

**MILILANI COMMUNITY CHURCH
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS**

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES 2003

LESSON 6: THE ORDER OF SALVATION (Part 1): Calling, Regeneration and Conversion

Our salvation was ACCOMPLISHED through the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 19:30). Now we are going to begin to consider how the salvation that Christ accomplished on the Cross is APPLIED to us as individuals.

In Romans 8:29-30 the Apostle Paul points to a definite ORDER in which the blessings of salvation come to us: "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**; those he called, he also **justified**; and those he justified, he also **glorified**."

The first topic in our discussion of the ORDER in which the blessings of salvation come to us is the doctrine of calling (See Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, chapter 33; and Charles M. Horne, The Doctrine of Salvation, from which much of this material is drawn).

I. CALLING

The Scriptural doctrine of calling is twofold:

- (1) The General Call: a call that comes through the proclamation of the gospel. It is a call which urges sinners to accept salvation (John 7:37)

- (2) The Effectual (Effective) Call: The effectual call is effective, that is, it always results in salvation (Romans 8:30, Romans 1:6-7; I Corinthians 1:9, 26; II Peter 1:10)

A. Effective Calling

Calling is an act of God (Romans 8:29, 30). "*those whom **he** predestined he also called; and those whom **he** called he also justified*"

Description of effective calling (verses describing what this calling is):

I Peter 2:9
I Corinthians 1:9
I Peter 5:10
Romans 1:6
Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2
I Corinthians 7:15
Galatians 5:13
Ephesians 1:18
I Thessalonians 4:7
I Peter 2:20-21
I Tim. 6:12
II Thessalonians 2:14

Definition: "*Effective calling is an act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which he summons people to himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith.*" (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 693)

Distinction between effective calling and general calling:

- (1) THE GENERAL CALL (all who hear with the ear)
- (2) THE EFFECTIVE CALL (all who respond from the heart)

We see then that *effective calling*, which is entirely an act of God, is distinguished from the gospel call or *general calling*. The general call, which comes through human speech, is sometimes called *external calling*. By contrast the *effective calling* of God that actually brings about a willing response from the person who hears it is sometimes called *internal calling*.

B. Elements of the Gospel Call

In the preaching of the gospel, three important elements must be included:

1. EXPLANATION OF THE FACTS CONCERNING SALVATION

- 1. Romans 3:23
- 2. Romans 6:23
- 3. Romans 5:8

2. INVITATION TO RESPOND TO CHRIST PERSONALLY IN REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Matthew 11:28-30

John 1:11-12

Revelation 3:20

Revelation 22:17

3. A PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE

John 3:16

I John 5:11-12

C. The importance of the Gospel Call (General Call)

The doctrine of the gospel call is important because if there were no gospel call we could not be saved (Romans 10:14)

II. REGENERATION (or “the new birth”)

It is God the Father who calls His own out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light; but the sinner must do the coming. And yet, if one is *dead* in trespasses and sin, how may he answer this divine call? It is the glory of the gospel of God's sovereign grace that it overcomes this dilemma. God's call, when it is effective, carries with it the operative grace necessary to enable the person called to respond in faith to the Savior. This grace is the grace of regeneration.

Definition of Regeneration: *“Regeneration is a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us.”* Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 699). This is sometimes called “being born again” using language from John 3:3-8.

A. Regeneration is totally a work of God

In the work of regeneration we play no active role at all. It is instead totally a work of God (John 1:13, James 1:18, I Peter 1:3, John 3:3-8, Ezekiel 36:26-27)

B. What is the connection between effective calling and regeneration?

Scripture indicates that regeneration must come before we can respond to effective calling with saving faith (I Peter 1:23,25; James 1:18).

*“As the gospel comes to us, God speaks through it to summon us to himself (effective calling) and to give us new spiritual life (regeneration) so that we are enabled to respond in faith. Effective calling is thus God the Father **speaking powerfully to us**, and regeneration is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit **working powerfully in us**, to make us alive”* (Grudem, 700).

These two things (regeneration and effective calling) must have happened simultaneously when Peter preached the gospel to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44).

C. The exact nature of regeneration is mysterious to us

D. Regeneration comes before saving faith

Using verses referred to above, we have defined regeneration to be the act of God awakening spiritual life within us, bringing us from spiritual death to spiritual life. On this definition, it is natural to understand that regeneration comes before saving faith. It is in fact this work of God that gives us the spiritual ability to respond to God in faith. Though it comes “before” saving faith, it is important to remember that they usually come so close together that it will ordinarily seem to us that they are happening at the same time.

E. Genuine regeneration must bring results in life

See I John 5:1; I John 3:9; I John 4:7; I John 5:3-4; I John 5:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 7:15-20.

III. CONVERSION (Faith and Repentance)

In effectual calling and regeneration God himself (through the preaching of the Word) issues the gospel call to us and, by the work of the Holy Spirit, regenerates us, imparting new spiritual life within. Now we examine our response to the gospel call.

A. Meaning of conversion

1. Positively, FAITH is turning toward something or someone. This turn or act of faith, may be defined as an understanding of and mental assent to certain basic facts concerning the person and work of Christ culminating in a committal of one's entire being to the person of whom those facts testify.

Three important elements of saving faith are to be noted in this definition:

- a. Knowledge - mind
 - b. Assent - emotions
 - c. Trust - will
2. Negatively, REPENTANCE is turning away from something or someone.
 - a. Repentance is the gift of God. "God has granted...the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18, NASB). It is implanted by the Spirit at regeneration.
 - b. Repentance includes a godly sorrow for sin. Paul calls this "Sorrow in accordance with the will of God," as contrasted to worldly sorrow (II Cor. 7:10)
 - c. Repentance is a turning from idols (I Thess. 1:9).

See: Psalm 119:59-60. From this passage we learn several important ideas:

- a. "I thought on my ways"
 - b. "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies"
 - c. "I made haste...to keep thy commandments"
- #### B. Illustration of Conversion (faith and repentance like two side of a coin)
- #### C. Means of conversion
1. The efficient cause is God, not man
 2. The moving cause is the good will of God
 3. The instrumental cause is the ministry of the Word
- #### D. Three biblical cases of conversion
1. Lydia (Acts 16:13-15)
 2. The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:19-34)
 3. Paul (Acts 9:1-28)