

# This Great Salvation

## Session 3—Calling and Regeneration

### I. Calling— Gospel Call and Effectual Call

A. **The Gospel Call** (also referred to as the external or general call), is the offer of salvation to all without distinction. It is an invitation to respond in repentance and faith to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

1. Biblical references:

- a. “Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11.28
- b. “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’” Revelation 22.17a
- c. “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ....” Acts 17.30
- d. Cf. John 6.35; 7.37; Isaiah 55.1 ff.
- e. Parables of the wedding banquet and great banquet (Matthew 22.1-14; Luke 14.12-24)

2. Elements of the gospel call

- a. Presentation of the facts of the gospel (Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection)—I Corinthians 15.1-3
- b. Invitation to respond—2 Corinthians 5.20
- c. Promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life—John 3.16; Acts 3.19

## B. **The Effectual Call** (also referred to as the internal or effective call)

### 1. Scriptural support:

a. John 6.44

b. I Corinthians 1.22-24—a distinction between Jews and Greeks for whom the message of a crucified Messiah is a stumbling block and foolishness and those Jews and Greeks whom God has called, and for whom Christ is the power and wisdom of God.

c. Romans 8.28-30

d. I Peter 2.9

e. 2 Peter 1.10

2. “The effectual call is the gospel call made effective in the hearts and lives of God’s people.... It is the sovereign action of God through the Holy Spirit, by which he enables the hearer of the gospel call to respond in faith, repentance and obedience.”<sup>1</sup>
3. This calling is actually a divine summons that carries with it not only the command, but the effect of the command. Lazarus as analogy.
4. “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.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Hoekema, *Saved By Grace*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1989, p. 86.

## II. Regeneration

- A. Definition: The initial work of the Holy Spirit by which he makes alive persons who are dead in sin bringing them into living union with Jesus Christ.
- B. “Regeneration is a New Testament concept that grew, it seems, out of a parabolic picture-phrase that Jesus used to show Nicodemus the inwardness and depth of the change that even religious Jews must undergo if they were ever to see and enter the kingdom of God, and so have eternal life. (John 3.3-15) Jesus pictured the change as being ‘born again.’”<sup>2</sup>
- C. “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is **born of the Spirit** is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be **born again.**’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is **born of the Spirit.**” (John 3.1-8)
- D. “Born again” can also be translated, “born from above.” These terms, as well as “born of water and the Spirit” (cf. Ezekiel 36.25-28) all indicate a spiritual birth or re-birth, a birth from above. It means to be alive spiritually with the very life of God the Holy Spirit who brings a person from spiritual death to spiritual life. It is more than believing certain things about God. It is a supernatural change. “Therefore, if anyone is in

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<sup>2</sup> J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, 1993, p. 157.

Christ (the result of new birth), he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5.17)

- E. This spiritual birth is mysterious, instantaneous and supernatural. It cannot be seen, measured or quantified. However, like the wind, its effects can be known.
- F. It is not something we do, but something that happens to us. In this sense it is analogous to natural birth. We are passive, not active. Yet there is a difference. In natural birth we move from non-existence to existence (in gestation) and emergence (from the womb). In spiritual birth we move from spiritual death in trespasses and sins to new spiritual life in union with Christ. (cf. Ephesians 2.1, 5)
- G. We cannot save ourselves any more than we could give birth to ourselves.
- H. Jesus said, “You **must** be born again.” (John 3.7) He also said, “The Son of Man **must** be lifted up (John 3.14), that **whoever believes in him** may have eternal life.” (John 3.15)
- I. The effects of regeneration may be seen in lives lived for God’s glory.
  - 1. “No one who is born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.” (I John 3.9)
  - 2. “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.” (I John 5.4)
  - 3. “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.” (I John 5.1)
  - 4. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” (I John 4.7)