

CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD ACTS 2:21

“And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). How many times have you heard that verse quoted? In most religious circles, a discussion of salvation from sins does not proceed very far until the sinner is urged to ‘call upon the Lord and He will save you.’ That the Bible teaches “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” is not questioned by any who believe the Bible (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). What we disagree with is what so many religious people make these verses say. They are simply saying for the sinner to ask the Lord to save them, and that they are therewith saved in this asking and calling. But is that really what the Bible teaches? Is this really how a person is saved?

In the light of what God hath spoken on the subject of salvation, are we to understand that this familiar verse is teaching salvation by faith only? Is not repentance important? What about the command to be baptized? Do related scriptures allow that one can “just call on the name of the Lord, realizing you are a sinner and ask God to have mercy on you for Jesus sake?” -or- “Lord save me” or- “Lord, I accept you into my heart.” With many, this is “*absolutely all*” that is involved in their concept of “God’s simple plan of salvation.”

As surely as the Bible affirms the fact of man’s sin, we as strongly affirm that God has provided a simple plan of salvation, but a plan whose understanding demands more than a distorted concept of one isolated passage of scripture.

Perhaps it would be well for us to get a deeper insight into the use of this phrase in the Bible.

I. The Scriptural Use of the Expression “Call Upon The Name of the Lord.”

A. Old Testament Scriptures.

1. Gen. 4:26–Seth
2. Gen. 12:8; 13:4–Abraham
3. Gen. 26:25--Isaac
4. It seems that the expression as used in O.T. meant “to worship God.”
5. It had reference to the worship of God and the lifestyle of those who worship God.
6. It encompasses the life of trust and reliance upon God.

B. New Testament Scriptures.

1. Acts 9;13,14, 20, 21
2. I Cor. 1:2
3. II Tim. 2:22

C. In these verses, “saints” and “they that call upon the name of the Lord” are used synonymously.

1. The phrase is talking about Christians.
2. It is all-inclusive of the life of trust.
3. It is not talking about becoming a Christian as much as it is in being one.
4. The life of prayer, and consequently trust, characterizes the Christian’s life.

D. As we look at several verses, we need to remember that difficult passages always harmonize with clearer passages of scripture on the same subject.

II. Acts 2:21...

A. Peter’s sermon centered on fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32).

B. Consider the scripture in the light of it’s origin.

1. Joel was foretelling that a time would come when the H/S would be poured out upon men and that many wonderful and fearful things would be revealed to them at that time.
2. He did not describe in detail everything that would happen.
3. He did not give detailed instruction of how people would “call on the name of the Lord.”
4. The details were left to be given at the time of fulfillment.

C. The word “CALL”and the word “NAME.”

1. Call in this context mens “to appeal to.”

2. Name is defined as meaning “authority.”
 3. Thus, when one “calls on the name of the Lord” he is *“appealing to the authority of the Lord.”*
- D. Christ name was given great authority as preached by Peter.
1. Acts 2:33,36 . . .Acts 4:12
 2. It is ONLY by calling on Christ’s name (authority) that one may receive salvation.
- E. What are the details of “calling on the name of the Lord?” How is it accomplished?
1. Romans 10:13-17 – belief is of primary importance.
 2. In our text of Acts 2...
 - a. Peter preached the first gospel sermon.
 - b. He used the keys to the kingdom to open the door
 - c. He proclaimed Jesus as Lord and Christ. Began with Savior’s death and resurrection.
 - d. Followed this with David’s prediction of the Messiah’s resurrection.
 - e. He concluded with Jesus’ exaltation tot he throne of God.
 - f. The multitude of listeners believed (had faith) and they began to feel great remorse (v.36f).
 - g. Indicates that these Jews called upon the name of the Lord in order to be saved.
 3. Peter did not tell them to call on the name of the Lord by repeating the “sinner’s prayer!”
 4. Nor by doing any of the foolish man-made things that are often preached today.
 5. Instead, he stated... Acts 2:38, 41
- F. Therefore, those who will let the Bible speak for itself will conclude w/o difficulty that those of Peter’s audience who gladly received the word by responding to the command of v.38 were in reality, calling upon the name of the Lord.
- III. Acts 22:16
- A. Conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road.
1. Acts 9:3-6
 2. It was evident that Paul believed and that he acknowledged (confessed) Jesus to be the Messiah by calling Him Lord, but he was not yet saved.
 3. He called on the name of the Lord to be saved!
 4. Told to go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do (9:6)
 5. He showed a repentant heart as he fasted and prayed for three days (Acts 9:9,11).
 6. He had believed, confessed, and repented of his sins, but he was not yet saved.
 7. Acts 22:16
 8. This final and essential act of immersion in water “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), was clearly specified by Ananias as equivalent to “CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD!”
- IV. Romans 10:13...
- A. Paul quotes Joel 2:32
- B. The point is that God’s wealth—His riches—would be shared with all, including the heathen.
- C. The gospel extends beyond Judaism—it is universal. Jew and Gentile alike are accepted by God.
- D. The principal application of Joel’s words in the N.T. is to emphasize that God’s gift of salvation is offered universally.
- E. Can’t call w/o believing and cannot believe w/o hearing (Romans 10:14-17).
1. Two statements used synonymously:
 - a. Romans 10:13—calling on the name. Romans 10:16—obeying the gospel.
 2. Context of Romans 10 tells us that hearing is required, which implies preaching the gospel. It means to believe in the lord , It necessitates confessing Jesus as Lord, it demands that a person be baptized for the remission of sins.
- V. Calling Upon the Name of the Lord and Being Saved (Becoming a Christian).
- A. Does the book of Acts, the book of conversions (and history of the early church), record any cases of men calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved in the sense that denominational preachers tell people to do today?
1. Acts 2:36-41—people on day of Pentecost

2. Acts 8:5,12—the Samaritans.
3. Acts 8:27,35-39—the Ethiopian
4. Acts 10, 11:13-14—Cornelius and his household
 - a. Notice that the prayers of Cornelius were heard (10:31) Question: Was he saved at that moment?
 - b. He was told that a man would come and “tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved (11:14).
 - c. Even receiving the H/S did not negate his need for baptism (Acts 10:47).
5. Acts 16:14,15—Lydia and her household
6. Acts 16:27-34—Philippian jailor and his household.
7. Today people are told to pray the “sinner’s prayer,” and to ask the Lord to save them, and that they are at that moment saved.
8. We have yet to find anything like this in these accounts in the book of Acts.

VI. Summary:

- A. The subjects of salvation are “whoever”
 1. I Tim. 2:4—all men
 2. II Pet. 3:9—all to repent
 3. Heb. 2:9—tasted of death for every man.
 4. Acts 10:34f—no respecter of persons.
- B. Salvation is conditional.
 1. Eph.2:8,9
 2. Heb. 5:8,9
 3. Acts 2:40—save yourselves
- C. Conditions of Salvation explained.
 1. It is more than merely voicing his name (Matt. 7:21f)
 2. In the expression itself, one does not learn how to “call upon the name of the Lord.”
 - a. Calling upon the name of the Lord involves the sinners’ realization of his lost condition and his desire and need for salvation.
 - (1) it involves his trust in Christ and no trust in self.
 - (2) He calls on the Lord because there is no one else upon whom he can call (John 6:68).
 - b. The gospel is an essential part of it.(Romans 10:13, 16)
 3. Peter explained the conditional nature of salvation and told men how to call on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21,38).
 - a. One cannot call on the name of the Lord unless one believes (Rom. 10:14).
 - b. Peter explained how men are saved (v.38).
 - c. Men who repented and are baptized shall be saved (Acts 2:38).
 - d. But those who “call on the name of the Lord” shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).
 - e. Therefore, “calling on the name of the Lord” is obeying the commands of the gospel.
 4. Is the “saved” of verse 21 equivalent with “remission of sins” in verse 38? Yes it is; the blessing is identical. Since there are not alternate plans of salvation for the lost sinner, it becomes obvious that the “call” (v. 21) encompasses the “repent and be immersed” of v. 38.

The Bible is it’s own best interpreter. We must consider all the evidence before we draw a conclusion. (Matt. 7:21). Only by a spirit of obedience to the revealed will of God can we lay claim to the salvation offered us in Christ (Acts 4:12). Psalm 145:18 *“the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.”* . . . Luke 6:46.