

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 5:
**SOTERIOLOGY—
THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION**

Lecture 3:
**THE DOCTRINES OF EFFECTUAL
CALLING and REGENERATION**



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module 5

Soteriology—the Doctrine of Salvation

1. Introduction to Soteriology
2. The Doctrine of Union with Christ
- 3. The Doctrines of Effectual Calling & Regeneration**
4. The Doctrine of Saving Faith
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Module 5:

SOTERIOLOGY—THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Lecture 3:

The Doctrines of Effectual Calling and Regeneration

Introduction

In the narrative of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, the Lord Jesus spoke and called Lazarus forth from the grave. Lazarus did not sit, and think, and contemplate Christ's words—he had no such option. He was drawn forth at the Lord's word. So too, when the Holy Spirit effectually calls and regenerates a sinful soul that is spiritually dead, that soul is brought to spiritual life by the power of God. The Lord initiates, and the Lord makes efficacious his work of grace, with no contribution or credit to the natural man. God takes the spiritually dead and gives them life.

Theme: *The doctrines of Effectual Calling and Regeneration.*

I. Scriptural Basis

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ezekiel 36:25–28)

1. The sovereign Lord takes the initiative in this work.
2. Regeneration is characterized by cleansing from the guilt and pollution of sin.
3. Regeneration includes a transformation of the heart.
4. Regeneration negates the past, while reforming the future.
5. At Regeneration, the Spirit indwells the believer, and implants a new principle of grace within him, enabling him to walk in the newness of life and obedience to God.

6. All of this is grounded in the covenant of grace.

Questions:

1. Please meditate on the truths derived from Ezekiel 36, verses 25 to 28. Who is the author of regeneration? Who is the actor in Regeneration? What new principle is formed in the regenerated soul?

2. Can real salvation be separated from practical holiness of life? Why? What is the great test of whether a person is born again?

II. Doctrinal Overview

As summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 10, paragraph 1:

“All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.”

1. Distinguishing Effectual Calling and Regeneration.

2. Effectual Calling.

a. External Call is the presentation of the gospel, like preaching.

b. Internal, or Effectual Call is the work of God efficaciously and savingly applying the gospel to the soul of an individual.

c. Various stages of the Effectual Call.

1) The Spirit convinces the sinner of sin and misery.

2) The Spirit enlightens the mind.

3) The Spirit renews the will.

4) The Spirit persuades and enables the sinner to embrace Christ.

d. Characteristics of Effectual Calling:

- 1) It is a divine summons.
- 2) It unites the believer to Christ.
- 2) It is based on the sovereign, eternal decree of God.
- 3) It is through the irresistible and persuasive power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Regeneration.

- a. Three New Testament words for regeneration.
- b. Regeneration is instantaneous, not a lengthy process.
- c. Distinguished from conversion, it precedes conversion.
 - 1) Regeneration comes before faith and repentance.
- d. It resolves the tension of how sinners can be saved.
- e. It is monergistic, not synergistic: God alone is the one who is at work, not man.
- f. It emphasizes the glory of God.

Questions

1. What are the differences between Effectual Calling and Regeneration?

2. What is the *external call* and the *internal call*?

3. What warrant does a sinner have to believe and respond to the external call? Does a sinner believe the gospel because of something inside his own soul that he has to find and untangle?

4. What are the various stages of effectual calling? Please give the scriptural references for each stage.

5. How are the three Persons of the Holy Trinity seen to be at work in the Effectual Call?

6. What are some of the characteristics of Effectual Calling?

7. Are there different words or phrases for Regeneration that are used in the New Testament?

8. What is Regeneration in the restrictive sense? How long does it take? How is it different from Conversion? Which comes first?

9. What are some of the characteristics of Regeneration?

10. Given man's depraved condition and inability to do any spiritual good, how is it possible for people in such a condition to be brought to faith? What resolves this tension?

11. How is the glory of God magnified in the work of Regeneration? Is it monergistic or synergistic? Why?

III. Polemical Exposition

1. *The error of Baptismal regeneration.*

2. *The question of elect infants.*

Questions:

1. What is *Presumed Regeneration*, or *Baptismal Regeneration*? Why must we reject this error? Please prove your answer from Scripture.

2. What does the *Westminster Confession of Faith* teach us about elect infants and all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the gospel? What comforts are there in this doctrine?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. The importance of bringing souls under the preaching of the gospel.
2. The indispensable work of the Holy Spirit to make that preaching powerful or efficacious.
3. The church must never cease to proclaim boldly to all: “Ye must be born again!”
4. We see the wonder of God’s sovereign grace, which leads us to worship.

Questions:

1. How does the External Call emphasize the priority of evangelism? What is the Apostle Paul’s argument?

2. Why is the work of the Holy Spirit indispensable in preaching of the gospel? How should this instruct us in our prayer life?

3. Why is it important for the church to boldly proclaim, “Ye must be born again!”?

4. How should these doctrines fuel the heart of the born-again, regenerate Christian?

V. Self-Reflection

After studying in this lecture, how does knowing about the external calling and the internal calling encourage you to help in evangelical work? Meditate on Romans chapter 10, then ask the Lord to show you what you are able to do. Pray God for the blessings of the Holy Spirit in all sorts of gospel sharing.
