings about the change, and gives us a new heart, a tender heart that is responsive to his voice.

It is a radical change, which is offered by God and not manipulated by man. Turn to the Old Testament book of Ezekiel. You don't hear many sermons on the book of Ezekiel these days, but a famous preacher in Scotland of the last century, a man named Guthrie, preached a marvelous series of messages, six published, called the Gospel in Ezekiel.

Take a look at Ezekiel chapter 36. Ezekiel 36, beginning at verse 24. The prophet says, speaking for God, I will take you out of the nations.

I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

The new heart, the inclination to follow God, the ability to do what is right, all of this originates with the initiative of God. This isn't something that was invented by John Calvin. This isn't something that was described and defined and invented by Martin Luther.

This was taught by St. Augustine but not invented by him. It wasn't even concocted by the Apostle Paul. It's from the very heart and mind of God revealed in the pages of the Old Testament through a prophet like Ezekiel.

The new mind, the new will, the new heart is something that is a gift of God. I will give you my spirit. I will put my spirit in you.

I will give you cleansing. I will incline you to follow my will. And so at the very beginning of our Christian experience there is that call of God, the inward call which brings together his word and his spirit and creates new life with which we then respond to God as we ought.

And here there is a whole series of contrasts because if you are called of God, you are called to something as well as from something. The passages are too numerous to look up one by one, but I'll simply give you the paraphrase of these various texts to demonstrate this. For one thing, we are called from darkness to light.

You all know that passage in 1 Peter. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and so forth, that we might declare the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Out of the darkness of superstition to the clear light of a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Out of the darkness of immorality into the light of purity. Out of the darkness of death into the light of a life that is everlasting. God calls from something that we must leave behind to something that we must apprehend, experience, and enjoy.

We are called from alienation and estrangement from God into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ. We are called, according to Galatians 5, from slavery to freedom. And the apostle exhorts the Galatians not to become entangled again in the yoke of bondage, but to stand fast in the liberty that Jesus Christ gives his people.

We are called from disobedience to holiness. We are called from the world, which is the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of God's dear son. We are called from death into life.

So scripture distinguishes between the outward call and the inward call which sparks new life and responds properly and is the proof that we have been effectually called. When we are called of God in this way, when we are spiritually reborn by something that touches our very innermost being, we respond in two ways. The first of these is repentance and the second is faith.

Repentance is a sure sign that we have heard God's call and it is a most appropriate response to the word of the Lord. Now what do we mean by repentance? We can know what repentance is by a study of the psalms. There are various kinds of psalms.

There are at least five or six different types of psalms and it makes an interesting study to go through them. There are royal psalms which speak of Jesus Christ the Messiah as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The second psalm is one of those.

The 72nd psalm is another. There are psalms of thanksgiving where the mighty acts of God and the liberation of his people from the slavery of Egypt to the liberty of Canaan is celebrated. There are ethical psalms, not to imply that some psalms are not ethical, but they deal with human conduct.

They deal with integrity, uprightness, generosity. Psalm 1 and Psalm 15 are two examples of these. And then there are penitential psalms, psalms that speak of heartbroken repentance for sin in the sight of a holy God.

And there are many of these. One of these is Psalm 32. It begins with the good news and then tells you how we got to the experience of the good news by dealing with the bad news.

Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven, whose transgression is covered, the man to whom God does not impute guile and iniquity. But, says the psalmist, I didn't come to that enjoyment of the grace of God immediately. I had to go through a process where night and day the hand of God was heavy upon me because my guilt was oppressive and my conscience was troubled.

And it wasn't until I owed up to God and was honest with Him that I received pardon and enjoyed peace. Psalm 32 is a penitential psalm. Another, of course, is Psalm 51.

If you ever want something rather detailed in treating Psalm 51, you ought to take a look at a Purim work by a man named Fildersam. Believe it or not, I read it all through from start to finish. It's over 700 closely packed pages and he gets as far as verse 7. But the 51st Psalm deals with the matter of repentance for sin and the forgiving grace of God.

Psalms 130 is one of these. Out of the depths I have cried to you, out of the depths of my despair, because of my sin, I cry to you, the only one who can forgive iniquity. When we hear the inward call of God, we are born again and our new being expresses itself in repentance for sin.

Briefly, how do we describe repentance? The Westminster Shorter Catechism has a concise definition that could fill volumes to expound. That repentance is an evidence of the goodness and the grace of God by which we acknowledge our sinfulness, we confess our sins, we sorrow for our sins, we hate our sins, we turn from our sins, we seek God's mercy, and we purpose that with his help we will here on in give him a fresh and new obedience. That is an evidence of the effectual call of God.

And the second evidence of the call of God beyond repentance for sin is confidence in the Savior. Faith, saving faith, is defined in our doctrinal standards as a gift from God by which we receive Jesus Christ and rest on him alone for our salvation as he is presented to us in the gospel. Not the Jesus of our imagination, but the Jesus who is revealed in the gospel.

The Jesus who is both sinless man and true God. The Jesus who bears in his own body our sins on the tree. The Jesus who is willing to die in our place.

The Jesus who defeats death and gives us the hope of a glorious and blessed immortality. We put our confidence in that Jesus and rest on him alone to put us right with God. Repentance for sin.

Trust in the Savior. These are the two infallible evidences that God has spoken to us, that we have heard his call, and that we have responded to it in a most appropriate way. I conclude with the passage that we started with at the beginning, and by the time this course is over you should know them by memory.

Romans 8 beginning at verse 28. We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.

That he might be the firstborn among many brothers, and those he predestined he also called. I think we have just about three or four minutes to deal with any questions that you may have concerning the subject of this morning. If you do, let's make the best use of the limited amount of time that we've got, and I'll do what I can to answer you as concisely as I can.

Yes? Do I believe in irresistible grace? I certainly believe that there are people who resist the Holy Spirit when he would move them in the direction of Jesus Christ. That's what stubborn unbelief is all about. But when the grace of God takes root in our hearts and begins that radical transformation, which has as its terminating point likeness to Christ in every respect, that grace proves to be irresistible.

In the elect, that grace is irresistible. For what God has had in mind from before the foundation of the world shall not be frustrated but shall come to pass. There is no link in the golden chain of salvation that is man-made and therefore capable of being broken.

Whom he loved from all eternity, he predestined to become like his Son. And in order that they might become like his Son, he has called them, not merely outwardly but in such a way as to change their hearts. And those whom he called, he also justified, which you'll be studying next week.

And those whom he justified, he will eventually and inevitably glorify. The course of his grace in the hearts and lives of the elect is indeed irresistible. Yes? I understand that the initiative is taken by God in this

whole matter of salvation.

How do you respond, however, or how do you inform the people of the need to turn to God? In Acts 16.32, it says, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. So, one of your points earlier, you were saying, you know, you can't just do that sort of thing and say you were born again. Can you just clarify that? All right.

We need to begin with people where they are. I find it fascinating that the Apostle Paul never used what can roughly be called a canned pitch. He was sensitive to the condition of people, and that is where he started his discussion.

So we should approach people where they are and begin with them at that point and not try to impose on everybody a stereotype message like a mustard plaster on a chest afflicted with pneumonia. For example, when Paul went into the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13, where was his starting point? Well, he had a Jewish audience. It was a synagogue.

It was the Sabbath. So you start with the scriptures of the Old Testament and the promise of the Messiah, and then you show how Jesus fulfills those predictions and therefore must be the Messiah. When he goes to Athens, he's not in a synagogue.

He's on Mars Hill. He's not talking to Jews who know the Old Testament. He's speaking to Gentiles who are utterly ignorant of it.

But they do happen to know pagan poets and philosophers. And so he speaks to them about the folly of idolatry, about the God who made heaven and earth, about the fact that we are God's offspring, about the God who will someday bring you and me into judgment, and the judge will be Jesus Christ risen from the dead. So he started with them where they were.

In Acts 14, he's not in a synagogue speaking to Jews. He's not on Mars Hill speaking to philosophers. He's speaking to peasant folk.

If he were to quote from the Old Testament, they wouldn't understand him at all. If he were to quote from Greek philosophers and poets, they would ignore that. But they were farmers.

They were used to seasons of seed time and harvest and the cycle of nature. And so he spoke to them about the God who gave seed time and harvest and moved from that to speak of the God who not only created and the God who not only governs through providence, but visited this planet in the person of Jesus. So when we approach people with the message, we must be very sensitive to know where they are at and to begin with that starting point and work toward Jesus.

One final word on this, and then I'll let you go and find your favorite seat at the back. If you go in late, you'll have to sit in the front. And it's this.

When Philip was sent by God to speak to the treasurer of the Ethiopian queen, he did not immediately launch into an evangelistic message. He approached the man. He got close enough to him to see what he was doing, to look at what he was like, and to know what his problem was.

What are you doing? I'm reading. Do you understand what you're reading? How can I unless somebody explains it to me? Well, I'm here to help you understand it. So he started with the man where he was at.

He got close enough to him to see what he was doing and to hear what he was doing and to understand what was bugging him. And from that starting point, he directed him to Jesus Christ. So in evangelistic calling and evangelistic preaching, though we know the message, we must begin where people are in their concern, in their interest, or in their misunderstanding of the faith.

But eventually, like all roads pointing to Rome, we must lead them to Christ. Let's conclude the prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you that by your Holy Spirit, who uses your word, you have spoken to our hearts, that you have begun the good work of changing the way we think and the things we love, so that we may begin to be conformed to the likeness of your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Any announcement you want to make about next week? Just that next week we'll have a video by our teacher on justification by faith. You'll enjoy that.

He's a dynamic teacher.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/DhwR3gky96A.mp4>

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