

Calling On the Name of the Lord

Part 1: What It Means to Call Upon His Name

Intro

Acts 2:21 famously quotes the book of Joel and says, “*And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*”

Calling upon the name of the Lord is a phrase we hear a lot, and talk about a lot, and yet fail to understand

1. What it means
2. How to do it
3. Or what it results in

We’re going to look at various scriptures about calling upon the name of the Lord and find out what it really means, how to do it, and its results.

In two separate lessons:

1. What it means to call upon the name of the Lord.
2. How we call upon the name of the Lord for salvation.

Old Testament Passages

Foundational Understanding of Calling Upon His

Calling on the name of the Lord is a single act of worship

- It is a single act
 - In the same way someone makes a pizza, someone can "call upon the Lord".
 - So let’s consider in what occasions and for what reasons people chose to call upon the name of the Lord.
- Abraham
 - First time
 - Verse:
 - Gen 12:8-9: *Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and **called upon the name of the Lord**. Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev.*
 - Here we see Abraham in the middle of His journey “call upon the name of the Lord”.
 - Context:
 - This is after God called Abraham from his hometown and gave him many promises.
 - He then travels to the land, the Lord appears to Him and tells him that he will inherit this land.
 - Abraham builds an altar there, but he does not call upon the name of the Lord.

- Then he travels more, builds an altar, and there he calls upon the name of the Lord.
- Emphasis:
 - The emphasis is calling upon the name, Yahweh, as opposed to any other god.
 - God calls him from a pagan family, tells him to wander in a pagan land, and Abraham chooses to call on the name of Yahweh to be his god instead of any other god from his old home or new.
 - Why did Abraham choose Yahweh to call upon? Because of His promises, and Abraham believed He was going to be faithful to them.

* Calling upon the name of the Lord is about calling upon *His* person specifically, for who *He* is and what *He* has done

- Calling upon the name of the Lord is about us consciously choosing to believe in and serve our God Yahweh because of what HE has done for us.
- Just believing in any god, or the idea of God in general doesn't count.
 - We think, well you have your idea of god, I have my idea of God, it's all really the same God in the end.
 - No! No it's not. No other god was going to make Abraham into a nation.
 - Not every God has died for us.
 - Acts 20:28: *Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*
 - The Muslim Allah didn't die for me.
 - The Yahweh that the Jehovah's Witness believe in didn't die for me.
- We call on Yahweh specifically over any idea or concept of God, because Yahweh is the real God who's done these things for us.

* The **WHO** matters - because God is a person.

- God is a person, and not a concept.
- So it's about me serving Him specifically, rather than just generically doing good things or believing in the idea of a God.
- EX:
 - I have a girlfriend, so to be a good boyfriend. I need to buy flowers, I go on dates, be attentive and listen ... but am I a good boyfriend if I do that for just anyone? No, I have to do that for Michelle specifically. Otherwise, not only is it not going to make a good boyfriend, it will make me a bad boyfriend, or more accurately, single.
 - The reason I'm her boyfriend and do things for her is because of who she is specifically and what she's done for me.
- Being a good person alone doesn't matter if it's not for Yahweh specifically.
 - If I do xyz for Allah - pray, sacrifice, worship - all things that God tells me to do...
 - It's worthless because I'm not doing them for Yahweh.
- Second time:
 - Verse:
 - Gen 13:3-4: *He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram **called on the name of the Lord.***
 - Abraham journeys more, and returns to the same location a rich and blessed man.
 - Once again he calls upon the name of the Lord.

* Not just a one time act, but something done repeated times in multiple situations.

- Emphasis:
 - ~~Abraham didn't just call on the name of the Lord once.~~
 - ~~As God continued to be faithful to him, Abraham would continue to call on His name.~~
- Lesson:
 - ~~We don't just call on God's name once, and then say, okay I'm a Christian and everything is fine. I'm good for life.~~
 - ~~No, we continue to call on His name repeatedly.~~

But, what *is* calling on the name of the Lord?

- Intro
 - What was Abraham actually doing when he called on the name of the Lord?
 - Let's consider some other examples of what calling on the name of the Lord is.
- Adoration
 - Psalm 105:1: *Oh give thanks to the Lord, **call upon His name**; make known His deeds among the peoples.*
 - Isa 12:4: *And in that day you will say, "Give thanks to the Lord, **call on His name**. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make them remember that His name is exalted." Praise the Lord in song, for He has done excellent things*
 - Giving thanks.
 - Telling about His amazing deeds.
 - Singing
- Moses
 - Verse:
 - Ex 34:4-7: *So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him **as he called upon the name of the Lord**. Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."*
 - Moses remakes the stone tablets.
 - God descends in a cloud and passes by Moses revealing His character.
 - Moses in the meantime is calling upon His name.
 - What kinds of things do you think he was saying?
- Crying for help
 - When in despair
 - Lam 3:55: ***I called on Your name**, O Lord, out of the lowest pit.*
 - Jeremiah desperately calling out to God when in the pits of despair.
 - When we need God to pull through for us
 - I Kings 18:24: *Then you call on the name of your god, and **I will call on the name of the Lord**, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."*
 - Elijah calling out to God when challenging the Baal prophets to a test.

* What's the difference between calling on the name of the Lord and just regular worship?

- I'm not sure.
- Some passages (like the example of Abraham in Gen 12) suggest that there is a potential difference.
- If anything, it's a more deliberate and focused calling on God than just our daily worship.
- Maybe it's the difference between walking down the block praying to God, and setting apart a specific time to really go to God praising Him for something or asking Him to help.
- So maybe special and specific are words to describe the act of calling on the name of the Lord in the OT.

* Connection to covenants - acknowledging the faithful God of promises

- Example of Hagar
 - Verse:
 - Gen 16:13: *Then **she called the name of the Lord** who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"*
 - Hagar had ran away from her mistress Sarah who was abusing her.
 - So God appears to her, tells her to return to her mistress.
 - And then promises to turn her descendants through Ishmael into a mighty nation.
 - She says God is a God who sees and she calls on His name.
 - Emphasis:
 - She acknowledges that God sees those in need, and that God will see that His promises are fulfilled.
 - She's also making Yahweh her God because of His promises.
- Other examples of calling upon the name of the Lord being connected to covenants.
 - Abraham after receiving God's promises (Gen 12:8).
 - Abraham after making covenant with Abimelech (Gen 21:33).
 - After God makes promises to Isaac and right before he makes covenant with Abimelech (Gen 26:25).
 - When Moses is remaking the tablets of the covenant (Ex 34:4-7).
- So maybe there is a big connection between calling upon the name of the Lord and covenants.

Calling upon the name of the Lord is also a disposition or state of being

- A disposition or characterization
 - Not just something you do, but the kind of person you are.
 - EX: "Do you snowboard?" "I went once vs. yes"
- Examples of being disposed or characterized by calling on His name
 - First example:
 - Gen 4:26: *To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. **Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.***
 - As opposed to Cain's descendants who made progress in earthly endeavors such as metallurgy and music, Seth's descendants were know for calling upon the Lord.
 - A disposition and characterization to call upon him
 - Being characterized by **not** calling on His name.
 - Jer 10:25: *Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You and **on the families that do not call Your name***
 - In the same way, people can be characterized as the opposite.
- God's example of people known for calling on the name of the Lord

- Ps 99:6: *Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel was among those who called on His name; **they called upon the Lord** and He answered them.*
- Samuel isn't said to ever "call upon the name of the Lord" in scripture, but still he's characterized as being that kind of person.

* It's not enough for us to be simply people who have called upon the name of the Lord, but rather people who call upon His name - as a lifestyle.

What are people who call on His name like?

* We will use parallel statements to define "calling on the name of the Lord".

1. Those who know the Lord
 - Ps 79:6: *Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You, and upon **the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name.***
 - So those who *do* call on the name of the Lord *know* Him - relationship.
2. Those who belong to God
 - Isa 44:5: *This one will say, 'I am the Lord's'; And **that one will call on the name of Jacob;** And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to the Lord,' And will name Israel's name with honor.*
 - Calling on the name of Jacob is identifying yourself as one of Jacob's descendants, which makes yourself one of the people of God.
 - The other references are all about our identity being completely wrapped up in God.
3. Those who taking hold of the Lord
 - Isa 64:7: ***There is no one who calls on Your name,** who arouses himself to take hold of You*
 - We need to stir ourselves to cling to God.
 - To not let Him go.
4. Those who never turn away from God
 - Ps 80:18: *Then we shall not turn back from You; revive us, and **we will call upon Your name.***
 - Permanently being God's possession.
 - Loyalty and faithfulness.
 - Long term commitment.

* Calling on the name of the Lord is not just a single magical incantation people do, but rather the idea that their whole life is bent towards and affected by the identity of Jehovah.

- It's about being the real deal.
- Are you someone who calls on His name?

* One last OT example.

5. Those who are God's covenant people
 - Zech 13:8-9: *"It will come about in all the land," Declares the Lord, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"*

- God's covenant with the nation of Israel is - I will be your God, and you shall be my people - Lev 26:9: *I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.*
- However, the covenant was broken because Israel didn't want to be the people of God.
- But God is prophesying that in the future, He will refine His people through trials, and the remaining remnant will be His true covenant people and call on His name.
- People who are characterized as those who truly call on His name, are His covenant people.

* This is talking about the New Covenant

- Remember the relationship between calling upon God's name and covenants?
- Since the Old Covenant failed, God will make a new covenant.
- And to be His New Covenant People we will have to truly call upon His name.

New Testament Passages

Calling Upon the Name of the Lord Jesus

- New Covenant Christians are identified as those who call upon the name of the Lord **Jesus**
 - The verse
 - I Cor 1: *To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours*
 - All true Christians everywhere are universally identified as those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.
 - Emphasis
 - The emphasis here is calling upon the name of the Lord - Jesus.
 - The New Testament reveals that the Lord Yahweh we are calling upon came to the earth in flesh to suffer and die for our salvation, and His name was Jesus.
 - **That** is the Lord upon whose name we are calling.

* Remember calling upon the name of the Lord is about calling upon His person, and we see that Yahweh fully reveals His identity in the person of Jesus. So Jesus being Yahweh is whom we call upon.

* Let me prove this...

- Calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus
 - Joel 2 predicts that salvation will come to those who call on the name of Yahweh.
 - Joel 2:32: *And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh will be delivered.*
 - The Lord upon whose name is deliverance is Yahweh.
 - Acts 2 reveal that this Lord Yahweh is Jesus.
 - The apostles begin to speak in tongues, and people ask what it all means.
 - Peter says these signs are proof of the fulfillment of Joel 2.
 - Acts 2:21 *And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*
 - Then the rest of Peter's sermon is all about *who* the Lord is - Acts 2:22: *Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and*

wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know.

- The conclusion to the sermon is that Jesus is the Lord upon whose name we need to call - Acts 2:36: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

* The OT says we need to call upon the name of the Yahweh, and the NT teaches that Jesus is who we need to call upon - showing that the names Jesus and Yahweh are interchangeable and that Jesus is Yahweh.

Conclusion

Yolo.

Calling On the Name of the Lord

Part 2: How to Call Upon His Name

Review

- Calling upon the name of the Lord is:
 1. A single act of worship - the emphasis being that one is choosing to worship the One God Yahweh as opposed to any other God.
 2. A way of being - being characterized as someone who calls on His name
 - Knows the Lord (Ps 79:6)
 - Belongs to the Lord (Isa 44:5)
 - Take hold of the Lord (Isa 64:7)
 - Never turns away from the Lord (Ps 80:18)
 - Is His covenant people (Zech 13:8-9)
- Calling upon the name of the Lord and the New Covenant
 - Calling on the name of the Lord is connected to covenants - *in most cases in Genesis when someone was calling on the name of the Lord, it was in connection with a covenant of some type.*
 - Prediction of the New Covenant
 - The verse - Zech 13:8-9: *"It will come about in all the land," Declares the Lord, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"*
 - This is God speaking about refining a future remnant and making a new covenant with them.
 - They will call on His name.
 - The ideal of the first covenant will be fulfilled - *they will be His people, He will be their God.*
 - The New Covenant - Jesus is Lord
 - God makes His new covenant, and those who call upon the name of Jesus become His holy possession.
 - I Cor 1:2: *To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.*
 - Jesus is the Lord Yahweh we call upon for salvation as seen in Acts 2.

Intro

In today's lesson, we will be looking at some NT passages about what it means to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and how to do it.

Romans 10

- This is the longest passage in the NT dedicated to the concept of calling upon the name of Jesus.

- Context
 - The whole book of Romans
 - The whole book is explaining salvation - *how salvation by faith in Christ works.*
 - After explaining this, Paul has to deal with two objections against it.
 - Rom 6-8 - It's by faith, are you saying we don't have to repent?
 - Rom 9-11 - If Jesus is the Christ, the savior of the Jews, why are the majority of Jews lost?
 - Rom 9: God's has the right to choose
 - 9:1-5: Paul is sad that his fellow Jews are lost.
 - 9:6-33: Paul defends God's right to choose who will be saved.
 - He establishes in the past that God has made choices between peoples, i.e. Isaac over Ishmael.
 - So God has the right to choose to save believers (majority gentile) in Jesus, and reject those who don't believe (the majority of Jews).
- Romans 10 - explaining the text
 - 10:1-4: The situation
 - Paul wants the Jews to be saved, and admits they are zealous, but states that they don't have proper knowledge.
 - The problem
 - They are trying to establish their own righteousness by their own works (i.e. be righteous on their own without God's help).
 - But the real source of righteousness is believing in Jesus.
- ✳ So the Jews are not saved because they are trying to establish their own righteousness rather than receiving it simply by believing Jesus?
 - What would you say to someone?
 - Why are you making it so complicated?
 - It's so simple to be saved, and yet you're trying to do it the hard way.
 - Whose fault is that?
 - Is it God's fault that the Jews aren't saved?
 - Or is it their own fault for not believing?
 - This is going to be Paul's point.
- 10:5: Establishing your own righteousness
 - To be made righteous by the Law, you've got to live it - put it into practice completely and perfectly.
 - But you aren't perfect, so you're no longer righteous.
 - It is then impossible to establish your own righteousness by your works, but you try anyways
 - Pretend like the bad deed didn't happen.
 - Compensate by doing more good deeds.
 - Does this work?
 - You end up like a man that's messed up, everyone knows it, but he refuses to acknowledge it, and tries to convince everyone he's good by doing other "good things".
 - Ever had a husband/boyfriend do that? Does it work?

** When saying "the Jews", we're talking about a majority population of Jews that rejected Jesus as the Messiah. **

- This is what the Pharisees were doing - trying too hard to make everyone think how good they were - blind to their own sin, professing their own righteousness.
- 10:6-13: Righteousness from faith in Christ
 - Summary - This explanation is longer and more confusing, but the point Paul is making is how easy and attainable salvation is to receive by faith in Christ, rather than establishing your own righteousness.
 - Quoting Deut 30
 - The verse - Deut 30:10-14: *if you obey the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.*
 - Moses' point:
 - The importance of following God's commands.
 - This is possible because you have His commands - you just received them.
 - You don't have to go up to heaven to get them.
 - You don't have to cross the sea to get them.
 - They're already here in your mouths and in your hearts.
 - Getting the commands is easy and attainable!
 - How Paul uses this quote:
 - 6-8: How hard is it to be righteous? No hard! It comes from faith in Christ.
 - 6 - do you have to go up to heaven to get Jesus? No He already came and lived and died for us.
 - 7 - do you have to go to the abyss to bring Christ up? No, he's already been raised.
 - 8 - and the word that leads us to salvation is here, in our mouths and hearts.
 - 9-10: The simplicity of salvation
 - 9 - salvation comes by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believing that in your heart.
 - 10 -
 - The heart believing is what leads to righteousness.
 - The mouth confessing is what leads to salvation.
 - 11-13: Who can be saved?
 - Whoever believes, whether Jew or Greek.
 - There's no disappointment, because all are invited.
 - There's no distinction because it's one Lord for everyone.
 - So whoever calls on His name will be saved.
- Why the Jews weren't saved.
 - Is it God's fault? Did He make it too hard? Or exclude them?
 - They weren't saved because they didn't want to be.
 - They didn't want to accept that this simple man from Galilee was their creator who died for them.
 - They didn't want to confess Him as their Lord and do all that He commanded.
- Calling on the name of the Lord - characterization
 - So for God to choose to save us, all we need to do is choose Jesus as Lord.
 - It's simple to be saved, and yet... it's challenging for us to humble ourselves and call out to Jesus for salvation and live our lives governed completely by His will.

- But if my life is characterized by my belief in who Jesus is, and serving Him, then that's why I God will save me.
- It's a characterization
 - You can't just say Jesus is Lord.
 - You've got to live like Jesus is your Lord.

*** Calling upon the name of Jesus - Single act?**

- Pray to be saved?
 - Based on this text alone you would think it's the explanation of how to call upon the name of the Lord.
 - Example
 - Step one: believe
 - Step two: confess
 - And so the way to call on the name of Jesus is to simply say it - or basically pray it.
 - This is why many believe that to be saved, you need to say a prayer - or what people call the sinners prayer.
- However, when we consider other texts, we'll see it's actually something else.

Calling Upon the Name of Jesus Through Baptism

- Acts 2 - Pentecost
 - 2:21 - whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.
 - 2:26 - Jesus is Lord
 - 2:37 - what shall we do?
 - 2:38: *Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
- Acts 16 - The Philippian Jailer
 - 16:30 - Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
 - 16:31 - Believe, and you will be saved
 - 16:33: *And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized.*
- Acts 22 - Paul's conversion
 - 22:16: *Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*
 - When Paul wanted to be saved, he was told to be baptized.
 - Baptism is described in two ways:
 1. When our sins are washed away.
 2. Calling upon the name of the Lord.

*** Baptism is the Biblical way in which we call upon the name of Jesus for salvation - have we seen the sinner's prayer?**

- I Pet 3 - An appeal for a clean conscience.
 - I Pet 3:20-21: *when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*
 - Baptism compared to the flood.

- Just as the flood washed away all the sinners.
- So baptism washes away all our sins.
- Baptism is a prayer
 - Here, baptism is said to save us.
 - It doesn't save us by removing physical filth from our physical bodies.
 - It's saves us by a spiritual cleansing.
 - Baptism is an appeal to God.
 - Appeal - urgent request.
 - What do you call it when you make an urgent request to God? Prayer.
 - For a clean conscience.
 - Our bad deeds make us have a bad conscience.
 - We would have a clean conscience if we had no bad deeds.
 - So an appeal for a clean conscience is asking God to give us a clean conscience by removing our bad deeds.
 - How do you make this appeal? You get baptized.
- Baptism is the prayer we pray to call upon Jesus for salvation.

Conclusion

- It's simple.
- Get baptized believing in Jesus, and determining to make Him the Lord of your life for the rest of your life.