



Ordo Salutis (Order of Salvation)

Lesson 2: Effectual Call–Regeneration

Key Verse: John 3:3

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

Introduction

When we talk about the effectual call in a believer’s life, we must first understand the external call. What is the external call? This refers to the verbal proclamation of the gospel by which all sinners are called to turn from their sin and trust in Christ for salvation.¹ This is often called the external call, the general call, or the gospel call. There is a distinction between the external call and the effectual call (also called the inner call). The external call is given by the preacher to all who will hear. However, this external call, although it goes out to all people without distinction, is often rejected. Therefore, since the external call can be and is rejected by the non-elect, it does not properly belong to the *ordo salutis*. At the same time, because the external call is the means by which God issues the effectual call of His elect in regeneration, it is a key component in the study of salvation.

The External Call

The external call is vitally important because no one comes to salvation apart from hearing the external call (Rom. 10:13–17). In the preaching of the gospel there are three elements that must be included in this call.

1. The Facts Concerning Salvation

A person must have a basic understanding of who Christ is and their need for salvation. They must know they have sinned against a holy and righteous God (Rom. 3:23). They must know the penalty for their sin is death (Rom. 6:23). They must know that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for sin (Rom. 5:6–8).

2. The Response to Personally Repent and Believe

While believing the facts of the gospel are essential for salvation, that is not sufficient for salvation; for even the demons believe facts about God and the gospel (Jam. 2:19). For the sinner to have a saving, personal relationship with Jesus, he must respond to these facts by turning from his sin and trusting in Christ for righteousness (Acts 2:38, 3:19; Rom. 4:5). Therefore, any genuine gospel proclamation must include an invitation to make a conscious decision to forsake one’s sins and come to Christ in faith, asking Christ for forgiveness of sins.² Repentance from sin and faith in Christ are two sides of the same coin that constitute conversion.

¹ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, gen. eds. *Biblical Doctrines: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 571.

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 695.

3. The Promise of Forgiveness and Eternal Life

As sinners are called to repentance and faith, they must also be given the promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life (Luke 24:47; John 6:47). This is the blessing that the sinner receives when they respond in repentance and faith. There is also an assurance of eternal life for all who come to Christ in repentance and faith. Jesus said in John 6:37, “The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”

Key Verses:

1. Matthew 5:48. What does this verse say about God? _____
2. Romans 3:23. What has man done? _____
3. Romans 6:23. What is the penalty for sin? _____
4. Romans 5:6–8. What did Christ do for ungodly sinner? _____
5. Mark 1:14–15. What did Jesus preach? _____
6. Acts 3:19. What did Peter say will happen for all who repent? _____
7. John 3:16. What is the promise for all who believe in Jesus? _____

The Effectual Call/Regeneration

Because of the nature of the sinner’s heart being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1), there is nothing he can do to save himself. Sin has so pervaded the heart of man that he is like a spiritual corpse, spiritually dead and totally corrupted by sin. This spiritually dead person is called “the natural man” in 1 Corinthians 2:14. The natural man will always reject the external call of the gospel because he cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God “for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor. 2:14). Being spiritually dead, the sinner is also spiritually blind because “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). The sinner is also spiritually deaf and unable to understand the gospel (John 8:43). The natural man is completely devoid of spiritual life and his heart is a heart of stone (Ezek. 11:19). There is nothing a spiritually dead sinner can do to save himself.

So how can the sinner be saved? He needs God to act to regenerate his heart so that he may respond to the external call in repentance and faith. What is regeneration? *Regeneration is the divine impartation of eternal spiritual life into the spiritually dead sinner.*³ This act of regeneration is a work of God alone (monergistic⁴) by which the sinner plays no active role. Regeneration is also only given to God’s elect. All those whom God has elected will be regenerated by God.

As theologian, Kevin Zuber, says, “Regeneration refers to the doctrine of the ‘new birth.’”⁵ Jesus said in John 3:3, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The expression “born again” (Greek *gennēthē anōthen*) means “to be born from above.” This conveys the idea that this is a “second birth” that is not of an earthly cause but is from above and supernatural. This

³ *Biblical Doctrines*, 580.

⁴ *Monergism* is a word derived from the Greek *monos*, meaning “one,” and *ergos*, meaning “work.” It speaks of there being one agent at work (*Biblical Doctrines*, 579).

⁵ Kevin D. Zuber, *The Essential Scriptures: A Handbook of the Biblical Texts for Key Doctrines* (Chicago: Moody, 2021), 239.

“new birth” is not something that is aided or accomplished by any human effort. Just like a child made no contribution to his conception or first natural birth, in the same way, sinners make no contribution to their new birth unto spiritual life. John affirms this in John 1:12–13, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” The new birth is not something that is passed down through bloodlines but is supernatural. It is also not something that the sinner decides to do as an exercise of his will. The new birth is “of God” (Eph. 2:4–5; Jam. 1:18).

The Bible also gives some illustrations of regeneration. The valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37) is a picture of regeneration. In Ezekiel 37:14 God says, “I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life.” After Lazarus was dead for four days, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth” (Luke 11:43). Lazarus came out of the grave as a result of the call of Jesus. The apostle Paul uses God’s act of creation to illustrate regeneration in 2 Corinthians 4:6 when he said, “For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” All these illustrations help to understand regeneration. In the effectual call God summons the sinner to Himself (effective calling) and gives the sinner new spiritual life (regeneration). In regeneration, God unites the external call of gospel preaching with his sovereign, effectual call unto new life.⁶

Key Verses:

1. John 6:44. Who comes to Christ? _____
2. Acts 16:14. How was Lydia able to respond to Paul’s preaching? _____
3. Romans 8:30. What does God do for those He has predestined? _____
4. 1 Corinthians 1:9. What are believers called into? _____
5. 1 Peter 2:9. What does God call believers out of? _____
6. 1 Peter 5:10. What are believers called to? _____
7. 1 Timothy 6:12. What are believers called to? _____

What are the differences?

- **The External Call:** the call of the preacher to the sinner to repent of their sin and trust in Christ for salvation. This call can be rejected and is rejected by all the non-elect.
- **The Effectual Call:** this is the work of God in grace and mercy, when God uses the gospel call to bring a person—willing and effectively—to saving faith in Christ and grants the sinner new life. This call cannot be rejected by God’s elect.

Application

1. What message are you giving to the lost in the external call?
2. How does the effectual call bring you comfort and joy?

⁶ *Biblical Doctrines*, 580.