

Canons of Dort–3&4 Head: Article 4-6–How Does God Call the Elect?

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

Unconditional Election is where God chose a certain number to save in Jesus Christ.

Definite or (Limited) Atonement is where Jesus died for that certain number given to him by the Father, fully saving them.

Total Inability (Depravity), shows man's total inability to please God and receive the atonement offered in Jesus.

Today we start to look at Effectual (Irresistible) Call, the 4th Head of Doctrine, showing how God calls man from the cesspool of his life and establishes him on the Rock—Jesus Christ.

Our headings are:

The Light of Nature Cannot Call

The Law of God cannot Call

The Lord who Calls

Our goals are: You will love your Covenant Keeper, hold on to him by faith, and serve in his kingdom, knowing he graciously sent his Holy Spirit to call you and others from darkness to light.

The Light of Nature Cannot Call

Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature: There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in people after the fall, by virtue of which they retain some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is decent and indecent, and demonstrate a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling them to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to God—so far, in fact, that they do not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways they completely distort this light, whatever its precise character, and suppress it in unrighteousness. In doing so they render themselves without excuse before God.

1. What is this Light of Nature?

“Light of Nature” is glimmerings (little lights or sparks) of who God is, glimmerings of the wonder of God's creation, and glimmerings of what God expects from his creation.

The “Light of Nature” gives man some sense of right and wrong. Man knows, for instance, murder is wrong and feels bad when he does it.

But because these are only sparks, they don’t produce enough light to see the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, and the necessity of the work of Jesus.

2. Our Arminian friends argue the “Light of Nature” is sufficient to enable a sinner to come to full conversion.

This is palpably false. Why are they wrong?

a. They are wrong because while God created man good with the ability to keep his law and image God, when man sinned, he was adversely affected and unable to fulfill the mandate of imaging God. He was **no longer positively inclined** to doing good. He **could do no good work**, not one, and he wasn’t interested in doing any.

Romans 3:11 There is none who understands; There is **none who seeks after God**. **12** They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

b. They are wrong because spiritual things require a clear spiritual mind, which an unregenerated man does not have!

1Corinthians 2:14 **But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God**, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

3. Consider a popular illustration: If you look at a car in a junkyard, you’d think it is car...but if it doesn’t have an engine, it can’t go anywhere, but will slowly rust away.

So man has a tarnished image of God and can’t come to God without total renewal of his soul – his engine. So man can know God exists when he looks at creation (Light of Nature), **but the need for salvation and the method of salvation cannot be deciphered without God’s help.**

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, **they became fools...**

Because man does see something of the attributes of God – his glory, wonder, and power – **if man does not seek out this God, but suppresses that knowledge, he is going to be condemned** for it.

The Law of God cannot Call

Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law: In this respect, what is true of the light of nature is true also of the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses specifically to the Jews. For humanity cannot obtain saving grace through the Decalogue, because, although it does **expose the magnitude of human sin** and increasingly convict people of their guilt, yet it does not offer a remedy or enable people to escape from human misery, and, indeed, weakened as it is by the flesh, leaves the offender under the curse.

1. Obeying the law of God is inadequate to lead a man back to God.

You have already seen that no one can obey the law...for the law must be obeyed through faith and for the glory of Jesus. Man has to be saved in order to obey the law; he is not saved by obeying the law.

2. Our Arminian brothers believe man could ultimately move back to God by keeping his law (many even believe the Old Testament saints were saved by keeping the law.

More, they believe man is able to keep God's law because they don't believe man's will became evil. They believe man's will was only hampered in the fall. (See how all doctrines tie together?)

This causes Arminians to insist on training and imitation. (Imitation evangelism is deadly!)

Arminians are legalistic instead of being Christ-centered in their preaching. They might say: *You must dress this way...you must act this way...you aren't a Christian if you drink alcohol...*

3. But is that how Christians are to look at the law? No!

Look at what the Apostle Paul said.

Romans 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we **have been delivered from the law**, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and **not in the oldness of the letter**.

In fact, the law did not encourage man to go to God and obey him.

Then add the fact that man is diametrically opposed to keeping God's law. So when God says, "You shall not steal," the sinner says "I want to steal." When God says, "Keep the Sabbath holy," man says, "I want to do what I want to do on the Sabbath."

Look at what is in the unconverted heart!

Romans 7:7 ...Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." 8 **But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.** For apart from the law sin was dead. 10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

4. The law given to Adam and Eve in Eden was sufficient to bring man the rewards of God, but because of sin, the law lost its effectiveness.

Man was not able to keep God's laws anymore according to God's standard. Man could not rise out of his pathetic condition and find his way back to God by obeying the law.

Man had to be **brought back** to God.

The Lord who Calls

Article 6: The Saving Power of the Gospel - What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God accomplishes by the **power of the Holy Spirit**, through the **Word or the ministry of reconciliation**. This is the gospel about the Messiah, through which it has pleased God to save believers, in both the Old and the New Testaments.

1. The only way you can be brought back to God is when the Holy Spirit calls you and pulls you to receive Christ's work as your own work.

Note your passive position of man in this!

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me **unless the Father who sent Me draws him...**

No man chooses to be born! He is passive in his birth!

John 3:5 ...**unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

2. How is this call *played out in time?*

This Gospel message comes through a preacher or a teacher. (This is the “*call of the Gospel.*”)

Romans 1: 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...

When the hearer hears the Gospel, God works in him by his Holy Spirit to produce faith. With faith, man receives salvation. (Faith is the hands of the soul.)

Galatians 2: 16 "...that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

3. There are some notable implications because of the necessity of God’s call for man’s salvation.

The noblest man, or the most charitable woman, or the most helpful boy to his parents, or the girl who speaks the truth, or that boss who gave you a nice bonus, cannot enter heaven on account of his good actions.

He can’t come to God by himself and so is lost by himself. God must call him.

Every single one of your non-Christian friends and acquaintances, even the one born in a Christian home and was baptized, will go to hell unless he has true faith in Jesus Christ and responds to God’s call.

Every single person from every single religion...as sweet and generous friend as he may be, will go to hell without being drawn to God.

Brothers and sisters, let this humble you, for you don’t deserve salvation, you don’t deserve Christ’s work, and you don’t deserve faith. You don’t deserve to be called to Christ. But you have them – given to you for free. (See how good doctrines always lead to good applications?).

More than being humble, let this give you the desire to tell others of this salvation. This Gospel is what the Holy Spirit will use to pull others to the Savior.

Your charm is nice, but the Holy Spirit will and can only use the Gospel!

4. Hearing and believing the Gospel has always been the means by which man is saved in the Old and New Testaments–throughout all dispensations.

Abraham was saved by faith in Jesus Christ. (John 8)...and a cloud of witnesses, listed in Hebrews 11-12, had faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said so too. Luke 24.

Hebrews 11:24 **By faith Moses**, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 26 **esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches** than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

For faith, they had to have the **Gospel**. For the **Gospel**, they needed to hear **preaching**. As they heard Gospel, the Holy Spirit called them to himself. **This is the same thing he does today.**

Conclusion:

Neither nature nor the law can call you to Christ. Neither one can call you to the Savior and tell you how to be saved.

In fact, both leave you guilty! Only the Holy Spirit can call you, through the Gospel, to the Savior.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Seeing the futility of man to come to God, and seeing man's lacking desire to come to God by himself, do you love God more now that he has called you to himself by his Holy Spirit? He would have been justified if he left you in your sins, but he didn't do that.

2. Seeing the gracious gift of faith from God to hold on to the promises of Jesus, will you serve him with more zeal?

Do you have *passion in coming to worship*?

Do you *set aside your pleasure and comforts* to teach your children the Gospel?

Do you *take time to pray for mission* work to spreading the Gospel?

Show you value God's effectual call by promoting the means of that effectual call!

3. Seeing you have this message of life that can save the world from its constant attempt to please God by good works, how faithfully are you personally telling them about the free gift of Jesus Christ?

Finally, if you are not a Christian, hear God's call. Are you feeling ashamed of your sins – of the things you think, do and say? Do you see the failure in trying to please God with your good works? He is calling you repent of your sins and ask him to be your Father!

Christ did for you what you could not do for yourself.