

### **Calling on the Name of the Lord**

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One of the popular false teachings regarding salvation is called the so-called “Sinner’s Prayer” or the teaching that a person can be saved by and through a penitent prayer or by even by a simple verbal affirmation of their belief. It should be a real point of concern that no one in the Bible was ever saved by such a prayer or affirmation, there is no example of such anywhere in the sacred text. When confronted with this death knell of truth, sometimes one will respond by saying that the phrase “calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:13-14; Joel 2:32) is an example similar to the “Sinners Prayer” or one’s affirmation of faith.

A good question for us then is, “what does the Bible mean by ‘calling on the name of the Lord?’” Praying surely could be considered a form of calling, however it is not the form of calling that is being considered in these texts.

The way “call” is being used in these passages is in a way less often used today as in days past. It means to “petition.” One might call upon his bank account by writing a check or swiping his card, but he could shout all day long “show me the money” and it will not come unless “called upon” properly, that is, in the manner prescribed by the bank. When one calls upon the Lord, he petitions the Lord, but he too must do so properly, in the manner prescribed by the Lord.

Consider the words of Jeremiah that clearly show a distinction between praying and calling: *“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you”* (Jer. 29:12). Calling and praying were two separate acts joined by the conjunction “and.” Further evidence that the “calling” of our study is not the same as a prayer or statement is seen by that fact that Jesus said, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Mat. 7:21). Thus, Jesus’ statement is in contradiction to the passages referenced if the “calling” is a prayer or simple affirmation of belief.

Notice a few passages where this phrase occurs.

Romans 10:13-14, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”* May the reader please notice that only those who have heard the Gospel and believed it are qualified to “call upon” Him.

Acts 22:16, *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* May the reader please notice that the designated place for one to make the call is while being immersed. Obviously, a statement of affirmation cannot be made while immersed, and there is hardly time for a prayer.

Joel 2:32, “*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.*” The reader might recall that Peter mentioned this very prophecy on the day of Pentecost in his inspired sermon (Acts 2:16-21). On that occasion the people did not understand how to call upon the name of the Lord as seen by their question “*Men and brethren what shall we do?*”(Acts 2:37). Peter told them how to call upon the name of the Lord (and it was not by prayer). He instructed them to, “*...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*” (Acts 2:38).

An interesting comparison is to place Acts 2:21, Acts 2:38, and Acts 22:16 together and note the parallels between them. In each verse, a calling upon the name of the Lord was made. In each case, salvation was achieved (“remission of sins” or “washing away of sins”). In the first case, how the call was made was not known by the audience, in the other two the audience was told how – through repentance and baptism. Now it is not necessarily the act of baptism itself, remember what Peter said later, “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, **but the answer of a good conscience toward God,**) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 3:21). Yes, it is baptism but more specifically, it is the act of obedience! God remits the sins of those who render complete obedience to His Son which culminates in baptism (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). Additionally, what Peter refers to an “answer” is equivalent to what we have before called a “call.” Therefore, we petition Christ on our behalf when we, knowing the truth and knowing our need of salvation, respond appropriately by repentance and baptism. We have called upon the account of salvation; the funds are there because Jesus paid it all! Because we petition according to His prescribed manner, the funds are transferred and we are saved.