

A Divine Cordial Chapter VII

Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson was of the group known as Non-conformist. His date of birth is unknown but it is known that he died at Barnston in 1686. He was educated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, and in 1646 was appointed to preach at St Stephen's, Walbrook. He showed strong Presbyterian views during the civil war, with, however, an attachment for the king; because of his share in Love's plot to recall Charles II. He was imprisoned in 1651, but was released and reinstated vicar of St. Stephen's in 1652. He acquired fame as a preacher, but in 1662 was ejected at the Restoration. He continued to exercise his ministry privately. In 1672 after the declaration of indulgence he obtained a licence for Crosby Hall, where he preached for several years, until his retirement to Barnston upon the failure of his health. Watson was a man of learning, and acquired fame by his quaint devotional and expository writings. Of his many works may be mentioned, *The Art of Divine Contentment* (London, 1653); *The Saint's Delight* (1657); *Jerusalem's Glory* (1661); *Divine Cordial* (1663); *The Godly Man's Picture* (1666); *The Holy Eucharist* (1668); *Heaven Taken by Storm* (1669); and *A Body of Practical Divinity; . . . One Hundred Seventy Six Sermons on the Lesser Catechism* (1692).

Effectual Calling

THE second qualification of the persons to whom this privilege in the text belongs, is, They are the called of God. All things work for good *"to them who are called."* Though this word *called* is placed in order after loving of God, yet in nature it goes before it. Love is first named, but not first wrought; we must be called of God, before we can love God.

Calling is made (Rom. viii. 30) the middle link of the golden chain of salvation. It is placed between predestination and glorification; and if we have this middle link fast, we are sure of the two other ends of the chain. For the clearer illustration of this there are six things observable.

1. A distinction about calling. There is a two-fold call.

(i.) There is an outward call, which is nothing else but God's blessed tender of grace in the gospel, His parleying with sinners, when He invites them to come in and accept of mercy. Of this our Saviour speaks: *"Many are called, but few chosen"* (Matt. xx. 16). This external call is insufficient to salvation, yet sufficient to leave men without excuse.

(ii.) There is an inward call, when God wonderfully overpowers the heart, and draws the will to embrace Christ. This is, as Augustine speaks, an effectual call. God, by the outward call, blows a trumpet in the ear; by the inward call, He opens the heart, as He did the heart of Lydia (Acts xvi. 14). The outward call may bring men to a profession of Christ, the inward call brings them to a possession of Christ. The outward call curbs a sinner, the inward call changes him.

2. Our deplorable condition before we are called.

(i.) We are in a state of vassalage. Before God calls a man, he is at the devil's call. If he say, Go, he goes : the deluded sinner is like the slave that digs in the mine, hews in the quarry, or tugs at the oar. He is at the command of Satan, as the ass is at the command of the driver.

(ii.) We are in a state of darkness. "*Ye were sometimes darkness*" (Ephes. v. 8). Darkness is very disconsolate. A man in the dark is full of fear, he trembles every step he takes. Darkness is dangerous. He who is in the dark may quickly go out of the right way, and fall into rivers or whirlpools; so in the darkness of ignorance, we may quickly fall into the whirlpool of hell.

(iii.) We are in a state of impotency. "*When we were without strength*" (Rom. v. 6). No strength to resist a temptation, or grapple with a corruption; sin cut the lock where our strength lay (Judg. xvi. 20). Nay, there is not only impotency, but obstinacy, "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*" (Acts vii. 51). Besides indisposition to good, there is opposition.

(iv.) We are in a state of pollution. "*I saw thee polluted in thy blood*" (Ezek. xvi. 6). The fancy coins earthly thoughts; the heart is the devil's forge, where the sparks of lust fly.

(v.) We are in a state of damnation. We are born under a curse. The wrath of God abideth on us (John iii. 36). This is our condition before God is pleased by a merciful call to bring us near to Himself, and free us from that misery in which we were before engulfed.

3. The means of our effectual call. The ordinary means which the Lord uses in calling us, is not by raptures and revelations, but is,

(i.) By His Word, which is "*the rod of his strength*" (Psalm cv. 2). The voice of the Word is God's call to us; therefore He is said to speak to us from heaven (Heb. xii. 25). That is, in the ministry of the Word. When the Word calls from sin, it is as if we heard a voice from heaven.

(ii.) By His Spirit. This is the loud call. The Word is the instrumental cause of our conversion, the Spirit is the efficient. The ministers of God are only the pipes and

organs; it is the Spirit blowing in them, that effectually changes the heart. "*While Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word*" (Acts x. 44). It is not the farmer's industry in ploughing and sowing, that will make the ground fruitful, without the early and latter rain. So it is not the seed of the Word that will effectually convert, unless the Spirit put forth His sweet influence, and drops as rain upon the heart. Therefore the aid of God's Spirit is to be implored, that He would put forth His powerful voice, and awaken us out of the grave of unbelief. If a man knock at a gate of brass, it will not open; but if he come with a key in his hand, it will open: so when God, who has the key of David in His hand (Rev. iii. 7) comes, He opens the heart, though it be ever so fast locked against Him.

4. The method God uses in calling of sinners.

The Lord does not tie Himself to a particular way, or use the same order with all. He comes sometimes in a still small voice. Such as have had godly parents, and have sat under the warm sunshine of religious education, often do not know how or when they were called. The Lord did secretly and gradually instill grace into their hearts, as the dew falls unnoticed in drops. They know by the heavenly effects that they are called, but the time or manner they know not. The hand moves on the clock, but they do not perceive when it moves.

Thus God deals with some. Others are more stubborn and knotty sinners, and God comes to them in a rough wind. He uses more wedges of the law to break their hearts; He deeply humbles them, and shows them they are damned without Christ. Then having ploughed up the fallow ground of their hearts by humiliation, He sows the seed of consolation. He presents Christ and mercy to them, and draws their wills, not only to accept Christ, but passionately to desire, and faithfully to rest upon Him. Thus He wrought upon Paul, and called him from a persecutor to a preacher. This call, though it is more visible than the other, yet is not more real. God's method in calling sinners may vary, but the effect is still the same.

5. The properties of this effectual calling.

(i.) It is a sweet call. God so calls as He allures; He does not force, but draw. The freedom of the will is not taken away, but the stubbornness of it is conquered. "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*" (Psalm cx. 3). After this call there are no more disputes, the soul readily obeys God's call: as when Christ called Zacchæus, he joyfully welcomed Him into his heart and house.

(ii.) It is a holy call, "*Who hath called us with a holy calling*" (2 Tim. i. 9). This call of God calls men out of their sins: by it they are consecrated, and set apart for God. The vessels of the tabernacle were taken from common use, and set apart to a holy use; so they who are effectually called are separated from sin, and consecrated to God's service. The God whom we worship is holy, the work we are employed in is holy, the

place we hope to arrive at is holy; all this calls for holiness. A Christian's heart is to be the presence-chamber of the blessed Trinity; and shall not holiness to the Lord be written upon it? Believers are children of God the Father, members of God the Son, and temples of God the Holy Ghost; and shall they not be holy? Holiness is the badge and livery of God's people. *"The people of thy holiness"* (Isaiah lxiii. 18). As chastity distinguishes a virtuous woman from a harlot, so holiness distinguishes the godly from the wicked. It is a holy calling; *"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"* (1 Thess. iv. 7). Let not any man say he is called of God, that lives in sin. Has God called you to be a swearer, to be a drunkard? Nay, let not the merely moral person say he is effectually called. What is civility without sanctity? It is but a dead carcass strewn with flowers. The king's picture stamped upon brass will not go current for gold. The merely moral man looks as if he had the King of heaven's image stamped upon him; but he is no better than counterfeit metal, which will not pass for current with God.

(iii.) It is an irresistible call. When God calls a man by His grace, he cannot but come. You may resist the minister's call, but you cannot the Spirit's call. The finger of the blessed Spirit can write upon a heart of stone, as once He wrote His laws upon tables of stone. God's words are creating words; when He said "Let there be light, there was light"; and when He says, "Let there be faith", it shall be so. When God called Paul, he answered to the call. *"I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"* (Acts xxvi. 19). God rides forth conquering in the chariot of His gospel; He makes the blind eyes see, and the stony heart bleed. If God will call a man, nothing shall lie in the way to hinder; difficulties shall be untied, the powers of hell shall disband. *"Who hath resisted his will?"* (Rom. ix. 19). God bends the iron sinew, and cuts asunder the gates of brass (Psalm cvii. 16). When the Lord touches a man's heart by His Spirit, all proud imaginations are brought down, and the fort-royal of the will yields to God. I may allude to Psalm cxiv. 5, *"What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? and thou Jordan, that thou wert driven back?"* The man that before was as a raging sea, foaming forth wickedness, now on a sudden flies back and trembles, he falls down as the jailor, *"What shall I do to be saved?"* (Acts xvi. 30). What ails thee, O sea? What ails this man? The Lord has been effectually calling him. He has been working a work of grace, and now his stubborn heart is conquered by a sweet violence.

(iv.) It is a high calling. *"I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God"* (Phil. iii. 14). It is a high calling, because we are called to high exercises of religion — to die to sin, to be crucified to the world, to live by faith, to have fellowship with the Father (1 John i. 3). This is a high calling; here is a work too high for men in a state of nature to perform. It is a high calling, because we are called to high privileges, to justification and adoption, to be made co-heirs with Christ. He that is effectually called is higher than the princes of the earth.

(v.) It is a gracious call. It is the fruit and product of free grace. That God should call some, and not others; some taken, and others left; one called who is of a more rugged, morose disposition, another of sharper intellect, of a sweeter temper, rejected, here is free grace. That the poor should be rich in faith, heirs of a kingdom (James ii. 5), and the nobles and great ones of the world for the most part rejected, *"Not many noble are*

called" (1 Cor. i. 26); this is free and rich grace. *"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight"* (Matt. xi. 26). That under the same sermon one should be effectually wrought upon, another no more moved than a dead man with the sound of music; that one should hear the Spirit's voice in the Word, another not hear it; that one should be softened and moistened with the influence of heaven, another, like Gideon's dry fleece, has no dew upon him: behold here distinguishing grace! The same affliction converts one and hardens another. Affliction to one is as the bruising of spices, which cast forth a fragrant smell; to the other it is as the crushing of weeds in a mortar, which are more unsavoury. What is the cause of this, but the free grace of God? It is a gracious calling; it is all enamelled and interwoven with free grace.

(vi.) It is a glorious call. *"Who hath called us unto his eternal glory"* (1 Pet. v. 10). We are called to the enjoyment of the ever-blessed God : as if a man were called out of a prison to sit upon a throne. Quintus Curtius writes of one, who while digging in his garden was called to be king. Thus God calls us to glory and virtue (2 Pet. i. 3). First to virtue, then to glory. At Athens there were two temples, the temple of Virtue, and the temple of Honour; and no man could go to the temple of honour, but through the temple of virtue. So God calls us first to virtue, and then to glory. What is the glory among men, which most so hunt after, but a feather blown in the air? What is it to the weight of glory? Is there not great reason we should follow God's call? He calls to preferment; can there be any loss or prejudice in this? God would have us part with nothing for Him, but that which will damn us if we keep it. He has no design upon us, but to make us happy. He calls us to salvation, He calls us to a kingdom. Oh, how should we then, with Bartimaeus, throw off our ragged coat of sin, and follow Christ when He calls!

(vii.) It is a rare call. But few are savingly called. *"Few are chosen"* (Matt. xxii. 14). Few, not collectively, but comparatively. The word "to call" signifies to choose out some from among others. Many have the light brought to them, but few have their eyes anointed to see that light. *"Thou hast a few names in Sardis that have not defiled their garments"* (Rev. iii. 4). How many millions sit in the region of darkness! And in those climates where the Sun of righteousness does shine, there are many who receive the light of the truth, without the love of it. There are many formalists, but few believers. There is something that looks like faith, which is not. The Cyprian diamond, says Pliny, sparkles like the true diamond, but it is not of the right kind, it will break with the hammer: so the hypocrite's faith will break with the hammer of persecution. But few are truly called, The number of precious stones is few, to the number of pebble stones. Most men shape their religion according to the fashion of the times; they are for the music and the idol (Dan. iii. 7). The serious thought of this should make us work out our salvation with fear, and labour to be in the number of those few whom God has translated into a state of grace.

(viii.) It is an unchangeable call. *"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance"* (Rom. xi. 29). That is, as a learned writer says, those gifts which flow from election. When God calls a man, He does not repent of it. God does not, as many friends do, love one day, and hate another; or as princes, who make their subjects favourites, and afterwards throw them into prison. This is the blessedness of a saint; his condition

admits of no alteration. God's call is founded upon His decree, and His decree is immutable. Acts of grace cannot be reversed. God blots out His people's sins, but not their names. Let the world ring changes every hour, a believer's condition is fixed and unalterable.

6. The end of our effectual calling is the honour of God. *"That we should be to the praise of his glory"* (Ephes. i. 12). He that is in the state of nature, is no more fit to honour God, than a brute is to put forth acts of reason. A man before conversion continually reflects dishonour upon God. As black vapours which arise out of fenny, moorish grounds, cloud and darken the sun, so out of the natural man's heart arise black vapours of sin, which cast a cloud upon God's glory. The sinner is versed in treason, but understands nothing of loyalty to the King of heaven. But there are some whom the lot of free-grace falls upon, and these shall be taken as jewels from among the rubbish, and be effectually called, that they may lift up God's name in the world. The Lord will have some in all ages who shall oppose the corruptions of the times, bear witness to His truths, and convert sinners from the error of their ways. He will have His worthies, as king David had. They who have been monuments of God's mercies, will be trumpets of His praise.

These considerations show us the necessity of effectual calling. Without it there is no going to heaven. We must be *"made meet for the inheritance"* (Col. i. 12). As God makes heaven fit for us, so He makes us fit for heaven; and what gives this meetness, but effectual calling? A man remaining in the filth and rubbish of nature, is no more fit for heaven, than a dead man is fit to inherit an estate. The high calling is not a thing arbitrary or indifferent, but as needful as salvation; yet alas, how is this one thing needful neglected! Most men, like the people of Israel, wander up and down to gather straw, but do not mind the evidences of their effectual calling.

Take notice what a mighty power God puts forth in calling of sinners! God does so call as to draw (John vi. 44). Conversion is styled a resurrection. *"Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection"* (Rev. xx. 6). That is, a rising from sin to grace. A man can no more convert himself than a dead man can raise himself. It is called a creation (Col. iii. 10). To create is above the power of nature.

Objection. But, say some, the will is not dead but asleep, and God, by a moral persuasion, does only awaken us, and then the will can obey God's call, and move of itself to its own conversion.

Answer. To this I answer, Every man is by sin bound in fetters. *"I perceive that thou art in the bond of iniquity"* (Acts viii. 23). A man that is in fetters, if you use arguments, and persuade him to go, is that sufficient? There must be a breaking of his fetters, and setting him free, before he can walk. So it is with every natural man; he is fettered with corruption; now the Lord by converting grace must file off his fetters, nay, give him legs to run too, or he can never obtain salvation.

Use. An exhortation to make your calling sure.

"Give diligence to make your calling sure" (2 Pet. i. 10). This is the great business of our lives, to get sound evidences of our effectual calling. Do not acquiesce in outward privileges, do not cry as the Jews, "*The temple of the Lord!*" (Jer. vii. 4). Do not rest in baptism; what is it to have the water, and want the Spirit? Do not be content that Christ has been preached to you. Do not satisfy yourselves with an empty profession; all this may be, and yet you are no better than blazing comets. But labour to evidence to your souls that you are called of God. Be not Athenians to inquire news. What is the state and complexion of the times? What changes are likely to happen in such a year? What is all this, if you are not effectually called? What if the times should have a fairer aspect? What though glory did dwell in our land, if grace does not dwell in our hearts? Oh my brethren, when things are dark without, let all be clear within. Give diligence to make your calling sure, it is both feasible and probable. God is not wanting to them that seek Him. Let not this great business hang in hand any longer. If there were a controversy about your land, you would use all means to clear your title; and is salvation nothing? Will you not clear your title here? Consider how sad your case is, if you are not effectually called.

You are strangers to God. The prodigal went into a far country (Luke xv. 13), which implies that every sinner, before conversion, is afar off from God. "*At that time ye were without Christ, strangers to the covenants of promise*" (Ephes. ii. 12). Men dying in their sins have no more right to promises than strangers have to the privilege of free-born citizens. If you are strangers, what language can you expect from God, but this, "I know you not!"

If you are not effectually called, you are enemies. "*Alienated and enemies*" (Col. i. 21). There is nothing in the Bible you can lay claim to, but the threatenings. You are heirs to all the plagues written in the book of God. Though you may resist the commands of the law, you cannot flee from the curses of the law. Such as are enemies to God, let them read their doom. "*But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me*" (Luke xix. 27). Oh, how it should concern you therefore to make your calling sure! How miserable and damnable will your condition be, if death call you before the Spirit call you!

Question. But is there any hope of my being called? I have been a great sinner.

Answer. Great sinners have been called. Paul was a persecutor, yet he was called. Some of the Jews who had a hand in crucifying Christ, were called. God loves to display His free grace to sinners. Therefore be not discouraged. You see a golden cord let down from heaven for poor trembling souls to lay hold upon.

Question. But how shall I know I am effectually called?

Answer. He who is savingly called is called out of himself, not only out of sinful self, but

out of righteous self; he denies his duties and moral endowments. *"Not having mine own righteousness"* (Phil. iii. 9). He whose heart God has touched by His Spirit, lays down the idol of self-righteousness at Christ's feet, for Him to tread upon. He uses morality and duties of piety, but does not trust to them. Noah's dove made use of her wings to fly, but trusted to the ark for safety. This is excellent, when a man is called out of himself. This self-renunciation is, as Augustine says, the first step to saving faith.

He who is effectually called has a visible change wrought. Not a change of the faculties, but of the qualities. He is altered from what he was before. His body is the same, but not his mind he has another spirit. Paul was so changed after his conversion that people did not know him (Acts ix. 21). Oh what a metamorphosis does grace make! *"And such were some of you; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified"* (1 Cor. vi. 11). Grace changes the heart.

In effectual calling there is a three-fold change wrought:

(1). There is a change wrought in the understanding. Before, there was ignorance, darkness was upon the face of the deep; but now there is light, *"Now ye are light in the Lord"* (Ephes. v. 8). The first work of God in the creation of the world was light; so it is in the new creation. He who is savingly called says with that man in the gospel: *"Whereas I was blind, now I see"* (John ix. 25). He sees such evil in sin, and excellency in the ways of God, as he never saw before. Indeed, this light which the blessed Spirit brings, may well be called a marvellous light. *"That ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you into his marvellous light"* (1 Pet. ii. 9). It is a marvellous light in six respects. (i.) Because it is strangely conveyed. It does not come from the celestial orbs where the planets are, but from the Sun of righteousness. (ii.) It is marvellous in the effect. This light does that which no other light can. It makes a man perceive himself to be blind. (iii.) It is a marvellous light, because it is more penetrating. Other light may shine upon the face; this light shines into the heart, and enlightens the conscience (2 Cor. iv. 6). (iv.) It is a marvellous light, because it sets those who have it a marvelling. They marvel at themselves, how they could be contented to be so long without it. They marvel that their eyes should be opened, and not others. They marvel that notwithstanding they hated and opposed this light, yet it should shine in the firmament of their souls. This is what the saints will stand wondering at to all eternity. (v.) It is a marvellous light, because it is more vital than any others. It not only enlightens, but quickens; it makes alive those who *"were dead in trespasses and sins"* (Ephes. ii. 1). Therefore it is called the *"light of life"* (John viii. 12). (vi.) It is a marvellous light, because it is the beginning of everlasting light. The light of grace is the morning-star which ushers in the sunlight of glory.

Now then, reader, can you say that this marvellous light of the Spirit has dawned upon you? When you were enveloped in ignorance, and did neither know God nor yourself, suddenly a light from heaven shined round about you. This is one part of that blessed change which is wrought in the effectual calling.

(2). There is a change wrought in the will. "*To will is present with me*" (Rom. vii. 18). The will, which before opposed Christ, now embraces Him. The will, which was an iron sinew, is now like melting wax; it readily receives the stamp and impression of the Holy Ghost. The will moves heavenward, and carries all the orbs of the affections along with it. The regenerate will answers to every call of God, as the echo answers to the voice. "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" (Acts ix. 6). The will now becomes a volunteer, it enlists itself under the Captain of salvation (Heb. ii. 10). Oh what a happy change is wrought here! Before, the will kept Christ out; now, it keeps sin out.

(3). There is a change in the conduct. He who is called of God, walks directly contrary to what he did before. He walked before in envy and malice, now he walks in love; before he walked in pride, now in humility. The current is carried quite another way. As in the heart there is a new birth, so in the life a new edition. Thus we see what a mighty change is wrought in such as are called of God.

How far are they from this effectual call who never had any change? They are the same they were forty or fifty years ago, as proud and carnal as ever, They have seen many changes in their times, but they have had no change in their heart. Let not men think to leap out of the harlot's lap (the world) into Abraham's bosom; either they must have a gracious change while they live, or a cursed change when they die.

He who is called of God esteems this call as the highest blessing. A king whom God has called by His grace, esteems it more that he is called to be a saint, than that he is called to be a king. He values his high-calling more than his high-birth. Theodosius thought it a greater honour to be a Christian than to be an emperor. A carnal person can no more value spiritual blessings than a baby can value a diamond necklace. He prefers his worldly grandeur, his ease, plenty, and titles of honour, before conversion. He had rather be called duke than saint, a sign he is a stranger to effectual calling. He who is enlightened by the Spirit, counts holiness his best heraldry, and looks upon his effectual calling as his preferment. When he has taken this degree, he is a candidate for heaven.

He who is effectually called, is called out of the world. It is a "*heavenly calling*" (Heb. iii. 1). He that is called of God, minds the things of a heavenly aspect; he is *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Naturalists say of precious stones, though they have their matter from the earth, yet their sparkling lustre is from the influence of the heavens: so it is with a godly man, though his body be from the earth, yet the sparkling of his affections is from heaven; his heart is drawn into the upper region, as high as Christ. He not only casts off every wicked work, but every earthly weight. He is not a worm, but an eagle.

Another sign of our effectual calling is diligence in our ordinary calling. Some boast of their high calling, but they lie idly at anchor. Religion does not seal warrants to idleness. Christians must not be slothful. Idleness is the devil's bath; a slothful person becomes a prey to every temptation. Grace, while it cures the heart, does not make the hand lame. He who is called of God, as he works for heaven, so he works in his trade.

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