

Effectual Calling

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Donald Macdonald

[0 : 00] Will you turn with me now to the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, Hebrews chapter 11, and we shall read to their date.

By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive an inheritance, obeyed.

And he went out, not knowing whither he went. I am going to take the story we have of Abraham and this explanation of it, this reference to it by the writer to the Hebrews, as an instance of effectual calling.

Now, the difference between a Christian and a Bevan who is not a Christian who is under the gospel, lies primarily in this.

That a Christian has been effectually called and the earth has not been.

[1 : 46] One could easily meet the objection immediately raised by people against the doctrine of effectual calling.

It is not my purpose to do that, just that. I am going to speak of the calling itself. Not very long ago, I was talking to you of the words of Christ, who said, No man can come unto me.

He said, No man will not come. But no man cannot come. He has not come. He has not got the ability. He is unable to do it.

Except the Father who has sent me. Draw him. Now that is effectual calling. And anything else, apart from the drawing of the Father, or the calling, the resisted calling of God, constitutes real faith or a real Christian.

Unless we have had that, we are not real Christians. Now then, Abraham was an idolater, just like those people with whom he lived and lived with him.

[3 : 32] It seems that he was a prosperous man in his providence. And then God called him to go away from his own native place to a place that he would show him.

And Abraham obeyed God. We are not going to speculate. After all, that is not profitable. And it is not, it is anywhere.

We are not going to ask, why did Abraham receive that call around anyone else? Because we don't know.

And we are not going to ask either, how did God call Abraham? Was it thought to be, or in that vision, or by a dream?

We don't know anything at all about that. So there is no use trying to speculate on matters on which the Bible does not speak.

[4 : 38] First of all then, we shall consider the call that he got. And secondly, the obedience that he gave.

And thirdly, the reward that he won. These are few simple thoughts. First of all, the call which he got.

And the first thing about it is that it was a sovereign call. I referred to this at the very beginning. The call originated in the will of God.

It could not originate in the will of Abraham. I said he was an idolater. But the will of an idolater, a person who has never heard about God, is not any more enabled to receive the truth of God, or the call of God, than the person who is under the gospel.

There is no difference between the inability of one human depraved will and another.

[6 : 01] We are all equally enabled to receive the call of God. Whether we be sitting in a church like this, or whether we be idolater as Abraham was.

The call was a sovereign call. It was God who initiated it. And as I said, he gave it to Abraham. Not because Abraham was better than other people.

We don't know why he gave it to him. The answer to that lies with God. We cannot give it. Now the same thing holds true of the effectual calling of God in every case.

We don't know why God calls one and not another. Two women shall be grinding at the mill.

One shall be taken and the other left.

Why one is taken, why the other is left, we cannot say. But that's the way it is. And that's the way it is because God wills it to be so.

[7 : 19] And he willed it to be so even under the ministry of his own son. When he was here preaching among men.

He went about doing good, performing miracles, declaring the truth of God. Some believed in him and in many believed not.

But why this happened, it is not for us to say or to give explanations for these things. We know that the cause lies in the sovereign will of God.

And we dare not dispute the wisdom and the holiness of his will. But you say, well I cannot fathom this very well.

I cannot, I cannot make it conform to reason. I cannot see how this can be reconciled with my responsibility which I am told I have.

[8 : 29] Yes friends, there are all these objections. If you try to give an explanation of these things in the light of your reason. It shows that you are thinking far more of your reason than God is thinking of it.

These things are beyond your reason and mine. They are beyond human reason. And I am quite persuaded that they are beyond even angelic reason.

They belong to the divine. They belong to God. As for reconciling this with your responsibility.

I am not going to attempt to do it. I couldn't do it if I attempted to do it. But there are two things that I am absolutely certain of.

That are revealed in the Bible. As clear as the sun is in the sky. I cannot reconcile them.

[9 : 35] But I know that they are reconciled. I know there is nothing wrong with them. I know they are not contradictory.

But I cannot explain them. One of these is the sovereignty of God's work in the human soul. Man has got nothing to do with his effectual call.

With his becoming a Christian. Man is entirely passive enough. One of these is the essence of God's work. And the other, is the absolute responsibility of my soul to God.

I am absolutely responsible. I am as responsible to God as in everything depending upon myself. But you say it doesn't make sense. Oh, it makes sense.

All right. Because this is the way it is. This is the way God ordered it to be. But I said that it is revealed in the Bible. And the one is revealed as clearly as the other.

[10 : 50] There's one other thing I'm going to say on that. And it is. When God effectually calls a soul, that soul is convicted of its own guiltiness in God's sight.

And that soul accepts its responsibility before God. And it doesn't dispute it. The soul that is effectually called is as conscious of its own responsibility that its destruction is the work of its own hands.

Just the same as those on a day of judgment will never dispute the verdict of God that will send them to hell because they were workers of the liberty.

But they will not dispute that verdict. Nobody will say it's not just. They'll know it's just. Well then, when we are convicted of our sin in effectual calling, we are just as convicted of our responsibility as these people will be in that day.

And so we have no argument. We are not. We are perpetually called with the sovereignty of the work of God. Now again, this call, it was sovereign. It was divine.

[12 : 21] That is to say, it belonged to the working of God upon the heart of Abraham. And that is what made it effectual.

There are other reasons for which people might want to become Christians as well as this. For example, if religion were popular as it once was in our land, if by being religious, by being Christians, by sitting at the Lord's table, by attending services regularly, if that meant that we would be more reliable to get promotions, a lot of people would be Christians who are not Christians. Somebody told me, whether that's true or not, I don't know. But the deaf one who told her to me ought to know what he was talking about. Somebody told me that in a lot of situations, it's pretty

hopeless to expect promotion unless one belongs to the Freemasons.

Well, now, I don't know if that's true or not. I cannot say. But that's what he said. And the result is that when people go into these situations, they're liable to become free messengers.

That is, if they have their eye on promotion. Well, the same thing would happen with the Christian faith. If the Christian faith were a sort of a free messengers, if that is true of it, what I'd say.

[14:07] Well, if it were that sort of thing, a lot of people would be Christians who are not Christians. Well, that is not why Abraham became a Christian.

And he didn't become a Christian because he was discontented where he was. People sometimes become discontented with the world.

The world becomes empty for them. Sometimes you see people who get down for the first part of their lives. And then, all of a sudden, things begin to go wrong.

Their loved ones begin to die. They themselves get aches and pains. And the world just goes flat.

Their enjoyment, the enjoyments of it become insidious. And they become absolutely discontented. And they say, well, what's the use of it all?

[15:06] And you get plenty of examples in history of people of whom that was true. Rich men. Popular people. Popular actors and actresses.

Famous statesmen. And then, all of a sudden, the bottom went out of their world. And their riches and their mansions and their popularity and everything meant nothing to them.

Nothing at all. And they became discontented. Like that man in the pilgrims' progress who was weary of the world. And Abraham didn't become a Christian because anybody else suggested to him to become a Christian.

You can't make Christians like that. No, my friends. We can't make Christians of people if we sat with them all night long. And talked with them of nothing but Christ.

We can't make Christians of them like that. We can't make Christians of a sort out of people if we have strong personalities.

[16:14] We can sort of make psychological Christians out of them. Now that isn't all that difficult really. It is not.

You know how you can make a person believe what is not true. It is an inclination to do so.

And there is a sort of a hypnotism in the Christian religion itself. Just the same as in other things.

And this can be brought to bear upon minds of people.

And if people press them, bring them under pressure, brainwash them, then these people will finally believe that they are really Christians.

And they will become Christians of that sort. Well then, Abraham was not a Christian like that. One of the things that has been a worry to a lot of people, and there is something in it, is this.

[17:27] That they were brought up in real Christian homes. They were always made to attend church. They were brought up to the reading of the Bible and to worship, and to perform the ethical aspects of the Bible.

And then, the question when they are converted. If their conversion is really genuine, or is it just the logical consequence of the way in which they were brought down?

Have they got real faith? Are they the suspects of a saving change? Or are they just sort of the logical outcome of that kind of teaching?

Now, I cannot answer that. We know that there are plenty of people who live like Christians, and who think they're Christians, who are not Christians.

And this has been brought about because of the way in which they were raised. The teaching was so good. I remember an old man in my native place, and nobody at all doubted the genuineness of this religion.

[18:52] But he was walking himself in daily fear that he had no real saving faith. He was brought up as very few people were, in a marvelous way at home.

And he was afraid that all he had was just the result of this upbringing without saving faith.

Well, one can have these imaginary impressions brought to bear upon him. Now, it's a pity if we're the means of making anyone believe that he's a Christian if he's not.

We should always beware them. We should never press people towards this kind of thing. We should press them as God presses them. We should ask them to strive to enter in at the straight gate.

We should ask them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. We should ask them all that. But we should always leave the matter itself, the doing of it, in the hand of him to whom it belongs.

[20 : 10] That is, in the hand of God. We should never really take the do with these things. For example, what I mean is, I've had young people come to the man's.

And they were telling me that they were pressed by some in the congregation to go to the Lord's table. People were telling them, no, you should go.

You should be a feast. You should go to the Lord's table. And there are some young people, members of this congregation now, who came to me in the trouble.

And told me about the existence of these people, the pressure brought to bear upon them, how they sometimes felt tempted to, how they felt inclined to do, what they were doing, how they were thinking that they were in the wrong and not these people.

But no friends, it's a great pity, if anyone gets his Christianity or his profession. Only a dull expense.

[21 : 17] It's a great pity. No friends, it's a matter, this becoming a Christian, is purely a matter between God and the human will.

And although there are human instrumentalities, a person could become a Christian today through my preaching. Many people have become Christians, I believe, through my preaching.

And this can happen, and through the preaching of others, and through our efforts. But the fact, the becoming a Christian is purely a matter of God and the human will.

And there is no third party in it at all. It was an authoritative call. How did Abraham know that he was God of court?

Ah, well, he knew by the impression the call made upon his mind. He knew that it wasn't anybody else's voice, even if he had never heard this voice before.

[22 : 22] He knew that one could go into all his friends at large, and what explanations can you give that the experimental one?

And you know yourselves, that if you haven't got an experience of something, you can only understand it in theory, but not in the practical sense.

Can you tell me this? There was a man called Levi sitting at a table counting money, receiving the tax levied by the Romans on the Jews.

This was his job, he was what they called a publican. And one day as he was counting the money and receiving the money, a man passed by, and he looked at him and he said, Come, leave it all, follow me.

And immediately he left it all and followed him. Why did that happen? What did that man Levi feel that made him do that? Or can you tell me this?

[23 : 27] There were contented fishermen, James and John's brothers. And there were many things in their nets in the boat, and a man passed by.

And he said to them, What seemed so great about that? Leave it all, leave your livelihood, leave it all, and come and follow me. I don't make any promises, I'm not going to give you houses, I'm not going to give you riches, but come and follow me.

And immediately they left their father and their nets and their boats and their father. Why did they do that? Or can you tell me this... There was a man once who lived, who had dedicated his life to one thing, and that was the extinction of Christianity.

He had dedicated his able life and his youthful life to that one thing. And as he was pursuing his object one day on the way to Damascus, he heard a voice speaking to him.

And immediately the voice spoke to him. He said, Lord, what would thou have me to do? He said, Lord, I will do anything you want. What is it? And the Lord told him.

[24 : 50] And you know what I'm kind of like to say. Now the point is, why did he become obedient all of a sudden? Why did this man change his mind all at once and there could be no greater change?

That man in a moment of time became the very contrary of himself. He was as different when he said, Lord, what would thou have me to do?

He was as different, as lightest to darkness as he was the minute before. Now what got about the change? What made them willing? The authority of call of God. You see, the authority of call of God, it persuades the reason.

It wins the will. It affects the heart. It renews the whole man.

And when you're called, you don't start asking, but there are things I cannot understand. What about the doctrine of election? What about my responsibility?

[26 : 02] What about reconciling these things in the Bible that are so dark to me? These things I've never asked. Why?

Because there is something dealing with your reason. That is illuminating. And although it doesn't solve every question. And if you lived a thousand years as a Christian, you wouldn't know everything that is in the Bible.

You wouldn't understand all the difficulties that are in the Bible. Nobody understands them. But the call of God was so authoritative and just drawn with His love towards Himself. And questions are shared.

All you want to do is to do business with God. It was a personal call. As personal as there has been no one else in the world at the time, but Abraham Himself.

As personal as there were no other sinners in the world but Himself. At this, my friend, is effectual calling. It is all that I have already said. And it is personal.

[27 : 20] There is an aloneness with God in effectual calling. What I mean is this, if I can put it better. If God was to call you effectually at this moment, you would never know that there is anybody in the church but yourself.

The whole thing, the whole preaching would be as personal to you as if there was nobody here but you and me. God. As personal as that. You would have no thought of people around about you. You would have no other thoughts about anything else.

But the fact that God was calling you and that you were determined to obey the call of God. This is what happened to Moses. This is what happened to Moses. What God called him.

See, it was a personal call. And this is what made him willing to leave all things and to bear reproach with the people of God.

It was a separate call. It separated Abraham from his former living. He was an idolater. But he wasn't an idolater after God called him. He worshipped God.

[28 : 39] Now, my friends, this is one of the distinct things about effectual calling. It is a separate call. It is this of itself.

You can't convince a man against his will. That's absolutely impossible. You have to renew the will before you get the whole man.

Now, the call of God gets the whole will of man. And so the man willingly separates himself from everything that is called to God. And this is Christianity.

Now, what people begin to ask. And sometimes they do ask. Sometimes people who say they're Christians ask it.

Well, what's wrong? What's wrong with doing this thing? What's wrong with doing that sort of thing? They ask that.

[29 : 43] I remember you heard the story, I suppose, of the lady once upon a time who wanted a safe driver to drive a carriage. And applicants came to see her.

And one man told her that he could go within such a distance of the edge of the road and that he could steer the carriage and the office and that there would be no danger of anything happening. And the second man said something the same. Only he could take it nearer the bridge. And then another person came and he said that he could go as near as an inch to the very edge, even of a precipice, but that he was such a good driver that nothing would happen.

And then somebody else came and she asked him. And then somebody else came and she asked him how near he could go to the edge without anything happening to the carriage, without it tripping over. He said, I don't know, madam, I never tried. I always keep as near the middle of the road as I possibly can, so that nothing would happen. She said, you will be my driver.

And my friends, when people begin to ask, how near the edge can I go? How much can I do? How much can I conform to the world? How worldly can I be and still be a Christian?

[31 : 06] That's the simple thing. I've never felt the eventual call of God. That's one thing. Shut up. No, my friend. The actual call of God makes you bid farewell to these things.

And all you want to do is to give yourself to him. And there are various reasons for that. But there is one reason for it. One reason of sons are both other reasons.

And I'll tell you what it is. And it is this. What God calls you factually by his grace, he gives you by faith to see the Lamb of God, crucified, bearing in war and sorrow and curse, bleeding on the tree.

And once you see that, if you owned a million words, they would be too like trash, like dumb in comparison with his glory and knowledge.

This is it, my friends. This is what makes a person receive the effectual call, call in with the effectual call. And he doesn't ask these questions.

[32 : 20] He's not like Lord's wife looking behind to see the sudden that he left. Oh no, he's looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of his name.

Jesus who died for a Montgomery. Jesus who shed his blood. Jesus who gave himself all that he was in God and that manhood for his redemption.

And he loves him with all his heart and soul. Now this does not mean that whenever he becomes a Christian and he separates himself from the world, it doesn't mean that he takes up an attitude to align far better than you are.

That doesn't take up that attitude. It's never been effectually called. He doesn't look upon himself as being better than others. It doesn't make him friendly towards other people who are still and converted.

If he's working with them, he'll be as friendly with them as ever he was and friendlier. It doesn't make him a recluse. No, that sort of thing is hypocrisy.

[33 : 33] If people put on long faces once they become Christians and they pretend that they're not interested in anything that pertains to the fellow men anymore, well, and they refuse to take any part as they used to in the ordinary sinless talkings and the faith of the fellow men.

That is just simple hypocrisy. Nothing more or less. No, my friends, it hasn't got that effect upon people. If it has any effect at all in that line, it is the effect of making one decide to mix with people, whoever mixed with people more than Jesus did.

And the Apostle Paul speaking to the Corinthians and telling them to separate themselves from wicked doers, he said, but I don't mean you to separate yourselves from them in the literal sense.

There are fornicators and idolatres in the world and I want you to separate yourselves from them, but not in the literal sense. He said, you cannot do that. If you do that, you must go out of the world. See, Paul was a reasonable man and he knew that. No, but all these things which are caught in the world, which are caught in the world, some of these things are sinless, things that one is supposed to leave, but if I, rather indifferent, is the word I should have used, not the word sinless.

[35 : 04] Some of these things are indifferent, but if an indifferent, nothing indifferent in itself is going to be a means of making me stay and not go, then I give it up.

I give up all things. This is what Paul did. You read about that in the third chapter to the Philippians. What Paul says that he gave up all things for Christ and counted them refuse in order that he might win it, he's not talking about the dregs of life, the evil things of life.

He's talking about the good things of life. He's talking about things that were good in themselves, but things that kept him from Christ, and so he separated himself from them.

And then, this call made Abraham poorer. It separated him, separated him in that sense. It certainly made him a poorer man.

Abraham never got one inch of the land that he was promised. Not even as much, Paul tells us in the episode to the Romans, as his food could tread upon him.

[36 : 18] Not an inch did he get. And when his wife died, he had to buy a plot of ground in which to bury her. But God never gave him any of it.

After having taken him out of a difficult ease with his promise, I will give thee this land unto thy seed, he never got one inch of it. And he became a poorer man than if he had stayed behind.

But what of it? This is what the rich young ruler failed. failed. Jesus said to him, Now you have your option.

You have your option of following me and having riches in heaven. Or staying with the riches that you have here in the world. And the rich young man went away sorrowful.

Because he had a lot of riches. But he went away. Now Abraham didn't go away. And after all, my friend, what did he leave?

[37 : 27] What did he lose? What did he lose in comparison with what he gained? But one hasn't got time just to enter into all this.

What did he gain by going away? Well, he gained this. He gained the friendship of God. Abraham, my friend, God calls him.

And he gained the friendship of God. And that is far more of more than than if we got the whole world put together.

What will a man gain if he gets the whole world and loses his soul? But a man doesn't lose his soul if he gains the friendship of God.

What did he gain? Did he not get a difficult way? God didn't provide chariots for him. The road was long and tasty and rough and difficult and dangerous.

[38 : 35] It was all done. God didn't put him in a chariot to take him to his destination. He had to make his own way under the guidance of God.

But something must have kept him going. And what was it that kept him going? My friends, it's the same thing that keeps the Christian going through life.

The call of God. Even if there were no reward, the call of God, the pulling of God, the drawing of God, the winning of God of his heart and the joy of it all more than compensates for any loss that one had incurred in the process.

Well then, by faith, Abraham obeyed the call of God. But my time is fast and I'm not going to talk to you and both the obedience which he gave.

But my friend, there's one thing I want to say and it is this. With that I will end. The actual call of God is an irresistible call.

[39 : 53] And yet, you can, if you want to, you can refuse the call of God upon your conscience and heart.

Now, does that make sense? Doesn't look like it. How can I think be resistant if it is a resistant error? Aye, that's it.

This is something that perhaps I find it difficult to explain. But my friends, the point is this, that when God calls the soul with effectual calling, the soul tries to resist the call.

There are many a peasant and they went into the pub for the whole night long. And they drank bottles of whiskey in order to drown their sense of guiltiness.

in order to remove their conviction. They did all sorts of things. They went to dances, they went to all sorts of entertainments, everything as long as it would make them get rid of this feeling that God was calling them.

[41 : 07] But they didn't get rid of it. Why? Because God winsomely and graciously persisted in drawing them to self.

And although it wasn't as quick as it was in the case of Levi and in the case of James and John, with many others, yet it was the same witsomeness, the same effectiveness that followed the call in that case as followed it in there.

And so, my friends, this is what the Reformation called the irresistible call of God. When God has begun a good work, He will continue it and He will never let you alone until at last you come and do what Abraham did, he obeyed.

And how then can I say that you resist, that you can persist it? What do I mean by that? Just this thing, that there are many people hearing the call of God in their conscience and to their heart.

And they resist the call. They disbelieve the call. They're frightened sometimes. They're attracted at other times. But they resist this call.

[42 : 23] Now, if they continue to resist, all it proves is that the call wasn't effectual. It wasn't. But it would have been effectual if they had obeyed.

Here we come again to the same thing. We come again to the divine sovereignty and to human responsibility. My friends, if you are not called, if you are not called effectually, the responsibility of it is your own, not God's.

Jesus said, weeping to the Jews, you will not come to me. You don't want to come to me, that he might have life. And this word, come, come.

Does you not close the canon of the scripture with this very word? Come. The spirit and the bride say come. Let him that is at least come.

And if we come, then we'll know that it is God's glory. If we don't come, then we'll know that it is not. Let's pray. Lord, we pray that we may hear thy call and obey it.

[43 : 42] And if anyone is drawn this day, feels drawn by thy spirit, grant that on no account he will resist thy drawing or deathly receive to thy call.

Forgive us, O Lord, for the many times we have quenched thy spirit, and thy spirit does not always strive with man. Restore him unto us, and take not thy spirit away from us.

For Jesus' sake, Amen. We shall sing in Psalm 45, the short meter, and three stanzas from this text, to the Chumala.

Psalm 45, from this text, O daughters, take good heed, and climb, and give good ear. Psalm 45, this text, to this twist.

O daughter, take good heed, in heart, ad give true ye.

[45 : 04] O I most forget thy unit up and love asstrahs as as dear.

Verse, My beauty to the King Shall then be light for me And do thou humbly worship Him because the glory is there When you are God's heaven and the Monsters Then with the grace shall fear And all the wealthy of the land shall be blessed to thee.

Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. Amen.