**Biblical Foundations – The Message and Call of the Gospel**

**What is the Gospel message? How does it become effective?**

When Paul talks about the way that God brings salvation into our lives, he says, “Those whom he *predestined* he *called*, and those whom he called he also*justified*, and those whom he justified he also *glorified*. (Romans 8:30) Paul outlines a definite order in which the blessings of salvation come to us. Although long ago, before the world was made, God ***“predestined”*** us to be his children and to be conformed to the image of his son, but he highlights the fact in the actual outworking of this purpose in our lives God ***“called”*** us.

**Effective Calling**- Paul indicates that calling is an act of God. (Romans 8:30) In fact, it is specifically an act of God the Father, for he is the one who “predestines people to be conformed to the image of his Son.” (Romans 8:29) Other verses in the NT describe more fully what this calling is. (1 Peter 2:9, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Colossians 3:15, Ephesians 4:4, 1 Timothy 6:12) These verses indicate that no powerless, merely human calling is in view. This calling is rather a kind of ***“summons”*** from the King of the universe, and it has such power that it brings about the response that it asks for in people’s hearts. The calling has the capacity to draw us out of the kingdom of darkness and bring us into God’s kingdom so we can join in full fellowship with him.

This powerful act of God is often referred to as ***effective calling***, to distinguish it from the general gospel invitation that goes to all people and which some people reject. This is not to say that human gospel proclamation is not involved. In fact, God’s effective calling comes through the human preaching of the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 2:14) Of course there are many who hear the ***general call*** of the gospel message and do not respond- but in some cases the gospel call is made so effective by the working of the Holy Spirit in people’s hearts that they do respond; in those instances, we can say they have received ***“effective calling.”***

***Effective calling is an act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which he summons people to himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith.***

\*\*It is critical that we not get the impression that people will be saved by the power of the Holy Spirit and this call ***apart from*** their own willing response to the gospel. In distinction from effective calling, which is entirely an act of God, we may talk about the ***gospel call in general*** which comes through human speech. This gospel call is offered to all people, even those who do not accept it.

**Elements of the Gospel Call**-In human preaching of the gospel, three important elements must be included:

1. **Explanation of Sin and Salvation**- Anyone who comes to Christ for salvation must have at least a basic understanding of who Christ is and how he meets our need for salvation.
   1. All people have sinned. (Romans 3:23)
   2. The penalty for our sin is death. (Romans 6:23)
   3. Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Romans 5:8) and rose from the dead demonstrating power over death and is alive forever more. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
2. **Invitation to Respond to Christ Personally in Repentance and Faith**- When the New Testament speaks of people coming to Christ for salvation, it speaks in terms of a “*genuine personal response”* to an invitation from Christ himself. (Matthew 11:28-30, Revelation 22:17)
3. **A Promise of Forgiveness and Eternal Life**- Although the words of personal invitation spoken by Christ do have promises of rest, and power to become children of God, and partaking of the water of life, it is helpful to make explicit just what Christ promises to those who come to him in repentance and faith. The primary benefit that is promised in the gospel message is the promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. (John 3:16)