

TEACHING GOAL

To understand the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in calling the elect into the kingdom of Christ.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Q. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convicting us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

S.C. 31, L.C. 67-69, W.C. of F. X, Savoy 10, Young 58, 59

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Ephesians 2:1-10

Support Passages: Acts 26:14, Romans 8:28-30, John 3:5-8, Acts 28:23-28, Ezekiel 36:25-28, I Corinthians 1:22-25, II Thessalonians 2:13&14

BIBLE STORY

Acts 10: Cornelius was prepared by God to receive the gospel from Peter. Thus did God call the gentile Cornelius and his household into the kingdom of His Son.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Romans 8:29 & 30

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

APPLICATION

The attempt to save ourselves or to merit eternal life by our behavior is utterly futile, and if at the outset we have saving faith in Christ, let it be known that it is the work of God's Spirit.

SUMMARY

There appears to be a certain set of events that must occur in an individual's behalf, in order for that person to obtain eternal life. Theologians refer to this as the Ordo Salutis or the order of salvation. Perhaps the best text to demonstrate that order, especially in reformed circles is Romans 8:29 and 30. There we find the following order of events: (1) Foreknown; (2) Predestined; (3) Called; (4) Justified; (5) Glorified. The first two have been discussed in lesson 10 on the decrees of God and the last two are shortly to be dealt with. This lesson concerns number three, namely, the work of the Holy Spirit in calling the elect into the kingdom of God.

This work of the Holy Spirit is taught by Paul in Ephesians chapter 2. There he compares the unsaved person to a dead man. Incapable of doing any spiritual good, in total bondage to the devil, an enemy of God, the unsaved person is completely hopeless and helpless. There is not the faintest spark of spiritual goodness in him and he cannot enter the kingdom of God nor does he care to. This is the description of the unsaved person though he be the best, most noble, most cultured, most refined and most philanthropic person on earth. In order to be saved we must be given "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him", and ... "our hearts must be enlightened." (Ephesians 1:17 & 18) In short we must be made spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:5) and in this process the spiritually dead man is completely passive, that is he can do and does nothing.

God's electing and seeking love alone can make those who are dead in their trespasses and sins, alive. At the outset the one who has been saved is the workmanship of God and has been gifted with salvation which includes all that is necessary to save. It includes the Redeemer and God's act of calling the sinner out of a condition of death, and the gift includes faith, for Paul writes "you have been saved through faith." ¹ God would have us know that not one single step in our salvation was accomplished by man, not even our faith. If at any point we could say "I produced the faith" or "I cooperated with grace", then we could not say we were the workmanship of God.

The Holy Spirit opened the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14) so that she responded to Paul's message. No one with deaf ears or blind eyes or a sin hardened and deadened heart can ever savingly respond to the gospel apart from regeneration by the Holy Spirit, as was the case with Lydia. The story of Cornelius also teaches this truth (Acts 10). He already had a rudimentary faith

in God for God had opened his heart to truth and when Peter preached the gospel to him, he savingly received it and as evidence the Holy Spirit fell upon him.

We learn from all this that if we hope for heaven because we have been good or have done good things for people (which of course we ought to do), then we are living in great delusion. Let us repent and believe on Jesus Christ as our sacrifice and LORD (YAHWEH), realizing that if we do this in a saving way it arises from the effectual calling of God's Spirit.

¹ For those with a bent for detail - the Greek word for *that* in the second clause of verse 8 (that not of yourselves) is *touto*, a pronoun which is neuter singular nominative. It does not have faith (*pistis*) as its antecedent since *pistis* is a feminine noun. *Touto* has an implied antecedent which is the whole complex of events, including faith, necessary to save us.