

EFFECTUAL CALLING

NO. 388-A

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1861
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

MY Christian friends, our minds have been occupied today with some of the loftiest subjects that can engage the thoughts of man. Our attention has been directed to the infinitely wise and true God, and we have been endeavoring to conceive of Him as the great, the infinite, the eternal. The great, the infinite, the eternal intellect, who, of Himself conceives the grandest schemes, and infallibly provides for their accomplishment, so that there can be no mistake, no failure. We know that every wise intellect forms its plan before it provides its means or attempts to carry out the idea conceived in the mind.

And the great doctrine of election, to which our attention was directed this afternoon, answers to the formation of the plan in the infinite mind of God. He foresaw, clearly, that the whole human race, represented by the first man, would fall into sin, and left to themselves, would certainly perish. To prevent a catastrophe so fearful, He determined in His infinite mind, to have a people for Himself, a people that would comprise the vast majority of the fallen inhabitants of this world.

They were all present before His mind, their names were registered in His book, which book was delivered into the hands of the Lamb, the Son of God, who accepted the book at the hands of His Father, and as it were, signed it with His own name, so that it has been designated, "The Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

And Jesus looked upon this act as the committing of the people to Himself, on purpose that He might take the charge of them, on purpose that he might carry out the Father's will respecting them, and gain eternal laurels and honors to Himself, by placing them in splendor, majesty, and glory before His Father's face forever. We therefore find Him frequently when speaking with His Father and referring to this act in the eternal counsels, saying, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me. Keep those whom thou hast given me by thine own name, that they may be one as we are."

But election interferes not with man as standing in Adam, but with man as under sin the result of Adam's fall. It ensured their restoration, but it did not interfere with their fall, and consequently the elect, with the rest, all fell in the first man. The entire mass of human nature became depraved, polluted, rotten to the heart's core.

So depraved, so polluted, so rotten, that nothing could effect a change but the omnipotent energy of the omnipotent God. There is that in depravity in every form that defies the touch of anyone but the Infinite, that refuses to succumb to anything but to Omnipotence itself. The heart of man is foul as the heart of Satan—the nature of man is foul as the nature of Satan—and the sin of man is worse than the sin of Satan.

Satan, the great archangel that fell from heaven, did a tremendous deed when he set mind in opposition to deity, but man set not merely mind, but matter with mind, in opposition to the eternal God. God could once look upon the world and say, "Though mind is in rebellion, matter is not in opposition," but after the fall of man, mind and matter alike were corrupt, were depraved, were in opposition to the Eternal.

Every man's heart steams with enmity against God. Every man's spirit rises in rebellion against God, and as you have heard tonight, the verdict of every man's conscience in its fallen state is, "No God, no God," and if the Eternal could be voted out of existence by the suffrages of His fallen creatures, every hand would be up, every heart would give its verdict, and every voice would vote for the annihilation of the Most High.

The will of man strong, the will of man stern, the will of man determined, and opposed to the will of God, will yield to nothing but that which is superior to itself. It laughs at authority, it turns with disgust

from holiness, it refuses to listen to invitation, and in this state, man—universal man, is found. In this state, man, the entire mass of man, with the exception of those who had been saved on credit, and had been changed by the sacred influences of the Spirit—in this state man was found when Christ came into our world.

He came, and as you have heard, assumed humanity, and united it with deity. The two natures constituted the one person of the glorious Mediator—that glorious Mediator stood the representative of His people, that Mediator stood the Surety of His family, that Mediator stood the Substitute of the multitude of His fallen ones. That Mediator came to be the sacrifice to which sin was to be transferred, by which sin was to be expiated and removed out of the way, that God’s mercy might freely flow, and from the sinners’ conscience, that he might have peace and joy.

But as the election of the Father did not interfere with the falling of man’s nature, so the redemption of the Son did not change the nature that had fallen. It was therefore necessary that as the Father sent the Son, the Son should send the Comforter. And as it required an infinite victim to atone for man’s guilt, it required an infinite agent to change man’s fallen nature.

As to the Father, the atonement must be made as the moral governor, as the maintainer of the rights of the eternal throne. So from the Father, through the Son, must the Holy Spirit descend to renew, to transform, to remodel, to fit human nature to gaze upon the unveiled glories of deity, and to render to God the homage due unto His name.

And this just brings me to my point—EFFECTUAL CALLING. This implies that there is a calling that may not be effectual. Yes, there is a call that extends to the whole human family. As it is written, “Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men.” There is a call that refers to humanity as sinful, and to sinners as such, however fallen and depraved they may be. Repentance or a change of mind, repentance and remission of sins, are to be preached among all nations, and the disciples were to begin at Jerusalem.

And beginning at Jerusalem the slaughter-house of the Son of God, and the slaughter-house of the prophets, and of the saints—beginning there, they said, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” But the people were like the deaf adder that stops her ear, and refuses to hear the voice of the charmer—charm he never so wisely.

The Baptist had come and cried, “Repent,” and sternly, and impressively he preached, but they paid little regard—at least, little regard that tended to life. And the Son of God, with all that was soft, and winning, and captivating, came and preached, but they turned away, and He said, “To whom shall I liken the men of this generation—they are like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows—We have piped unto you, but you have not danced, and we have mourned unto you, but you have not lamented.”

Now, this call must be given, because God commands it. This call must be given, because God works by it. In giving the general, the universal call to all who hear the Gospel, we obey the high mandate of the Eternal God. We do honor and homage to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we employ an instrument—a weapon, if you please—by which the Spirit of God operates upon the human mind. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing, and the bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The general call leads to the special, to the particular, or what we designate, the “effectual call.” We speak to men as men, and we reason with them. We speak to sinners as sinners, and we expostulate with them. But while we reason, and while we expostulate, we have the promise of the presence of the Master—“I am with you.”

We have the promised presence of the Eternal Paraclete, who was sent to empower, sent to accompany, and sent to work by the Lord’s servants. And while we speak and give the call as we are

commanded and commissioned, the Holy Spirit works—the infinite power of the Eternal Spirit comes into contact—direct, immediate contact, with the mind of man.

There is a power that goes with the Word—distinct from the Word—when it is accompanied by the energy of the Eternal Spirit. And that power produces in the heart, life—a spiritual, a Divine, an immortal life—a life that man dead in sin had not—a life which a man once having loses not, for it is eternal—a life that was given us in Christ before the world was—a life preserved for us by Christ all through the past ages that have rolled away—a life that is communicated from the loving heart of Him who is the great depository of grace, and conducted by the Holy Ghost into the heart that is called by grace.

Has the Spirit accompanying the Word produced life? from that life springs conviction—not the cold conviction awakened occasionally in the mind of man, by the reasoning of man, by reflecting upon his past misconduct, or by the flashing of the forked lightnings of the law, but a conviction that is produced by the Holy Spirit bringing the law into contact with the conscience—the Gospel into contact with the heart.

In the sinner's conscience God erects a tribunal, in the sinner's conscience God sits as judge, and to the tribunal before the just judge, man is summoned to appear. And in the heart, in the soul, in the nature of man, there is a miniature of the judgment that is to take place at the completion and winding up of the present dispensation.

The man is arraigned as a sinner, the man is convicted as a culprit, the man is condemned as a criminal. He stands before God and he has nothing to say—every excuse has withered like the leaves of autumn, every excuse is carried away like the chaff from the summer's threshing-floor, every rag that the man boasted of is torn from him, and he stands, a naked sinner, before a heart-searching God.

The penetrating eye of the Omniscient darts into the innermost recesses of his soul, and the gentle fingers of the Spirit turns over one fold of the heart after the other. The process may be long, or the operation may be quick, but sooner or later the man is brought to this—"In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

He had once started at the Scriptural representation of man's fallen and depraved nature. He had once wondered that from the lip of truth had proceeded the startling words, "From within, out of the heart, proceed murders, adulteries, blasphemies, false witnesses, and abominable idolatries."

He never could have thought that evil so dreadful, he never could have thought that sin so fearful, he never could have thought that principles so diabolical, could have been found in a nature like his—but there they are, and he has nothing to object—but under the power of the deep conviction that is produced, he is filled with terrible alarm.

If he casts his eye back, there are the crimes of his life. If he casts his eye forward, there is the tremendous judgment. If he lifts up his eyes to heaven, there is the pure and holy God that he has insulted, and if he turns his eyes within, all is dark and vain and wild. He is filled with alarm—alarm that perhaps keeps him awake at night, and haunts and harasses him by day, until he is prepared to do anything, prepared to go anywhere, if he may but escape the just judgment of his God.

He is by this discipline prepared to submit to God's method of salvation. He is prepared to give up proposing conditions according to which he would be saved. He no longer goes about to work out a righteousness of his own, but he is ready to submit himself to the righteousness of God.

Being, therefore, conscious of his criminality, burdened with his guilt, and trembling at the prospect of his destiny, he falls prostrate before the high throne of the Eternal, smites upon his breast, and cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," as if no such a sinner had ever appealed to God's mercy, as if no such culprit had ever stood before God's throne.

Before God he says, "If there can be mercy in Your heart sufficient to reach a case so dismal and so desperate, God be merciful to me," and after having pleaded with earnestness, after having supplicated with intense emotion, and after having, perhaps, become a little bold, he is startled at his own temerity, and receding, as it were, from the position that he had taken, he cries—

*“Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy in Thy heart for me,
O God of spotless purity?”*

And perhaps, like David, he groans in his heart, and mourns in his soul, until his bones wax old, through his roaring all the day long. But no relief, no help is found, until, at length, he begins to make confession of his sin, and as he confesses, the Spirit of God unveils and unfolds the Gospel mystery, and as in the days of the law, when the victim was brought to the priest, and the man placed his hand upon its head, between its horns, and pressed with all his might, and confessed over it all his transgressions, all his iniquities, and all his sins, so the man lays his hand of faith upon the victim’s head, and there confesses his sin.

As he confesses, a change takes place in his feelings, the burden begins to move from his conscience, the dark cloud that hovered over him begins to disperse, a little bright light in the cloud attracts his attention, and as he looks upward, he seems to catch the loving Father’s eye, and feels an encouragement within him to approach unto God.

And as he approaches, still confessing, still pleading, still deploring, still resting his hand upon the victim’s head, and trusting in the atonement you have heard of, and on that alone, he seems to hear strange music, a delightful melody, and that music is the commencement of the sound of the trump of the Jubilee, when the oppressed one is to go free, and as he listens to the sound the chains drop from his hands, and the burden from his shoulders, the trouble is removed from his heart, and he lifts up his eyes, streaming perhaps with tears, to heaven, and says, “Oh Lord, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”

And looking around, on those about him, in the language of wonder, astonishment, and gratitude, he says, “Behold, behold a mystery, behold a miracle, behold one of the greatest wonders in the universe, behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid, for JAH JEHOVAH is my strength and my song, He also is become my salvation.”

He has now peace flowing into his heart like a river, he has now a consciousness that God has accepted him in the Beloved, and he now experientially knows the truth, tastes the sweetness, and feels the power of the apostolic testimony, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

He has now experienced the effectual call. It has been a call from darkness into marvelous light, from bondage into glorious liberty—out of prison the man comes to reign—from the dunghill he is lifted up to sit among the princes, even among the princes of God’s people.

And now, as I must conclude, just observe, the origin of this call is the free, the sovereign, the distinguishing grace of God. It originates, not in man’s will, nor in man’s disposition, nor in man’s station in society, but of His will, and of His will alone, who is the great sovereign ruler of the universe, is this change effected—of man it *cannot be*, for it includes a new creation, a resurrection, and the inhabitation of God.

Generally speaking, the instrumentality by which God works is the Gospel, but in every instance the agent that produces the change is the holy and eternal Spirit of God. He quickens the soul dead in trespasses and sins, He enlightens the understanding that was in the midnight darkness of nature, He disposes the will which before ran counter to the will of God.

He teaches the understanding that was once averse to everything pure and holy, and then gently, and lovingly, and sweetly, He leads the soul to the cross to gaze upon the wondrous Sufferer. He then leads the soul to the church to confess Christ and Him crucified, and then leads it in the paths of righteousness for His own name’s sake.

The calling is high, for it is from the High and Holy One. It is heavenly, in contrast with the earthly calling of the descendants of Abraham of old. It is an evidence of distinguishing love and thanks, eternal

thanks to God, it is irreversible, for the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance. From death to life we pass, from darkness into light we come, out of bondage into liberty we spring, from sin to the knowledge and enjoyment of holiness we are introduced, then at last from earth to heaven.

Into the grace of Christ we are called and we stand in His favor. Into the fellowship of Christ we are called and in communion with Him we live. To be glorified with Christ we are called, and when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.

The Father draws, the Spirit quickens, the Son receives, and when locked in the arms of the Son of God, our effectual calling is realized and enjoyed. Its author is God, its subjects are the elect, its nature is holy, and its end is glorious.

Thus, you perceive, my friends, all originated in God's thought, which thought sprung into a perfect plan, to carry out which plan provision was made, and this plan will be perfectly carried out to the praise of the glory of His grace. Thus, whether you think of election, whether you think of redemption, or whether you think of effectual calling,

*“Give all the glory to His holy name,
For to Him all the glory belongs;
Be yours the high joy still to sound forth His praise
And crown Him in each of your songs.”*

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON—I think it was John Newton, who, speaking about good Calvinistic doctrine compared it to lumps of sugar, but he said, he did not so much give to his people the lumps of sugar, as diffuse the whole of it throughout his sermons—just as people do not eat sugar, but put it in their tea.

Now, some of you have not yet grown patient enough to listen, I think, to a doctrine, however fully it may be brought out. Our people want anecdotes, illustrations, parables, and metaphors. Even the best and most sublime things keep our minds on such a stretch when we listen to them, that there is good need that illustrations should yield us some relief.

Today was set apart that these doctrines might be fully brought out—this has been done and there remains but one, and that my friend Mr. O'Neill is to take, namely, the final perseverance of the saints. Before he speaks, just one or two words.

Has it never struck you that the scheme of doctrine which is called Calvinistic has much to say concerning God? It commences and ends with the Divine One. The angel of that system stands like Uriel in the sun, it dwells with God, He begins, He carries on, He perfects, it is for His glory, and for His honor. Father, Son, and Spirit co-working, the whole Gospel scheme is carried out.

Perhaps there may be this defect in our theology—we may perhaps too much forget man. I think that is a very small fault, compared with the fault of the opposite system, which begins with man, and all but ends with him. Man is a creature—how ought God to deal with him? That is the question some theologians seem to answer.

The way we put it is—God is the Creator, He has a right to do as He wills. He is sovereign, there is no law above Him, He has a right to make and to unmake, and when man has sinned, He has a right to save or to destroy. If He can save, and yet not impair His justice, heaven shall ring with songs. If He destroys, and yet His goodness be not marred, then hell itself with its deep bass of misery, shall swell the mighty rollings of His glorious praise.

We hold that God should be most prominent in all our teaching, and we hold this to be a gauge by which to test the soundness of ministers. If they exalt God and sink the sinner to the very dust, it is all well. But if they lower the prerogatives of deity, if He be less sovereign, less just, or less loving than the Scripture reveals Him to be, and if man be puffed up with that fond notion that he is anything better than an unclean thing, then such theology is utterly unsound. Salvation is of the Lord and let the Lord alone be glorified.

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