

The Irresistible Call

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Date: 24 April 2016

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's guidance, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the Revelation of John, chapter 3, and if we take as our text this evening the words of verse 20.

Revelation chapter 3 and verse 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

These precious words of Jesus Christ, they highlight to us the great offer of the gospel.

That there is good news tonight because salvation has been accomplished on our behalf through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And now God has issued an invitation for us to come and receive that salvation and the offer of eternal life. And this invitation is portrayed to us so clearly and so simply in the words of our text.

[1 : 23] Where Jesus is standing at the door of our heart and he is knocking. And if we are willing to open the door, he will come into our heart and he will dwell there.

But as we saw last Lord's Day when we picked up again our study of the shorter catechism, we saw that by the time we come to question 28 in the catechism, we already know the story of redemption. We know the gospel. Because we know that we have been created righteous in the image of God. But then we fell into ruin by Adam's disobedience.

And yet God provided a remedy in the person of Jesus Christ. And Jesus has accomplished the plan of redemption by his death and resurrection.

And that's the message of the gospel. There is righteousness, ruin, remedy, redemption. And that's the message which is offered to us tonight.

[2 : 27] A full and free, as we were singing, a plenteous redemption. But as we said last week, the redemption which has been accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross, it is applied to us by the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit applies it to us by revealing Jesus Christ to us. By illuminating and exalting and glorifying Jesus Christ to us in the gospel.

And so the work of the Holy Spirit is to make Christ known. And the Holy Spirit does this, as we said last week. He does it by regeneration. Where we are brought back to life.

We were in a state of ruin in our sin and death. And yet we are brought back to life. We're born again. We're born of the Spirit of God. We're made brand new.

Just like a newborn baby. And we're a new creation. But at that moment of regeneration, where we're brought back to life, we're also in union with Christ.

[3 : 31] We're united to Christ. We are inseparably united to Christ. We are in Christ. And Christ is in us. Jesus Christ dwells in our heart by the Holy Spirit.

So that if we are a Christian, we have the promise that in both life and in death, Jesus will never let us go. He has promised never to leave us and never to forsake us.

But now as we move on to question 30 in the Catechism, we see that the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus Christ to us. Not only in our being made alive again, our regeneration, and not only in our union with Christ, but the Holy Spirit also reveals the preciousness of Jesus Christ to us.

And he does so by this irresistible call to come and embrace him as he has offered to us in the gospel. And this, I believe, is why Jesus says at the end of every address given to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, Jesus says at the end of the address, he who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Because it's the role of the Holy Spirit to impress upon our hearts the call of the gospel. It's the role of the Holy Spirit to make us hear what Jesus is saying to us.

[5 : 00] But the question I want us to ask ourselves this evening, the question I want us all to ask is, how do I know that I am a Christian?

How do I know that God has worked in my heart? What signs and what evidence is there to prove that God has worked in my heart?

So how do I know that I'm a Christian? And I'd like us to answer this question under five headings. I don't want you to be alarmed by the five headings, but hopefully we'll go through them and we'll get there.

The five headings, call, conviction, clarity, constraint and commitment. Call, conviction, clarity, constraint and commitment.

So if we look firstly at call. Call, behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

[6 : 07] The book of Revelation was a revelation of Jesus Christ, which was given to the Apostle John whilst he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos.

And John received this vision in order to give a full and a final revelation of Jesus Christ by issuing both a message of warning and hope to the churches.

And in chapters 2 and 3, Jesus tells John to write to seven different churches throughout the region of Asia, which today would be Turkey.

And as Jesus addresses each church individually, he gives to them a word of condemnation and a word of exhortation. And so when Jesus urges John to write to the seventh church in Asia, the church in Laodicea, they are a church that are neither here nor there.

He says they are neither hot nor cold because they are a lukewarm church. And the reason the Laodiceans are a lukewarm church is because they are distracted by all their wealth and all their worldly possessions, which is what Jesus says in verse 16.

[7 : 22] So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you're wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Jesus exhorts the Laodiceans to turn back to God in repentance.

And he tells them that the gospel table, it's full and it's free. The redemption which is on offer, it's plenteous. And Jesus is bidding them to come to it.

He says, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich. And Jesus says this because the eternal riches which he offers in the gospel, they are more than gold, and they are sweeter than honey.

[8 : 34] And what's more is that Jesus is more than willing. More than willing to graciously lavish upon them his riches. More than willing to save them.

Because he is only standing on the other side of the door. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.

And so as Jesus stands at the door of their heart, he stands knocking. And my friend, that's what the call of the gospel is. It's like a knock at the door.

Because on hearing the knock at the door, we are presented with a choice. Will we answer the door or will we leave it? Will we respond to the knock or will we hope that the knocking stops and the visitor goes away?

Will we open the door and welcome the visitor in or will we send them away until a more convenient time? And that's what happens every time we hear the word of God being read or the gospel being preached.

[9 : 45] Jesus is standing and he is knocking at the door of our heart. And this is what we often refer to as the outward call. Because the outward call, it's general.

It's given to everyone. Because the call or the invitation to come to Christ for your salvation, it's offered to everyone. It's offered to whosoever.

Whosoever will, let him come. Which means that Christ stands and knocks on the door of everyone's heart. There is not one door that Jesus Christ does not knock on.

He is a saviour who goes door to door to door. And he knocks every time the presentation of the gospel is given. Because the outward call of the gospel, it's very clear.

And we see that throughout the Bible. Even with Isaiah, that evangelistic Old Testament prophet who proclaimed to his generation and to subsequent generations.

[10:49] He says, Ho, everyone that thirsts, come. And then when Jesus issued the outward call in his ministry, he said, Come unto me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

And the same is true of the Spirit and of the church. Because we're told that the final words in this book, the final words of the Bible, say, The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.

And so throughout Scripture, there is this universal call to come to the gospel table and receive this free offer of salvation. Where Jesus knocks at the door of our heart, and we have to let him in.

But Jesus not only knocks at the door of our heart by the reading of God's word and the preaching of God's word, Jesus also knocks at the door of our heart through every event in our lives.

Because all our providences, all the events in our lives, whether they are events which cause us joy and gladness, or they are the events which cause us pain and heartache and sorrow, where we receive bad news in the form of either illness or death.

[12:09] And often when we think that God is absent from these things, God is actually in the midst of them. And he's using them not to drive us away from him, but to drive us to him.

God uses all the events in our lives, everything that goes on in our experience from day to day, in order to drive us to our knees. Because through every event, every providence, every experience that we go through in our lives, Christ is knocking at the door.

He's knocking at the door of our heart. But the question is, will we answer the door, or will we leave it? Will we open the door and let Jesus in?

Or are we like the Laodiceans, who were far too focused upon their worldly possessions than the knock at the door? Because the Laodiceans thought that they were in need of nothing.

They thought that they had everything life could offer, and everything money could buy. But the one thing they lacked, the one thing they were needful of, was the one standing outside the door knocking.

[13:22] But what the Catechism teaches us is that Jesus Christ will remain outside the door knocking. And he will continue to issue that outward call through the preaching of God's word, and through all the events in our lives from day to day.

He'll keep doing it. He'll keep knocking. Until the Holy Spirit applies that effectual inward call to our hearts. Which means that the outward call is often ineffectual.

But the inward call is always effectual. Because as a work of God's Spirit, it's always successful. God doesn't make mistakes.

And what I mean by this is that Jesus Christ stands and knocks outside the door of every heart. But it's only when God's Spirit works in our heart that we hear His voice and we respond.

And that's what Jesus says. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

[14:34] And so hearing the voice of Jesus is what separates between the outward, ineffectual call to open the door and the inward effectual call to open the door.

It's only those who have been regenerated, those who have been made alive by the Holy Spirit and those who are in union with Christ by the Holy Spirit where they belong to Jesus, they will not only hear the knock at the door of their heart, but they will also hear His voice.

They will also hear His voice. And is that all what Jesus said in John chapter 10? My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

And so we can ask, how do I know that I'm a Christian? How do I know that God has worked in my heart? I have heard the inward call to come to Christ. I have heard the voice of Jesus in the Gospel pressing upon my heart.

And you know, that's what the hymn writer said. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast.

[15:44] I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad. I found in Him a resting place and He has made me glad.

But in order to know that God has worked in our heart, there is not only the inward call, there is also conviction. which is what we'll look at secondly.

Conviction. Conviction of sin. And conviction of sin is something I suppose that is rarely spoken of today. Because there can be a tendency to only speak about the need to come to Christ. And the importance of having a relationship with Jesus Christ. And it is important. But in order to know what we are being saved to, we have to know what we are being saved from.

In order to know, in order to come to Jesus for salvation, we need to know why we need to come to Jesus for salvation. Because most people would stress that they're not that bad.

[16:50] Yes, they sin, they tell little lies, they say wrong things, they think ill of other people, they speak ill of other people, but they're not as bad as other people. They're not as bad as the drug addict who has to steal in order to feed his addiction.

They're not as bad as the pedophile or the rapist or the murderer. And to some extent, that is true. But the reality is that because of our default position is in a state of ruin, where we were all conceived in guiltiness and sin due to the fall of Adam.

Therefore, we are all hell-deserving sinners. All of us. And our ruined condition means that we deserve nothing from God except his wrath and his curse.

But what's interesting is that it's the work of the Holy Spirit to convince us and convict us of our ruined condition. It's the work of the Holy Spirit to show us how dark and how sinful our heart really is.

And that's what happened to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Because before he fell into any state of sin and misery, when everything was perfect, before the fall, we're told that Adam was naked.

[18:07] And he didn't know what sin was. And he didn't know the shame that comes with nakedness. But as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, the first thing they did was try to clothe themselves by sewing together fig leaves because they felt shame.

They felt shame because of sin. And you remember what God asked Adam and Eve, who told you that you were naked? And I believe that it was the Holy Spirit who convinced them and convicted them of their nakedness and their shame before God.

And that's what the Holy Spirit does when he is working in our heart. He highlights for us, he illuminates to us the sinfulness of our sin. Just to give you an illustration, I always remember when I was still living at home with my parents.

It wasn't that long ago. But my mother, she went, she would usually go to the gate and she would collect the milk, which had been dropped off by the milkman. And one morning, it was early in the morning and it was still dark and there were no streetlights on at the time.

But my mother, she went down and she went to pick up the milk cartons. But what she didn't realise was that the crows had been there before her. And they had poked all these little holes in the milk cartons.

[19:29] And so when my mother walked back to the house, she couldn't see that all the milk was pouring out of the cartons all over her clothes. That was, she didn't realise until she came into the house and stood in the light.

And it was only standing in the kitchen light that she was able to see how much of a mess she was in. And my friend, that's what the Holy Spirit does with our sin.

He reveals to us the awful mess that we're in by shedding light on the darkness of our heart and showing us our ruined condition and convicting us of our sin and pricking our conscience.

My friend, when the Holy Spirit is working in our heart, He convinces us that there is something far wrong with us and it needs to be rectified immediately.

And that's what the Holy Spirit was doing even in the church of Laodicea. Because in verse 17 we see that they were saying that they were wealthy and rich and that they had need of nothing.

[20:40] But through the words of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was showing them that they were in fact wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. The Holy Spirit was convicting them, convicting the church in Laodicea and convincing them of the awful condition of their heart.

But the Holy Spirit was also showing to them that the remedy to their wound was only standing outside the door. And that's what the Holy Spirit does with us too.

He reveals to us how dark our heart is on the inside. But he also makes clear to us how beautiful and how wonderful and how glorious the Saviour is who is standing on the outside.

And so how do I become a Christian? How do I know that I'm a Christian? How do I know that God has worked in my heart? I have heard the inward call to come to Christ.

I am convicted that I am a miserable sinner. And thirdly, I have been given clarity that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour.

[21 : 56] Call conviction clarity. Clarity. So the work of the Holy Spirit is not only to enlighten the darkness of our heart by convincing us that we are sinners, we are in a state of ruin.

The Holy Spirit also shows us how wonderful and how glorious Jesus is. He makes Jesus known to us. He gives clarity. He gives enlightenment to our heart and to our mind so that we know where to go with our sin.

My friend, the Holy Spirit reveals to us the finished work of Jesus on the cross by opening our eyes. And that's what the Spirit was doing with this church, the church in Laodicea.

Because it says in verse 18, Jesus says, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

The Holy Spirit was going to anoint the blind and darkened eyes of the Laodiceans with eyesalve so that they could see.

[23 : 14] And this reference to eyesalve and the blindness of the Laodiceans, because it's John that wrote this, it's meant to draw us immediately back to John chapter 9.

Because in John chapter 9, we read of the account when Jesus and his disciples came across this man who was born blind. And thinking that his blindness was the result of sinning against God, all the disciples asked Jesus, who sinned?

Was it this man or was it his parents that he was born blind? And you remember that Jesus said, neither. Neither have this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.

And then we read that Jesus spat upon the ground and he made clay and he anointed the eyes of the blind man and he said to him, go, wash in the pool of Siloam. And when the man went and washed, he came back seeing.

And of course, the spiritual lesson is there for all of us. We are all born blind. Our blindness is an inheritance from Adam. But when the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, he anoints our eyes so that we may see.

[24 : 31] And he reveals to us the works of God. The works of God, Christ and him crucified. And so when the Holy Spirit works in our heart, he wants us to see that Jesus went to the cross for us.

When the Holy Spirit works in our heart, he wants us to see that Jesus took our sin for us. He wants us to see that Jesus stood condemned for us. He wants us to see that Jesus died for us.

He wants us to see that Jesus rose again on the third day for us. And he wants us to see that Jesus is now standing at the door of our heart and he is knocking for us to let him in.

My friend, the Holy Spirit anoints our eyes and gives us clarity in order that we will survey the wondrous cross upon which the Prince of Glory died and see displayed there a love so amazing, a love so divine, said Isaac Watts, but it's a love which demands my soul, my life, my all.

And that brings us fourthly to consider constraint. How do I know that I am a Christian? How do I know that God has worked in my heart I have the inward call to come to Christ.

[25 : 56] I am convicted that I am a miserable sinner. I have been given clarity that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient saviour. And fourthly, I am being constrained by the love of Christ to accept this offer.

Call conviction clarity constraint. Constraint. when the apostle Paul wrote his second letter to the church in Corinth, second Corinthians, Paul emphasized that the message of the gospel is a message of reconciliation.

That because of our sin we have been separated from God, but we need to be reconciled to God. And Paul says that the reason he preaches the gospel and the reason he tells other people that they too must stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account.

The reason he preaches such a solemn message is because the love of Christ constrains him to do it. It compels him to do it.

And what Paul was saying is that because the Holy Spirit worked in his heart, and the Holy Spirit not only showed him how sinful he was and how much he needed to be reconciled to God, the Holy Spirit also showed him that Jesus loved him so much that he was willing to die for him.

[27 : 25] The Holy Spirit revealed the depth of Jesus' love for him by pointing to Calvin. That greater love hath no man than this, that a man laid down his life for his friends.

And it was that love, that selfless sacrificial love of Christ which constrained Paul. It compelled him, him, it persuaded him to open the door and let Jesus in.

And Paul says that he now preaches to others the same message of love and forgiveness, that same love and forgiveness which constrained him to follow Jesus.

But you know there were many times in Paul's life when he was unwilling to follow Jesus, where he had no interest in Christianity. Christianity. In fact he hated Christianity.

He hated Christians and he enjoyed throwing them into prison and he enjoyed putting them to death. And he thought that he would get to heaven by all his works and his good works of righteousness.

[28 : 30] That was until Jesus knocked on the door of his heart and he heard the voice of Jesus calling to him. And when he heard the voice there was conviction of sin and there was clarity because he realized and he knew straight away who was speaking to him and he knew that Jesus was Lord.

And when Jesus spoke to him there was constraint. The love of Jesus Christ constrained him. It compelled him. It persuaded him to accept Jesus into his heart.

My friend, Paul was this unwilling persecutor of the church who was made willing to accept the free offer of the gospel.

And he was made willing because the Holy Spirit renewed his will. The Holy Spirit revealed the love of Christ to him and it constrained him to follow Jesus.

And that's what the Holy Spirit does when he's working in our heart. He renews our will. We're like Paul, we were once unwilling to follow Jesus. Jesus.

[29 : 40] Maybe not for any particular reason but simply because we had no love for him. We had no thought of church, no concern for our undying soul, no concept of our sin, no interest in the Bible or the preaching of God's word.

We had no love for the Lord's people. And yet when the Holy Spirit constrained us and compelled us by the love of Christ he made us willing.

he made us willing because he renewed our will by working in us a love for Jesus and his salvation.

He renewed our will by working in us a hatred for sin and a love for what is good and right.

He renewed our will by working in us a love for the people of God and the preaching of God's word and the word of God itself. He renewed our will by working in us a love for the church of Christ and a desire to be in church.

Whether it's the Lord's day or midweek. My friend when the Holy Spirit works in our heart he constrains us and he compels us to hand over everything and commit our life to Jesus Christ.

[30 : 57] Which brings us lastly to consider the need for commitment. commitment. The need for commitment. How do I know that I'm a Christian?

How do I know that God has worked in my heart? Well you will know that God has worked in your heart. If you can say I have heard the inward call to come to Christ.

I am convicted that I am a miserable sinner. I have been given clarity that Jesus is an all sufficient saviour. I am being constrained by the love of Christ to accept this offer.

And now I am willing to commit my life to Jesus Christ. Call conviction clarity constraint commitment.

Commitment. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

[32 : 11] In the middle of the 19th century William Holman Hunt produced a famous painting that now hangs in St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

And this painting was named by Holman Hunt as the light of the world. because on the canvas Holman Hunt he painted a figure depicting Jesus standing at a closed door.

But the door in the painting it was overgrown with weeds and with thorns indicating that the door had never been opened. And so in the painting Jesus is standing at this closed and overgrown door and he is knocking.

And of course Holman Hunt was illustrating the words of our text. However what's remarkable about the painting is that Holman Hunt didn't paint a door handle on the outside of the door.

There is a door but no door handle which obviously means that the door could only be opened from the inside. therefore the only way to let Jesus in was for the one on the inside to open the door.

[33 : 32] And my friend that's what Jesus is saying to us tonight. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

Jesus is standing at the door of your heart and he is knocking. And if God is working in your heart then you will have heard the inward call.

You will have heard the voice of Jesus in the gospel being pressed upon your heart. And you will feel conviction of sin. You'll be convinced that you're a miserable sinner in ruins and that you are in need of an urgent remedy.

And having your eyes opened you will not only have clarity in seeing how sinful you are but you'll also see how sufficient Jesus is. that he is this wonderful saviour who is able to save you from your sins and he is the one who is constraining you and compelling you to open the door of your heart. Therefore my friend if God is working in your heart the reason you must commit your life to Jesus Christ tonight the reason you must open the door to Jesus tonight is because he is calling you to open it.

[35 : 00] And yes God is sovereign yes effectual calling is a work of God's spirit but as Jesus stands at the door and knocks the door handle is on the inside the door handle is on your side and Jesus is not going to force his way in because you have to turn the handle by faith and open the door.

You have to commit your life to Jesus by letting him into your heart. What are you going to do with this Jesus?

This Jesus who has been persistently knocking at the door of your heart for many years and I look at you and I know he has been knocking for many years many many years but are you going to say to Jesus not today not tomorrow maybe some other time are you going to say to Jesus come back at a more convenient time in my life or are you going to finally open the door the door which has been closed and the door that is overgrown with weeds and thorns are you going to open it and welcome Jesus into your heart he says to you tonight behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door

I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me how do I know that I'm a Christian how do I know that God has worked in my heart he has worked in your heart my friend if you can say I have heard the inward call to come to Christ I am convicted that I'm a miserable sinner I have been given clarity that Jesus is an all sufficient saviour I am being constrained by the love of Christ to accept this free offer and now I am willing to commit my life to Jesus Christ my only question for you does that describe you may the

Lord bless these thoughts let us pray O Lord we give thanks to thee for the great call of the gospel help us Lord we plead to open that door a door Lord for many has been shut for many years but that thou art one who stands knocking that we would be willing that we would be ready that we would truly open that door by faith and welcome Jesus into our arms O Lord bless us we plead bless thy word to our souls impress it upon us upon us by thy spirit that thou wouldst lead us and guide us keep us in the week that lies ahead a week whereof we are often reminded that we do not know what a day or an hour may bring Lord go before us then we pray keep us in the for Jesus sake Amen we shall conclude by singing in

[39 : 04] Psalm 95 in the Scottish Psalter we began our worship this evening singing in Psalm 95 and we began by hearing the call to come and worship the Lord we were urged to bow down before the Lord because he's a great God and king but after the psalmist after he issues the plea and the call to come he issues a plea to commit because he says today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart so whatever you do don't harden to this gospel and to this Jesus Psalm 95 from verse 7 for he is our God the people we of his own pasture are and of his hand the sheep today if ye his voice will hear then harden not your hearts as in the provocation as in the desert on the day of temptation when me your fathers tempt and proved and did my working see in for the space of forty years this race hath grieved me

I said this people urge in heart my ways they do not know to whom I swear in wrath at two my rest they should not go shall sing in Psalm 95 these verses will stand to sing to God praise for he dark on the people we of his own pasture are and of his hand the sheep today if he his voice will hear then harden not pure hearts as in the provocation as in the desert on the day of the temptation when the earth father said on fruit and did my working see in for the space of forty years years this wish hath grieved me

I said this people there should go in my ways they do not know to whom I swim in wrath that to my rest they should not go all the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen