

7. IRRESISTIBLE GRACE & EFFECTUAL CALLING

ROMANS 8:28-39

1. INTRODUCING "EFFECTUAL CALLING"

(a) Today's question: can we resist the work of saving grace?

(b) Distinguishing different types of "calling"

- NOT naming or calling to a station in life
- We distinguish
 - (i) External call (nature, Romans 1:18ff; verbal preaching, Matt 22:14)
 - (ii) Internal call

(c) A definition of "effectual calling"

"By the regenerating work of his Spirit, God the Father irresistibly summons, normally in conjunction with the church's proclamation of the gospel, the elect sinner into fellowship with, and into the kingdom of, his Son Jesus Christ. His call is rendered effectual by the quickening work of the Spirit of God the Father and God the Son in the hearts of the elect." Robert Reymond, *New Systematic Theology*, p718.

(d) A key text – Romans 8:28-30 and the *ordo salutis*

Predestination
Irresistible grace and effectual calling
Regeneration
Conversion (repentance and faith)
Justification
Adoption
Sanctification
Glorification

2. EXPLAINING GOD'S "EFFECTUAL CALL"

(a) The nature of the call: it is a powerful summons that achieves what God wants

- A summons
- God's call must be effectual because we are dead in sin
- The will of God cannot fail (Eph 1:11, Isaiah 55:10-11)
- Called into...
 - Fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9)
 - Out of darkness and into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:)
 - Into his kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:12, 2 Thess 2:14, 1 Peter 5:10)
 - The final marriage supper of the lamb (Rev 19:9)
 - To eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12)
- God's call cannot be revoked (Rom 11:29)

(b) The author of the call: Not us... but God the Holy Trinity

- **God – not us (Romans 8:29, 1 Cor 1:9)**

- **God the Father (1 Cor 1:9)**

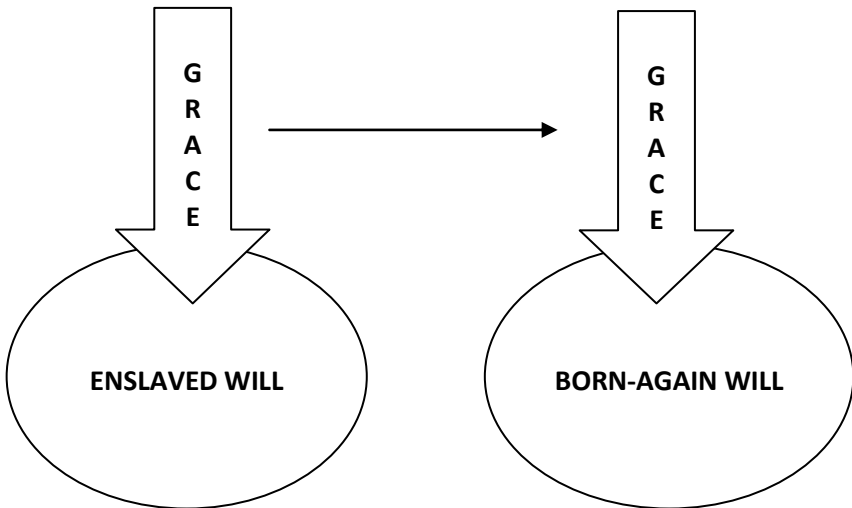
... in Christ (2 Tim 1:9)

... through the Holy Spirit and the Gospel (2 Thess 2:13-14)

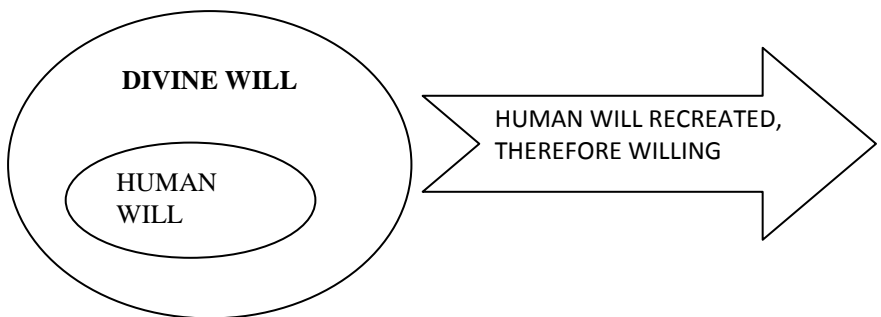
3. QUESTION: DOES GOD OVER-RIDE THE HUMAN WILL?

ANSWER: NO, GOD TRANSFORMS THE HUMAN WILL

- (a) Saving grace penetrates will and regenerates it



- (b) Through the Spirit's ongoing work, the regenerate person chooses to believe



4. APPLICATIONS:

- (a) Salvation: it is God's sovereign work all the way down the line
- (b) Salvation: how wonderful that the Lord changes our wills

5. SUMMARY

“All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, 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, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.” (Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), chapter X)

“Original sin renders all human beings naturally dead (unresponsive) to God, but in effectual calling God quickens the dead. As the outward call of God to faith in Christ is communicated through the reading, preaching, and explaining of the contents of the Bible, the Holy Spirit enlightens and renews the heart of elect sinners so that they understand the gospel and embrace it as truth from God, and God in Christ becomes to them an object of desire and affection. Being now regenerate and able by the use of their freed will to choose God and the good, they turn away from their former pattern of living to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to start a new life with him.” (J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, p153).

6. HOMEWORK

For reflection:

- Read, pray and worship in the light of some Bible texts we've looked at today.
- Read Charles Wesley's hymn below and think about its words.

Next session: regeneration, repentance and faith - please read John 3:1-15

1 AND can it be, that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

2 'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel-minds inquire no more.

3 He left his Father's throne above,
(So free, so infinite his grace!)
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!

4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

5 No condemnation now I dread,
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.