

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 21 (HCLD 23) ¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

Vocabulary: Effectual Calling, Regeneration, Enlightenment, Conversion

Question: What is effectual calling?

Answer: Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace,[a] whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereto [b]) he does, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit:[c] savingly enlightening their minds,[d] renewing and powerfully determining their wills,[e] so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.[f]2

Here we find the light of the third tenet of faith being examined by the glorious light of Holy Scripture, and it fades not away, but rather the more brightly shines, revealing the mystery of God's Gospel of grace. I mention tenet three first because it is the one men have the most trouble accepting, yet we also find in these same verses of Scripture the truth of the second tenet. But, none deny the unconditional love (election) of God, but in horror rebel at the thought of a human soul in hell. And rightly we should find hell such a horror to bring a chill to the spine, even as we bask in the glorious warmth of the Gospel of grace. That man stumbles, and refuses the truth, changes nothing before the throne of God the Father almighty. God has spoken, thus it will be, should be enough that none would deny the limited atonement.

Effectual calling means that the offer of God's grace in the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ is not effectual to all mankind, but only to those whom God has drawn to Christ. The process in systematics must be broken down into a sequence of events. I believe that in actuality we are dealing with things that are all but instantaneous, and would defy such a physical separation, but for logic's sake we do so to gain an understanding of the Word of God. Thus from

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 23

Q59: But what does it help you now, that you believe all this?

A59: That I am righteous in Christ before God, and an heir of eternal life.[a]

a. Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; 5:1; 8:16; John 3:36; Titus 3:7

Q60: How are you righteous before God?

A60: Only by true faith in Jesus Christ:[a] that is, although my conscience accuses me, that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them,[b] and am still prone always to all evil:[c] yet God, without any merit of mine,[d] of mere grace,[e] grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction,[f] righteousness and holiness of Christ,[g] as if I had never committed nor had any sins, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me:[h] if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart.[i]

a. Rom. 3:21-25; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9

b. Rom. 3:9-10

c. Rom. 7:23

d. Titus 3:5

e. Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8

f. I John 2:2

g. I John 2:1; Rom. 4:4-5; II Cor. 5:19

h. II Cor. 5:21

i. John 3:18; Rom. 3:28; 10:10

Q61: Why do you say that you are righteous by faith only?

A61: Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God:[a] and I can receive the same and make it my own in no other way than by faith only.[b]

a. I Cor. 1:30; 2:2

b. I John 5:10; Isa. 53:5; Gal. 3:22; Rom. 4:16

² a. John 5:25; Eph. 1:18-20; II Tim. 1:8-9

b. Titus. 3:4-5; Eph. 2:4-5, 7-9; Rom. 9:11

c. II Cor. 5:20; 6:1-2; John 6:44; II Thess. 2:13-14

d. Acts 26:18; I Cor. 2:10, 12

e. Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27; John 6:45

f. Eph. 2:5; Phil. 2:13; Deut. 30:6

the proof texts listed we see regeneration as the first step in our move toward God. In Titus we see this called both a regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. I chose to see these two as the same event, elsewhere spoken of as being enlightened (Eph. 1:18). All of which is what is meant by conversion. The election is from the eternal counsel of God, from before the creation of the world, yet it must be made manifest in history. The order of salvation is important and not some mundane fact to be considered by theologians alone. The sequence of grace, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification in this exact order are a necessity to properly understand justification and sanctification. Any other order leaves to the creature more freedom of will and power than the Bible allows.

What then is the sequence of events? Here we will see a slight co-mingling of the infra/supra as some things are clearly before the fall; the election. From the fall we see tenet one, the total depravity of man is truth. The depth of this depravity being so total man is dead in sin and can in no way save himself. Yet because of the eternal decree which for His own purpose God chose some unto salvation, God cannot leave these elect in this fallen condition. Yet in this condition man will never turn toward God. Thus the first step is for the Holy Spirit to renew, regenerate, enlighten, (all being the same thing) the heart of man, so man can see his own condition and know that he needs a Savior. However enter tenet four, even knowing that he needs a savior, man cannot and will not take the gift offered until God's powerful ordering of all things so works in his heart to make him willing. It is of God's will for man both to will and to do. This steps on the free-will of the created and is another point many will argue about. Yet the Scriptures are clear and it would seem the most foolish wouldn't dare argue with God. Yet all outside the Reformed faith do just this and sadly we have those within the Reformed churches who waffle and allow the heresy of man's free will to tarnish the golden truth of God.

The Westminster Assembly points out that it is in God's accepted time. In another part of the standards we find that the Assembly mention that God often leaves His own elect in their sins for a season for punishment of past sins and for instruction that they might see how low they can sink apart from God's renewing Spirit. Not only does God choose whom He will (tenet three) of a lost and dead humankind (tenet one) out of His own will for His own purpose, by no virtue or merit of man (tenet two) God so orders the heart and mind of man that he is willing to accept the offer of grace (tenet four). All of this declaring with the Scriptures God's sovereignty over all. Sovereignty itself not being one of the five classic points is however the very foundation of the Reformed faith.

The western mind would do well to consider the meaning of the word sovereign, even of earthly monarchs. When we duly note the power and glory claimed by mere mortals, perhaps we can begin to understand the sovereignty of an Almighty God. Two things undergird every doctrine in the reformed church: God's sovereignty and Holy Scripture. The diminishing of either and the whole of the Reformed world will tumble as a house of straw in a whirlwind. Though the light of nature is great and reveals God, it is Holy Scripture that reveals Him as a Sovereign God. Nothing less than the total sovereignty of God can sustain the salvation revealed in the Bible.

Here then we see the fifth tenet revealed to bring into the glorious light of God's revealed truth the fullness of the five tenets of Christian faith once more. For God has spoken, and thereby nothing can undo what He has said and the salvation thus offered cannot be reversed by any power, including the will of the created.

All this said, yet, we must remember even the elect having had the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit so draw them to Christ, are still in the flesh, and will wrestle daily against the Spirit of God, even to doing that which they now hate. Only Christ was both without the nature of sin in the flesh and sinless before God in nature and deed. Mankind in the flesh as noted by Paul, will see as through a glass, darkly, and along with all of creation groan in anticipation the glorious manifestation of the sons of God in the second coming of our Lord and the renewing of all things. Thereby, we grasp why we are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, lest any should glory. All glory belongs to God, especially that of saving a wretched creature such as man. And by this glorious manifestation of His love toward man, God will continue to receive the glory for all ages to come (Eph. 2:7). And here we come full circle once more to question one and the duty of man, to Glorify God.

By now we should have been able to discern that the whole revelation of God as laid down in Scripture and explained to us in the present document by the Westminster Assembly is progressive, and that at any point we can draw a circle and return to the beginning, without damage to the whole that is yet incomplete. As an exercise, try taking each point of classic Calvinism and finding how it alone points to the glory of our sovereign God; yet the whole returns to this same point. Man was created for God's glory and so destined to bring all glory to God in all His perfections, both of love and wrath. Glory be to God, for great things he hath done! Note well the past tense; God has spoken so it is, so it will be.

Suggested Sermon Outline

What Good Does It Do To Believe?

But how does it help you now that you believe all this?

That I am righteous in Christ before God, and an heir of eternal life.

How are you righteous before God?

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all that is evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of my own, out of pure grace, grants me the benefits of the perfect expiation of Christ, imputing to me His righteousness and holiness as if I had never committed a single sin or had ever been sinful, having fulfilled myself all the obedience which Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.

Why do you say that you are righteous by faith alone?

Not because I please God by virtue of the worthiness of my faith, but because the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ alone are my righteousness before God, and because I can accept it and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone.

I. The Ministry of Jesus Enables Believers To Expect Eternal Life

A. The great mystery of our holy religion is that faith can provide righteousness. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, ***The just shall live by faith.*** (Romans 1:17)

The doctrines of the Creed form the structure for grace.

B. Paul was quoting the great message of the Old Testament. Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but ***the just shall live by his faith.*** (Habakkuk 2:4)

C. Faith is the instrument of justification before God. Therefore ***being justified by faith, we have peace*** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Romans 5:1)

D. The importance of believing God's revealed and historical truth could not be more emphatically stated in Scripture. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* (John 3:36)

II. Righteousness Develops According to a Pattern

A. Righteousness anchors in true faith in Jesus Christ. But now *the righteousness of God without the law is manifested*, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even *the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe*: for there is no difference: (Romans 3:21-22)

B. Believers know they are sinners and abandon denial and evasion. What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: *for we have before proved* both Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all under sin*; As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one*: (Romans 3:9-10)

C. Our best human effort cannot keep us from sinning. But *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind*, and *bringing me into captivity to the law of sin* which is in my members. (Romans 7:23)

D. We bring no personal merit to the throne of grace. *Not by works of righteousness* which we have done, *but according to his mercy he saved us*, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (Titus 3:5)

E. Salvation is entirely a matter of grace. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is* the Gift of God: (Ephesians 2:8)

F. In Christ believers obtain all the benefits which would have been theirs if they had not sinned. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And *if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*: And *he is the propitiation for our sins*: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*. (1 John 2:1-2)

G. The judicial record now accounts the believer as actually righteous with God. For what saith the scripture? *Abraham believed* God, and *it was counted unto him for righteousness*. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*. (Romans 4:3-5)

H. Not only do believers avoid the hell they deserve, but they also gain the heaven Christ deserved. But for us also, *to whom it shall be Imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus* our Lord from the dead; (Romans 4:24)

I. All we bring to the gospel is a trusting heart. Being *justified freely by his grace* through the *redemption that is in Christ* Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness *for the remission of sins that are past*, through the forbearance of God; (Romans 3:24-25)

III. Faith Stands by Itself

A. All that believers need as Christians comes to them through the operation of faith. But of him are ye in *Christ Jesus*, who of *God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*: (1 Corinthians 1:30)

B. Nothing but faith brings the outcome we seek and therefore everything else must be expendable. For *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

Heidelberg Catechism
Lord's Day 023
Questions 59, 60, 61
Dr. Edwin P. Elliott, Jr.