

The Theology of the Westminster Standards
WCF 10.3–4 – God’s Sovereignty in 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

A. The Subjects and Nature of Effectual Calling

“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 ... effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.” (WCF 10.1)

1. **1 Cor 1:9** – “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

B. The Unconditional Character of Effectual Calling

This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it. (WCF 10.2)

1. **Rom 3:10–11** – “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.”
2. **2 Tim 1:9** – “[God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began ...”

II. The Calling of Elect Infants and Other Incapables

Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word. (WCF 10.3)

A. Support

1. WCF 5.3 – “God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure.”
2. **Luke 1:43–44** – “And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.”
3. **Jer 1:18** – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

4. **Acts 2:38–39** – *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”*

Canons of Dort, 1/17 – *“Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 7:14).”*

- B. How might we sometimes emphasize age and ability over the power of God’s call?
- C. How does WCF 10.3 gives us one more reason to love the doctrine of effectual calling? How does it give hope to grieving Christians?
- D. We have focused on what is different in the case of an infant or mentally inhibited child of God. What is the same in such cases?

III. Effectual Calling and the Non-Elect

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. (WCF 10.4)

- A. **John 6:63–64** – *“The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe.’ (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.).”*
- B. What are some of the “common operations of the Spirit” that people might experience without coming to faith?
- C. How should we guard ourselves from an unhealthy wondering if we are among those who are false church members? How should we properly examine ourselves? What should we do?
- D. What is it “very pernicious, and to be detested” to hold that one may be saved in “any other way” than in Christ? Do you find this to be difficult to believe today? Why or why not?
- E. What makes the teaching of Chapter 10 of the confession difficult? What makes it compelling? As you close your study, consider giving thanks to God for areas of increased clarity and pray for faithfulness to the challenging truths herein.