Section: Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q84. How does a person change from spiritually dead to spiritually alive?**

By God’s will alone and according to His sovereign timing, the Holy Spirit causes each elect person to be born again, giving new life and saving faith in Jesus.

Intro: Good evening. We have a lot to dig into tonight, so let’s open with prayer then we will dive. Bow your heads and pray with me.

Before we dive in, I want to read our definition of

**Regeneration (new birth, becoming born again):** The act by which God, by His power and will, gives new life to the spiritually dead. Regeneration immediately precedes the gift of saving faith.

For our first question, as I unpack our catechism answer I have 4 main points I want us to see. P1 a person changes from spiritually dead to spiritually alive by God’s will alone, P2 Regeneration happens according to God’s sovereign timing, P3 the Holy Spirit causes the elect to be born again, and P4 when the elect person is born again (regenerated), then God immediately gives them saving faith in Jesus. (Repeat this). So…

**Point 1: A person changes from spiritually dead to spiritually alive by God’s will alone.**

Consider this theological point historically first, I want to show you this from the 1689 Baptist confession of faith:

**Ch. 9:**

**3. Humanity, by falling into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability to choose any spiritual good that accompanies salvation. Thus, people in their natural state are absolutely opposed to spiritual good and dead in sin, so that they cannot convert themselves by their own strength or prepare themselves for conversion.**

This is why we must be born again. The confession goes on to say:

**4. When God converts sinners and transforms them into the state of grace, he frees them from their natural bondage to sin and by his grace alone enables them to will and to do freely what is spiritually good. Yet because of their remaining corruption, they do not perfectly nor exclusively will what is good but also will what is evil.**

What we see repeatedly in Scripture and in our historic confession is that the transition of moving from spiritual death to spiritual life is done by God’s will alone. It is not possible in man’s fallen state to do this necessary work. The changing from spiritual death to spiritual life is the first personal change to the elect person in the process of salvation. We must be given new spiritual life in order to be given and express saving faith. We cannot, in a spiritually dead state, believe in God- as we learned last week.

That being said, we know God saves whom He wills; He is author and finisher of our faith. Though with fallen man, this is sometimes/often a contested doctrine, the Scriptures are so clear on this topic.

**John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

This verse is often misused to argue the opposite of what I am teaching tonight. What typically happens is that someone goes to this passage and reads verse 12 without finishing the sentence-the thought- to verse 13. They argue that belief is a part of man’s so-called autonomous “free” will and that this verse declares that it’s up to man to receive God. There are some huge holes in this argument though; even in verse 12, people tend to miss the clear wording that explains who gives man the “right” to be children of God.

God is the one who calls who He wills for salvation. As we will see later, theologically this is called the Effectual call.

By definition, **Effective Call (Irresistible Grace):** The act of God in which He graciously summons each of the elect to Himself, regenerates them, and gives saving faith, so they willingly respond with genuine repentance and trust in Jesus Christ. God’s effective call—saving grace—always brings about the response it demands in people's hearts.

Our confession states in regards to Gods effectual call and regeneration:

**Ch.10:2. This effectual call flows from God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in those called. Neither does the call arise from any power or action on their part; they are totally passive in it. They are dead in sins and trespasses until they are made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit. By this they are enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it. This response is enabled by a power that is no less than that which raised Christ from the dead.**

You see, man does not and cannot play a part in His regeneration.

So let me be very clear here: all, every single soul who believes, does so because God gave them the new birth and the ability to believe, and therefore the right to become children of God. When they were spiritually dead, they had no ability to believe and no right to be children of God. Therefore, by giving them new birth or spiritual life, God also gave them faith. This is done by God’s will alone.

Look at verse 13: those who believe were born not of blood, so no Jewish rights by birth; nor of the will of the flesh, so no physical obedience or earning; nor of the will of man, so this did not happen because any man desired or willed the belief. … “but of God.” It was God who effectually called, regenerated, and gave saving faith to each of the redeemed. They were “**born**, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, **but of God**.”

If you were “born again,” it was not because of your birthright, not because of your physical will, and not because of your mental will. The only option left is that you were born again, as the verse says, “But of GOD.” This verse is very similar to one found in Romans 9:16:

**Romans 9:16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.**

You see the same point here from Paul. Salvation as a whole, beginning with regeneration, depends not on human will or exertion, but rather on God who has or possesses or owns saving grace.

This truth is taught all throughout Scripture. In the John chapter three Jesus was talking to Nicodemus -- a teacher of Israel. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, meaning he should have had a deep intimate knowledge of the Old Testament. Jesus said to him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not know these things?”

Jesus is clearly saying that these “things” (speaking of being born again) are found in the Old Testament or the Scripture that Nicodemus teaches from. So let’s look to Ezekiel chapter 36 to see why Jesus thought Nicodemus should know this:

**Ezekiel 36:25-27 “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness’s, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”**

Earlier in this chapter, Ezekiel, speaking on God’s behalf, says clearly, “Thus sayeth the Lord: It is not for your sake that I am about to act, oh Israel, but for the sake of my Name.” What we must see here is that the “I” in this passage, the “I” that is giving new life and causing obedience, is God--and He does this by His will alone. His acting here is not affected by any other thing. It is, and always was, God’s will to save to Himself His elect. His will is based on nothing other than His sovereign choice. Because we are so familiar with these verses, let me show you that this is found in many other places in Scripture:

**Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

I know this is a very often-referenced verse to point out the truth that new spiritual life is given by God’s will alone. However I really want to draw your attention to why it is regularly used for this point. This verse is so clear. Faith was given to you by God’s grace. Please hear this: if grace has any other active participant working in it apart from the giver of it, it is not grace. (Repeat this) Therefore, the grace spoken of here in this passage is of God’s will alone.

Let’s look at our next verse:

**1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**

According to God’s great mercy, He caused us to be born again. Who is doing the regenerating work in this text? God has caused each of the saved to be born again. It cannot be any clearer. The cause- the effective reason- that a spiritually dead person becomes born again and spiritually alive is God. He is the cause. It’s done by His will alone; it’s His work in and to the elect. Notice the heart of Peter here, too. Peter is not upset. Peter is in awe of God; this is an exclamation! “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

He praises God and gives complete credit to Him for new birth. This was done by God’s will and work. Praise God indeed, Christian, if you have been raised from spiritual deadness to spiritual life, God did it! He did it according to His great mercy!

Regeneration (new birth) is God’s saving mercy to us in action; it should well up awe in our hearts that He would do this through the Holy Spirit, on the basis of the perfect work of His Son. We who have been saved, have a living hope because our Lord is not dead but has been resurrected. God accepted the payment of Jesus. He, in His sovereign timing, by His power and will, is the effective cause of each of us elect being born again. From start to finish salvation is of the Lord and this is glorious!

We saw in Ezekiel and we see all throughout the Old Testament God’s sovereign choice in choosing whom He will save or even show favor to. Now we have seen letters from Paul, John, and Peter make this point clearly.

Let’s consider another passage:

James 1:18 Of **his own will** he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

By God’s own will, He brought us forth. This bringing forth is speaking of saving a dead sinner to new life. The clarity of the context of James is that James is speaking to “brothers” or fellow believers all throughout his letter and especially here in chapter 1. The “us” he is referring to in this verse is believers. In fact, by verse 18, he has used the word brother 3 times and follows verse 18 by addressing his beloved brothers in verse 19. The context makes it clear that James is speaking about the saving work of God. So that is from James, Jesus’s own brother. Look at the way Jude speaks of this in the closing of his letter:

**Jude 1:24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.**

You see, it is God who presents you, the believer, blameless. No one else but God. Every author in every book of the New Testament shows that salvation is from God’s will alone. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus tells a parable of a rich young ruler. Jesus says it is harder for a rich man to enter heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. His disciples then ask this important question: “Who then can be saved?” Notice they do not ask, “How can a rich man be saved?” No, they respond with, “Then WHO can be saved?” because in their time, richness was proof of God’s favor. If a rich man could not be saved, then the poor and all those without God’s favor were surely doomed. You see this train of thought in their question. Who can be saved, then?

In both books, Jesus’s response is this: “With man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.” Again by God’s will and not man’s. I have now shown you every author in the New Testament except for Luke. Luke makes this clear as well in the book of ACTS:

Acts 16:14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

The Lord opened her heart. Luke says Lydia believed because the Lord opened her heart or caused her to believe. This is the constant theme; men are saved by God’s will alone. Let’s look at one more:

**Titus 3:5 he (God) saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit**

So by God’s own mercy He saved us. This truth is so clear.

This leads me to our next point.

**Point 2: Regeneration happens according to God’s sovereign timing**

I want to keep this point brief for time’s sake. God according to His sovereign timing, will cause regeneration in the His elect. Since we do not know Gods concealed will, we must not assume or suppose that someone is outside of God’s salvation.

We know that God will save the elect prior to their death and judgment but we do not know the hour or day in which He will do this. This then is why we continue to pray for and share the gospel with all whom we can.

I have spoken to many parents over the years heartbroken because their child has rebelled against the gospel truths they had worked so hard to instil in them. This rebellion may be permanent, and I would be a liar if I assured them their child will certainly be saved. However, I always want to remind them that as long as they are alive it may be Gods will to save them and that they can hope and trust in God for that work.

When we share the gospel with others the beautiful reality, is that we are not responsible for their salvation. We do not get to decide when or if they will believe. We get to honor God by our obedience and trust in Him, to do the work He prepared before the ages began. This is a freeing truth church. Just because someone does not repent right in front of you at the first sharing of the gospel does not mean they will never believe.

God may perhaps use that very proclamation to convict said person and bring them to salvation at a later time. This should free you up for a greater boldness and joy in obedience to God’s command to spread the gospel and pray for all men!

Let’s move to my 3rd point.

**Point 3: The Holy Spirit causes the elect to be born again**

We saw this point in 1 Peter a few moments ago, but we also find this point so clearly in the gospel of John.

Open your bibles to John 3. I had already mentioned this passage in my first point tonight but let’s look at the actual passage. We see here, Jesus teaching Nicodemus that without the regeneration, which only comes through the work of the Holy Spirit, you cannot be born again and therefore cannot be saved.

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

Jesus clearly says you must be born of the Spirit; you must have spiritual life, and this comes through the work of the Holy Spirit. John says it again clearly in John 6:

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.

Regeneration (being born again) must imply a previous death. We learned that we are conceived and brought forth spiritually dead in sin because of our Federal Head, Adam. So a person’s only hope to eternal life with Jesus is that of God giving him/her new spiritual life- regeneration. This is the clear teaching of Scripture that we need to be given new spiritual life and that this work is done through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives life; the flesh is no help at all! Let’s look at another passage in Romans 8:

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Who freed you, the believer, from sin and death? The Spirit, on the basis of Christ finished work and unto new life in Christ Jesus. This is the work of giving you, the believer, new life. The Holy Spirit causes the elect to be born again.

My last point in this first question is:

**Point 4: When the elect person is born again (regenerated), God gives them new life and saving faith in Jesus.**

We will look at saving faith in greater detail next week, but I’ll plant a little seed for that lesson now, since our answer speaks to it. When the Holy Spirit causes new birth in the elect, they are then also, immediately, given saving faith in Jesus.

Remember our definition for Regeneration (New Birth, Becoming Born Again): The act by which God, by His power and will, gives new life to the spiritually dead. Regeneration **immediately precedes the gift of saving faith**.

Also see the definition for Conversion: **As a result of regeneration, God immediately gives the gift of saving faith** by which a person willingly repents of sin and trusts his/her life and salvation to Jesus Christ alone.

When you are born again, your spiritual eyes are changed from blind to seeing, your spiritual ears are changed from deaf to hearing, and your spiritual heart is changed from stone to flesh. These changes cause you to rightly see who God is; hear the truth of His gospel that you once could not; and believe in, with your now alive heart, Jesus, who is the only savior. This belief is saving faith. God calls, and because the Spirit has given you new ears and a new heart, you hear this call and believe. And this saving faith is a gift; it is a work done by God’s power in each regenerated person immediately after new birth.

Remember: **Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through *faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God*, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

That verse (as well as others) teaches us that the entirety of blessed Salvation (INCLUDING saving faith) is a gift from God- faith is worked by God in us. It is not mustered from ourselves. When regeneration and saving faith has happened, you show you have been made a child of God, by God. When regeneration and saving faith has happened, you show you have a new life. One that is different than the life you had before.

2 Corinthians says it this way:

**2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

Your old life is gone; you have been made new. This was done by God’s will alone through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit unto new life and faith in Jesus.

The Triune God is always in unity and working together to bring about the salvation of the elect. Isn’t it so amazing how God has done this? Each member of the Trinity sovereignly at work to bring about God’s will, to the praise of His glorious grace. This should cause us to well up with praise!

**Q84. How does a person change from spiritually dead to spiritually alive?**

By God’s will alone and according to His sovereign timing, the Holy Spirit causes each elect person to be born again, giving new life and saving faith in Jesus.

This leads us into our next question well.

**Q85.** **Who will respond to the gospel?**

Those for whom Christ died—the elect—are each regenerated in God’s sovereign timing and caused to respond.

See again our definition of:

**Effective Call (Irresistible Grace):** The act of God in which He graciously summons each of the elect to Himself, regenerates them, and gives saving faith so they willingly respond with genuine repentance and trust in Jesus Christ. God’s effective call- saving grace- always brings about the response it demands in people's hearts.

Read along with this quote from historic confession of faith, it is so important that we see these truths not as some new understanding of God’s word but that it is rooted historically in the Christian faith.

**Ch. 10:1. In God’s appointed and acceptable time, he is pleased to call effectually, by his Word and Spirit, those he has predestined to life. He calls them out of their natural state of sin and death to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. He enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God. He takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh.  He renews their wills and by his almighty power turns them to good and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ.  Yet he does all this in such a way that they come completely freely, since they are made willing by his grace.**

God’s effectual call is needed to remove the chains of enslavement to sin. Apart from this we cannot willingly turn to God because we are enslaved and in love with our own sin. Our wills are in bondage due to the acts of our 1st Federal Head, Adam and our own sinful acts after conception. This is why we must be born again as taught in our first section tonight.

We also know from previous teachings that God saves His elect. His true Israel- spiritual Israel- the children of the promise- will be saved. God cannot fail. He is perfect; it is impossible for Him to fail. God does this through causing His elect, in His sovereign timing, to be born again and gives them saving faith.

Let’s consider how this happens, what means God uses, and what He does supernaturally by His power directly.

Last week, Josh taught about the general call, the sharing of the gospel. According to:

**Romans 10:14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? 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, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**

You see God, in His sovereign choice, decided to make the general gospel call a required part of the process He uses in salvation. This means that we are to go and preach the gospel to all people.

God uses that means of “gospel sharing/proclaiming,” in the time He specifically ordained in eternity past. According to His preordained plan, God causes an elect person to be born again.

Not everyone will believe, as we learned last week. Man cannot believe in his/her spiritually dead state. But the general call is the means God ordained for getting the gospel to His elect.

He WILL save those He has chosen to save, and He does that in using the general call His people make to non-believers.

**Who will respond to the gospel?**

Those for whom Christ died—the elect—are each regenerated in God’s sovereign timing and caused to respond.

Let me give you an example. I had many students in youth ministry through the 16 years I served there. I aimed to share the gospel with all of them and, though I have not seen faith in all of them, I have planted a seed that if God chooses to use in His sovereign time, He can use to cause new birth. One of the harder things about youth ministry is that we do not usually get to see the fruit of the work. God in His grace has allowed me to see many students years later share with me how God used the gospel that was proclaimed to them in youth ministry to bring them to salvation.

However, for many of them, God did not save them immediately or even in the four to six years they were with me. But the gospel seed was planted, and for those that are elect, God effectually has called them or will call them, through that means, at a later time, unto salvation. This action that God takes is the effectual calling. He has not saved all students or people I have shared the gospel with, and I humbly trust that to Him; that work is based on His eternal election. God chooses whom He saves. As I stated earlier, we don’t know who the elect are, but we are **blessed** to be used to share His amazing gospel to all and any unbeliever that God has sovereignly placed in each of our lives.

Now, the individual whom God calls, God gives new life to. God gives faith to the now spiritually alive individual and justifies them (saves them). The individual responds to the effective call, the new birth, with the gifted repentance and trust into Jesus as their Lord. This happens in a moment; however, there is an order to this process. This order is extremely important, so let’s line these details out very clearly:

1. The gospel must be shared (that’s the general call). In this, a person is made aware of the facts of the gospel.
2. God must make an effectual call that is up to His sovereign timing. This can happen the moment the general call is made or days/years later.
3. God’s call is effectual, meaning it is in His effectual call, that He causes new birth/regeneration.
4. When God causes new birth; he also causes faith. Faith does not proceed new birth (this is critical: many falsely believe that they are given new birth because they chose to believe. If this were true, then new birth would be caused by faith and not by God. But as we saw clearly in the Peter passage, this is not the case). It is impossible to have faith without new birth. However, faith is an immediate reality after new birth has happened. It is one of God’s gifts to the elect.

The elect person sees God for who He is, because they are given eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart that believes. In this, the born again believer repents of sin and places his/her trust in Jesus Christ as Lord. We will learn more about this “saving faith” in detail in a coming lesson. But take note, it is not a person’s will or work that saves, but the effective work of God in a person.

1. With regeneration, then immediate saving faith worked in a person by God, God now justifies the person, based on grace through saving faith in Jesus Christ. God now declares a person righteous and not guilty due to the imputed righteousness of Christ. We learned about justification in our last section; hopefully you remember that doctrine. At this same moment, God adopts this person into His eternal family.

**Oh, this is the glorious moment of salvation! This all happens in an instant.**

See with me that the general call goes out, and God uses it whenever He decides. But when God makes the effectual call, it instantly brings about God’s desired effects. Namely new birth, saving faith, salvation, justification, and adoption.

In John chapter 6, we can see the absolute need for God’s effectual call in order for an individual to be saved.

**John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.**

**39 And this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” 43 Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”**

Jesus tells the Pharisees that salvation is through Him. He then says this: “You do not believe, but all that the Father has given me, or all the elect, will come to me. Whoever comes, I will not cast out.” Jesus then says, “I came to do my Fathers will.” Do you see again that salvation is by the will of God alone? Jesus then tells the Pharisees that it is God’s will to save all His believers and that this is the purpose of sending Jesus down from heaven. This makes the Pharisees grumble, because they think they know who Jesus is, so they say, “How can he come from heaven? We know his father and mother.” This obviously only reveals their unbelief.

Jesus’s response here is amazing and clear. Jesus said to them, “Don’t grumble. You can’t, in fact no one can, come to me unless the Father who did send me draws them. And I will raise them up on the last day.”

When Jesus says that only those the Father draws will come, He is speaking about the effectual calling that we defined prior to the passage. We see this call referenced in Romans 8 as well:

**Romans 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.**

This really is the whole answer in one verse. Those whom God predestines are His elect. **He calls** His elect and justifies them. When God effectually calls the elect man, God causes him to be born again and gives him saving faith. That person is justified by God. And those whom God justifies He also glorifies! Can you see how all of this is an act of God and not man?

God is so gracious to save a sinner, an enemy, an ill-deserving human, from wrath by placing that wrath on His Son - on Jesus himself. This is amazing, it goes against all the wisdom of the world but not against God’s wisdom. You and I would never do this. But praise God He did and does.

So between our lectures on limited atonement and predestination and election, we have clearly shown that God saves His elect in His timing and that these are the men and women who respond to the gospel. When I taught on limited atonement, I spent a lot of time in John 10. I want to read a few verses and make my point for this lecture through them:

**John 10:27 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”**

**John 10:3 …The sheep hear his [Jesus’s] voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.**

Jesus’s sheep hear His voice and follow. Jesus died for His sheep-- the elect-- and He calls them (this is the effectual call) by name and leads them. Jesus is the good shepherd, and He died for His sheep. Here is the bridge in this gap. If Jesus died for a person, is it then possible for that person to not be saved? The answer here is clearly no. If Jesus died for you, then you will be saved. You will be called by Him, and you will follow Him. Jesus will not lose any that the Father has given to Him.

**John 10:27-30 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one.”**

You see this same theme played out through the text in John 10. Jesus’s elect hear His voice, and they do definitely follow Him. Jesus gives them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can take them from Jesus, not even the sheep themselves. God the Father gave them to Jesus, and no one can take them from the Father, for no one is greater than Him. Jesus then says, “I and the Father are one,” meaning no one can take them from Jesus either, because Jesus is greater than all, just as the Father is greater than all. Who will respond to the gospel? In John 10, it is clear that only Jesus’s sheep or His elect can respond. They do this when God effectually calls them.

They hear God’s call because God the Holy Spirit has caused new birth according to the timing of God and caused them to believe and follow Jesus. The Triune God is at work and always in unison.

In 2 Thessalonians, Paul makes this clear again:

**2 Thessalonians 2:14 To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The “He” who calls you through the gospel is the Triune God. The Father elects; the Son dies for and calls the elect; the Spirit regenerates the elect causing them to see, hear, and believe; then the Spirit gives faith in the finished work of Jesus through the grace of the Father. This is simply amazing.

Beloved, brothers, believers, you have been saved by God’s will alone through the sacrifice of Jesus, and by His call and the Spirit’s work, you have been born again and caused to respond in faith to God. He called you through the gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The only one who truly responds to the gospel is the elect regenerated believer. Now we’ve already focused on this work being God’s. Let’s look at the fact that those outside of this family cannot respond to the gospel.

In the John 6 verses we read, Jesus clearly told the Pharisees that they should not be confused or grumble because if God did draw them, they would believe. Why grumble if God doesn’t call you? You will not believe and cannot believe what Jesus was saying.

If we look at the John 10 passages, these verses in particular stick out:

**John 10: 24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.”**

The Jews say, “Tell us plainly if you’re the Christ.” Jesus responds by saying, “I have told you plainly, in fact even the miracles I’ve done prove that I am the Christ. You do not believe because you are not my sheep.” You have got to see this clearly. Jesus did not say they were not His sheep because they didn’t believe.

The whole argument Jesus makes is this: they cannot believe because they are not His. He said, “I have said it plainly, I have proven it true by my works, but you do not believe because you’re not mine. You are not among the elect, so it matters not what I say or do; you will not believe.” One of the coolest parables in the Scriptures, in my opinion, is the parable of Lazarus and the rich man:

**Luke 16:19 “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ 27 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ 29 But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ 30 And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’**

**31 He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”**

Jesus’s parable here is often the argument I heard from friends growing up. If God wants to save everyone, then why doesn’t He show Himself to the world and do it? This is a good argument; it at least stays consistent with the thought process presented by those who claim God wants to save everyone. What we see here in the Scriptures though is that God wants to and will save a specific people and them alone. God **did** come into the world and did reveal in a sense who He was. But just like here in this parable, if they do not hear Moses and the Prophets (this was most likely a reference to the Torah, the Scriptures they had), they will not be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

We know this parable is true because Jesus rose from the dead and yet people still do not believe. What is really being explained here is that only those God has chosen can respond, because it is only in those that God causes regeneration through the Holy Spirit. It is only those that Jesus had died for. They are the ones that the Father has given to Jesus and the ones that Jesus died for and calls. This is the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture. The Scriptures are clear: only the elect can respond to the gospel, and they only do this after new birth, all through the work of God.

So what does this mean for us practically?

Why do we share the gospel? First, because it should be the JOY of a person saved by grace to tell of the saving good news! Next, we are commanded to, and it is the means that God uses to perform His work of regeneration. It is a blessed gift of God to invite us into His work!

Why do we pray for unbelievers? First, because it should be the JOY of a person saved by grace to want to see others saved by God! Next, because God can and will save any whom He has chosen. The hardest most unrepentant heart cannot overcome God’s effective call.

We should be thankful for God’s grace, and we should be heartbroken for the lost in this world. We should be obedient, first and foremost to glorify God because we love Him, and secondly to be a part of what God is sovereignly doing in this world for His people. We should be in awe that God would choose to save any. We are so undeserving. Praise God for His sovereign work in saving His elect!

Let’s pray.