

The Theology of the Westminster Standards WCF 10.1 – Effectual Calling

*“Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.”*

– Charles Wesley, “And Can It Be”

I. Review: Natural Liberty

- A. *“God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil. (WCF 9.1)*

“In shorthand, the law is: Our choices are determined by our desires. They remain our choices because they are motivated by our own desires. This is what we call self-determination, which is the essence of freedom.”

– R.C. Sproul, *Chosen By God*, 54.

- B. The Human Will in Its “Fourfold State”

1. **Eccl 7:29** – “... God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”
2. **Rom 8:7–8** – “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”
3. **John 8, 34, 36** – “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin ... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’”
4. **Rev 21:27** – “But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

- C. *When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good ... (WCF 9.4)*

II. Effectual Calling (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

Q. 30. *How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?*

A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

Q. 31. *What is effectual calling?*

A. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

- A. WHO issues this effectual call? (Hint: see 1 Cor 1:9)
- B. WHAT, at root, does God’s effectual calling *do*? What does it accomplish?
- C. WHY is it called “effectual”? Doesn’t this violate our “natural liberty”?!
1. **John 6:44, 45** – “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day ... Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me ...”

III. Man's Natural Liberty and God's Effectual Call

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. (WCF 10.1)

A. WHOM does God “generally” or “externally” call? How? Whom does he “effectually call”?

1. **Acts 17:30** – *“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent ...”*
2. **Rom 8:30** – *“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”*

B. HOW does God effectually call those whom he will?

1. **2 Thess 2:13** – *“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”*

C. WHAT happens when God effectually calls those whom he will?

IV. Application

A. How is the Bible’s teaching on effectual calling a comfort to you? Is it?

B. How should understanding effectual calling (who, what, why, when, how) inform evangelism?

Rom 10:15 – *“And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written [Is 52:7], ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”*

“First we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. . . We also, in turn, are said to be 'engrafted into him' (Rom 11:17), and to 'put on Christ' (Gal 3:27); for, as I have said, all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him. It is true that we obtain this by faith. Yet . . . reason itself teaches us to climb higher and to examine into the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits ... To sum up, the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.” (Calvin, Institutes, 3.1.1)