

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24
 22 | Election & Effectual Calling

HOW REDEMPTION IS APPLIED: ELECTION AND EFFECTUAL CALLING

PART 1 | Of the Decree of God (WCF 3)

“Decree” includes several decrees (pl. in WLC):

1. General Decree of Creation & Providence

1. **What is it?** “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”
2. **What about sin and freedom?** “yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”
 1. We have to think beyond modern metaphors of “control” or “puppets”. God establishes our freedom and its bounds. Absolute freedom - as if we could be free to become a fish or fly like a bird - is a myth. We have freedom according to what it means to be a human.
 2. Note the combination of sovereignty and responsibility for sin in Acts 2.23 - *“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”*
3. **Not conditional or merely foreknowledge** - “Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.”

2. Special Decree of Salvation

1. 3.5 - “Those of mankind that are **predestinated** unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath **chosen, in Christ**, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, **without** any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.”

1. **Not just the end, but the means also** - "VI. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the **means** thereunto.
2. **Some** - "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are *predestinated* unto everlasting life; and others *foreordained* to everlasting death."
 1. **Some Passed by** - "VII. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to **pass by**; and to **ordain** them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."
 2. Notice the different terms being used to capture the different ways God acts. It's simply not the same work of God or need for special divine intervention in saving as in condemning.
3. **Handle with Care, noting its purposes** - "VIII. The doctrine of this **high mystery** of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be *assured* of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of *praise*, reverence, and admiration of God; and of *humility*, *diligence*, and abundant *consolation* to all that sincerely obey the gospel."

Key Passages:

- John 10.14-26 - "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. . . . you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."
- Eph. 1.3-11 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. . . . as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will"
- Rom. 8:28-30 - "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

See also: Ps 33:11; Eph 1:11; Heb 6:17; Ps 5:4; Jas 1:13-14; 1 John 1:5; Hab 1:13; Acts 2:23; Matt 17:12; Acts 4:27-28; John 19:11; Prov 16:33; 1 Pet 1:2; Eph 2:10; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Thess 5:9-10; Titus 2:14; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:5; John 6:64-65; Rom 8:28-39; John 8:47; 1 John 2:19

Note the biblical reasoning: Because God is God and salvation is by grace alone. Most objections to this doctrine stem from not believing that we are really dead in our sin and / or not believing that salvation is by pure grace. If we don't accept predestination, are we willing to accept salvation by grace alone?

Note also how this totally reorients us from NOT being the center of the universe!

PART 2 | Effectual Calling

"In Due Season, having elected, God effectually calls..."

"Effectual" means it works; as opposed to merely "outward" or "ordinary." All who hear a sermon are "outwardly called" but not all are "effectually called." Effectual calling is the Confession's language for regeneration, new birth, or conversion.

WCF 10:

I. 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.

Notice these specifics:

1. **Who** - the elect (but that's merely a logical deduction, it never diminishes a zeal to preach; if anything, it emboldens it because we know our preaching will serve God's purpose!)
2. **When** - God's appointed and accepted time
3. **What** - effectually to call to grace and salvation, which includes:

1. Being brought from sin and death by Jesus Christ
 2. Enlightening their minds
 3. New Hearts
 4. Renewed wills that are determined or set upon the good
 5. Drawn to Jesus Christ
4. **How -**
1. **Divine side** - by God's Word and Spirit, who always work in tandem!
 2. **Human side** - 10.2 - "**enabled** to answer this call, and to **embrace** the grace offered and conveyed in it."

Outward call is necessary but not sufficient for the Effectual Call - "IV. Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they do profess. And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested."

See: Acts 13:48; Rom 8:28,30; Rom 11:7; Eph 1:5,11; 2 Tim 1:9-10; 2 Thess 2:13-14; Jas 1:18; 2 Cor 3:3,6; 1 Cor 2:12; 2 Tim 1:9-10; 1 Pet 2:9; Rom 8:2; Eph 2:1-10; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor 2:10,12; Eph 1:17-18; 2 Cor 4:6; Ezek 36:26; Ezek 11:19; Deut 30:6; Ezek 36:27; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:23; John 6:44-45; Acts 16:14; Ps 110:3; John 6:37; Matt 11:28; Rev 22:17; Rom 6:16-18; Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29

The Wonderful Benefits!

WSC 32 - "They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them."

Many benefits to come!