

# Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

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## STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 31. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel.

**Scripture References:** II Tim. 1:8,9. Eph. 1:18-20. Acts 2:37. Acts 26:18. Ezek. 11:19. John 6:44,45. Phil. 2:13. Eph. 2:15.

### Questions:

1. In what two ways could "calling" be understood?

Calling has been recognized in Reformed Theology as both "external" and "internal" call. The first is the call of the word whereby all sinners are freely invited to Christ, that they may have life and salvation in Him. However, this call is insufficient in itself to enable them to come to Him. The second is the internal call of the Spirit that accompanies the proclamation of the word whereby the sinner is not only invited to Christ but is inwardly enabled to embrace Him as He is freely offered in the Gospel.

2. What is involved in the Spirit's work in our hearts to convince us of our sin and misery?

The Spirit gives us a clear insight of the guilt of our sins and a recognition of the wrath of God and the miseries of hell. This wounds our conscience and causes us to ask, "What must I do to be saved?"

3. How does the Spirit accomplish this task?

The Spirit accomplishes this task by the law — "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

4. How does the Spirit enlighten our minds?

The Spirit does this by pointing us to Christ for in Him, that is in the knowledge of His person, righteousness, power, etc., we are renewed in our wills and are enabled to turn to Christ as Saviour and Lord.

5. Are we able to renew our own wills?

No, our wills are renewed only when the Spirit puts new inclinations in them and causes us, (makes us willing), to embrace Jesus Christ by faith. (Eph. 1:19,20)

## CONVICTION OF SIN

Conviction of sin, though no evidence of conversion, is necessary to it. The Gospel is offered to those who are in their guilt. Without a recognition of the guilt the sinner will never be convinced that he will perish without the righteousness of Christ.

This conviction is a gift of the Holy Spirit. He was sent to convince the world of its sin. The means by which the Holy Spirit does this is the subject of our Catechism Question. He, the Holy Spirit, convinces and enlightens.

The Holy Spirit convinces of sin through the Law. The person seeking Christ is brought face to face with the standard of the law. He is not to judge himself by others nor is he to judge himself by a cultural standard he has set up that makes him look good in the eyes of himself. This is the reason it is so necessary for the preacher of the Gospel to hold high the Truth, the standard as is set in the Word of God. It is equally necessary for the Christian to obtain every kind of Scriptural knowledge of Scripture possible, especially committing it to memory, so as to be able to quote it correctly at the appropriate time. The Holy Spirit will use such to the glory of God.

Many times the Holy Spirit will use the life of a Christian as an instrument to convict a person still in his sins. Therefore as Christians we must recognize our responsibility here to be used by Him. A great minister of God's word once gave three things a Christian must do in order to be used as an instrument of the Holy Spirit: (1) Avoid all sin, exercise all right affections toward God and our fellow-men, being devoted to His glory and service. (2) Be willing to suffer for Christ. (3) Love Christ more than any other object, more than our lives.

It was a favorite saying of Charles Hodge that it is the great duty of the Christian to labor to convince the world of the sin of unbelief in Christ. Hodge said that the Spirit produces this conviction through the truth and He can use our labor to lead them to receive, acknowledge, love, worship, serve and trust Jesus Christ. Such is the teaching of Acts 1:8. May we be faithful to it.

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