Sermon Series: What Does It Mean to be Saved?
Sermon Title: The Effectual Call of God

Text: **Acts 2:37-39 -- Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."**

Introduction: It was **1779** when **John Newton** wrote "**Amazing Grace**," a song that I'm sure most, if not all of us, are familiar with. But I wonder if you know his backstory, which began in **1725**. As a boy, Newton was raised in a Christian home and had the blessing of being taught verses of the Bible as a young child. Unfortunately, his mother died when John was only six years old, and he was sent to live with a relative who hated the Bible and mocked Christianity. When he couldn't tolerate his living situation any longer, Newton ran away. **He became quite wild in those years and was known for being able to swear for two hours without ever repeating himself**. Later, he enlisted in **the British Navy** but eventually deserted. A short while after that, he was captured and beaten publicly as punishment for deserting. Newton then signed up for the ***Merchant Marines*** and went to Africa. In his memoirs, he wrote that he went there for one reason only, ***'That I might sin my fill***.' **Newton fell in with a Portuguese slave trader in whose home he was cruelly treated. This man often went away on slaving expeditions, and when he was gone, his power passed to his African wife, who hated all white men and vented her hatred on poor Newton**. As a result, she forced Newton to grovel in the dirt, eating his food from the ground like a dog. He was beaten mercilessly if he touched it with anything but his face. In time, thin and emaciated Newton made his way to sea where he was picked up by a British ship sailing to the coast of England. When the captain of the ship learned that the young man knew something about navigation as a result of being in the British Navy, he made him his ship's mate. **But even then, Newton fell into trouble**. One day, when the captain was ashore, Newton broke out the ship's supply of rum and got the whole crew drunk. He was so drunk himself that when the captain returned and struck him on the head, Newton fell overboard and would have drowned if one of the sailors hadn't quickly hauled him back on board. Near the end of one particularly difficult voyage, the ship ran into bad weather and was blown off course. Water poured in and the ship began to sink. Newton was sent down into the hole to pump water. **The storm lasted for days. During the entire time, the young man was sure the vessel would sink and he would drown**. But in the hold of the ship as he desperately pumped water, the God of all grace, whom he had tried to forget but who had **never forgotten him**, brought to his mind Bible verses he had learned in his home as a child. **It was then that the way of salvation opened up to John Newton. He was born again and his life was deeply transformed**. Much later, when he was again in England, he began to study theology, eventually becoming a preacher first in a little town called ***Olney*** and later in ***London***. **And then in 1779, in the 54th year of his life, John Newton penned the words to the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace."**

To what can we attribute Newton's salvation and the dramatic transformation that resulted? **Well, if you were here last week, you know that the Bible says it was not through his own human effort that he found God. It was, in fact, God's election of him before the foundation of the world as an act of pure grace that resulted in Newton's response of saving faith in Christ** (**Ephesians 1:4-6 – God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will)**. I suspect it was verses like these that inspired him to pen the words – **Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found; was blind, but now I see**. '**Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed**.

This morning, in our third message in the series, **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SAVED,** I want to focus on what comes AFTER God's election of someone in the grand scheme of His saving work among us. I'm referring to what theologians refer to as **GOD'S EFFECTIVE CALLING** referred to in **Romans 8:30 -- those whom he predestined he also called.** Here's what it means.

Effective Calling is an act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which He summons people to Himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith (*Wayne Grudem,* **Systematic Theology***, p. 693*). Though the word can be used in a general sense, as in calling out to a friend, it can also have much more force, as in a **SUMMONS OR SUBPOENA.** This is how it's used in **Romans 8:30** and in **Acts 24:25 NASV – (Governor Felix to Paul) Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon (call) you -- NASU**).

It is in this latter sense, as a summons or subpoena, that we are to understand God's effective calling. **Here's a simple illustration that might help you**. Roughly every two years, I receive a summons from the Kenosha County courts to serve on jury duty. THIS IS **NOT AN INVITATION** TO SERVE. IT IS AN **ORDER TO APPEAR** THAT HAS THE FULL WEIGHT AND AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNMENT BEHIND IT. I AM NOT ALLOWED TO IGNORE THIS SUMMONS. IF I DO, I CAN BE FINED AND FACE UP TO SIX MONTHS IN JAIL! This is the way the word CALLED is used when it refers to our salvation. **It is a summons from God that has such force behind it that it will bring about the response that it asks for in people's hearts.** The Bible tells us that when God calls us in this way, **He calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light** (**1 Peter 2:9**); **He calls us into the fellowship of His Son** (**1 Corinthians 1:9**); and **into His own kingdom and glory** (**1 Thessalonians 2:12 -- walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory**). IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS GOING TO TRANSFORM US!

In an effort to help us understand this calling of God a little better, we're going to address three aspects of it: **(1)** Where it comes from; **(2)** How it comes to us; and (**3**) What it accomplishes in us.

WHERE IT COMES FROM -- Effective calling comes from God. It starts with God the Father (**John 6:44 -- No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him**). The word "**draw**" has the idea of **DRAGGING SOMEONE AGAINST HIS WILL**. This is how it's used in **James 2:6 -- Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court**? **So, the Father not only chooses a person before the foundation of the world to be saved, but then drags him to Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit, who is sent by God in Christ's name**. **Why is this necessary?** Here are FOUR WORDS from **Romans 5** that might help you to understand **the hard-heartedness of every unbeliever**: (**1**) **Verse six** – WEAK – (**without strength or powerless**); (**2**) **Verse six** – UNGODLY – (**wicked or against God**); (**3**) **Verse eight** – SINNERS – (**missed the mark**); and (**4**) ENEMIES – (**adversaries**). **Weak, ungodly, sinners and enemies**! No wonder God has to draw (drag) us to Christ. WE WOULD NEVER GET THERE IF HE DIDN'T.

So, God enables us to hear and respond to His call, something the unbeliever could never do for himself (**1 Corinthians 2:14-15 -- The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one**). In fact, if a person does not have the Holy Spirit to enable him to discern spiritual truth, he will not accept or comprehend it and will even consider the things of God to be utter foolishness (**1 Corinthians 1:18 -- For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing).** In **Acts 2:37-39**, **we read that this is what the Apostle Peter observed at Pentecost**. He preached the Gospel so that people were **cut to the heart** (**deeply move**d) by his message. **Though all heard it, only those whom the Lord God had called to Himself received forgiveness of their sins and the promised Holy Spirit** (**Acts 2:37-39 --Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of**

the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself").

Here's another illustration for you. We all know that God has given certain creatures amazing abilities. **The chameleon, for example, has an uncanny knack for nabbing bugs in midair with its tongue**. Researchers now know why. According to **Matthias Ott and Frank Schaffel of the University Eye Hospital in Tubingen, Germany,** chameleons have eyes that work like a telephoto lens on a camera constructed with both **a positive and a negative lens**. All other animals in the world that have been subjected to a similar study have only a positive convex lens. **The chameleon is the only creature that also has a negative, concave lens. It is the addition of this second lens that enables it to see things close up in a way that other animals cannot**. IT ENABLES CHAMELEONS TO CATCH THEIR DINNER LIKE NO OTHER OF GOD'S CREATIONS. **Perhaps the same thing can be said of humans as well. Everyone in our world has a positive, spiritual lens that allows them to grasp certain spiritual realities (the general call of God), but only those who are subject to the effective call of God have the benefit of a second lens that permits them to see in clear focus what others miss**. ***And it is this additional insight that makes all the difference***.

HOW IT COMES TO US -- Effective calling comes through the Gospel Call (**Romans 1:16-17 -- I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith"**). Though God's call is always effective, He doesn't save us without seeking a response from us in believing the good news.

- **God's gospel call must include the facts of salvation**.
  - **All have sinned and fall short of God's glory** (**Romans 3:9-10 -- For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one**).
  - **The wages of sin is death** (**See James 1:15 -- Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death**).
  - **Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins** (**Galatians 3:13 -- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree**).
- **God's gospel call must include an invitation to respond**. Any gospel presentation must include an invitation to make a conscious decision to respond to God's call in two ways:
  - **God calls us to respond in REPENTANCE** (**Acts 2:37-38 – "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent"**).
  - **God calls us to respond in FAITH** (**Acts 2:37-38 -- Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**). **The word BAPTIZED means to be immersed into Christ. I like Kenneth Wuest's translation of this verse** -- **Let each one of you be baptized upon the ground of your confession of belief in the sum total of all that Jesus Christ is in His glorious Person**.
- **God's gospel call must include the promise of forgiveness** (**Colossians 1:13-14 -- He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**). Having been forgiven of sin, those God has called are made alive in Christ.
  - **Forgiveness brings abundant life** (**See John 10:10**).
  - **Forgiveness brings eternal life** (**See John 3:16**).

WHAT IT ACCOMPLISHES IN US -- Effective calling guarantees a positive response to God with these two results.

- **Believers belong to Christ** (**Romans 1:6 -- you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ**).
- **Believers become like Christ** (**Romans 8:29 -- For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers)**. We are holy ones (**See Romans 1:7; 1 Peter 2:9**) who embody the character of Christ (peace—**See Colossians 3:15**; freedom—**See Galatians 5:13**; hope—**See Ephesians 4:4**; patience—**1 Peter 2:20-21**, etc.).

Conclusion: According to **Romans 11:29 the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable** (**without repentance…in other words, God will not change His mind concerning you**). He has ordained that you will be in the kingdom of His Son forever. The confidence that we derive from this knowledge is meant to bring us peace no matter the circumstances we face. **Have you ever booked a ticket to fly somewhere, checked in for your flight, arrived at your gate, and noticed that some people are nervously pacing back and forth by the gate before your plane's departure**? If you're a veteran flyer, you know why they're a little nervous. **These people are on standby**. THEY'RE HOPING FOR A SEAT ON THE PLANE ONCE EVERYONE WITH A TICKET HAS BOARDED. **What a contrast their behaviors are to those who already have a confirmed reservation**. Those with tickets calmly read newspapers, chat with their friends, or sleep. The ones on standby anxiously wait in front of the ticket counter. **The difference between the two is caused by the confidence factor**. Those who are certain that a seat on the plane has been reserved for them do not need to worry. Those who are not cannot escape it.

Listen, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you can know with certainty that you have been called by God and that His call is without repentance. You have a place reserved for you in heaven, and nothing can change that fact. IF YOU'RE NOT YET A BELIEVER, THIS IS THE TIME TO CHANGE THAT BY RESPONDING TO THE GOSPEL CALL.