

TEXTS: Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:12-13.

INTRODUCTION: Many people use these passages as proof that a "sinner's prayer" and not baptism is the final step a person takes in order to become a Christian. In tonight's lesson, we are going to test whether this is a fair use of the phrase, "calling on the name of the Lord."

DISCUSSION:

1. **DEFINITION.**

- A. In Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13 Paul is quoting Joel 2:32.
- B. "Calling on the name of the Lord" is clearly a Hebrew figure of speech. The Old Testament greatly helps us understand its meaning. The phrase first appears in Genesis 4:26.
- C. **To call on the name of the Lord simply means to worship the Lord.** Genesis 12:8; 26:24-25A; Psalm 99:5-6; Zephaniah 3:9-10.
- D. When a specific act of worship is mentioned, prayer is usually, but not exclusively, the act of worship employed. Lamentations 3:55-57; 1 Chronicles 16:7-9; Isaiah 43:22-24.
- E. According to E. W. Bullinger in his *Figures Of Speech Used In The Bible*, "To CALL UPON THE LORD is used of *Divine worship*. A special act is put for the general act of worship" (p. 631).
- F. **In Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13, to call on the name of the Lord simply means to worship the Lord.** Acts 9:13-14, 21; 1 Corinthians 1:2.

2. **QUALIFICATIONS.** Are Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13 unconditional? Certainly not. **To be saved, we must call upon the name of the Lord ...**

- A. **In truth.** Psalm 145:18.
- B. **Having believed in the Lord.** Romans 10:14A.
- C. **Having entered covenant fellowship with the Lord through forgiveness.** Zephaniah 3:9-10; Acts 22:16; 2 Timothy 2:20-22.
- D. **Obedying the Lord.** Psalm 50:15-16; Isaiah 55:6-7; 58:9-10; Zechariah 7:8-13.
- E. **With all our heart.** Jeremiah 29:12-13.
- F. **Always.** Psalm 116:1-2.

3. **USAGE.**

- A. **Joel 2:32.** In Joel 1:1-2:11, God discusses the punishment for sin He was going to exact. Beginning in Joel 2:12, God calls for repentance and true worship. Joel 2:12-17. If repentance and true worship were forthcoming, God promised to relent of His punishment. Joel 2:18-27. In Joel 2:28-32, God prophesies about the event described in Acts 2. Given its context, it is clear that calling on the name of the Lord in Joel 2:32 refers to true worship.
- B. **Acts 2:21.**
 - 1) Acts 2:37-41. Acts 2:21 and Acts 2:38 **are not mutually exclusive concepts, nor are we free to pick one and ignore the other. Both passages are true and we must interpret their meaning in a way that does justice to the plain meaning of both passages.**
 - 2) I believe we do this in the following manner. If preceded by faith, confession, and repentance, baptism is the final step a person takes in becoming a Christian and thereafter may worship or call upon the name of the Lord. Carefully note the order of Acts 22:16.
 - 3) Also carefully note that Saul was praying when Ananias came to him with the instructions of Acts 22:16. Acts 9:11. Ananias commanded Saul to do something other than what he had been doing. In essence Ananias told Saul, "First get saved, then go and *truly* worship God." John 4:23-24.
 - 4) The promise of Acts 2:21 is that whoever continues to call on the name of the Lord, i.e. whoever continues to worship God in spirit and in truth, will be saved in the day of judgment.
- C. **Romans 10:13.** The point of this passage is simply that anyone can truly worship God and be saved. Romans 10:11-12.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1. It is simply not a fair interpretation of scripture to reduce the meaning of the phrase "calling on the name of the Lord" to praying a sinner's prayer and then on that basis dismiss the role of baptism in the plan of salvation. Unfortunately, many people do just this. Hopefully this lesson will help us help us all understand the way of the Lord more perfectly.
- 2. In discussing what calling on the name of the Lord isn't or doesn't do, we must not lose sight of what calling on the name of the Lord is and does do. It's a wonderful privilege of those who have been forgiven that results in blessings beyond compare. Psalm 91:14-15; 145:18-20.