

Call Upon the Name of the Lord

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Our loving and merciful God wants “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Since God desires that all men be saved, He provides for us His plan to save man (Rom. 1:16-17). How comforting it is to know that God loves us and sent His only begotten Son into the world that through Him we might be saved (John 3:16-17). It is also extremely comforting to know that we can know what God requires of us regarding salvation (John 8:31-32).

The Bible teaches that, “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). What does it mean to “call upon the name of the Lord”? Many have defined calling on the name of the Lord as a prayer for salvation and for Jesus to come and abide in one’s heart. However, this definition contradicts the words of Jesus who 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). Any interpretation of a verse in the Bible that contradicts another verse is, of necessity, deemed to be false. The inspired James writes, “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves...Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Jam. 1:22; 2:17). Additionally, there is no example anywhere in the New Testament of an individual praying for salvation. Therefore, calling upon the name of the Lord does not refer to a prayer or to any spoken act.

It is important to understand how to “call upon the name of the Lord” since it is necessary for salvation. To understand the meaning, we must study the statement in the context of the

book and chapter in which it is found as well as the whole of the New Testament. In the immediate context, we find that there are prerequisites to calling upon the name of the Lord—Romans 10:14-15 teaches that one must hear and believe. Also, in the immediate context, verse 16 in particular, we find a phrase that is used in substitute for “calling upon the name of the Lord.” The inspired writer uses “obeyed the gospel” interchangeably with “call upon the name of the Lord.” To be saved, one must obey the Gospel of Christ—i.e., “call upon the name of the Lord.”

The apostle Paul further defines what it means to call upon the name of the Lord when he recalls the words spoken to him by Ananias, “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Here, calling on the name of the Lord is defined as arising and being baptized to have one’s sins washed away. This is in harmony with Paul’s letter to the Romans seeing that Paul told them:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

It is also in harmony with the first Gospel sermon recorded in Acts 2. Peter and the other apostles preached, “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). Later, when the audience was convinced of their sins and asked what they must do to be forgiven and thus saved, “Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). The New Testament teaches that, following faith (Heb. 11:6), repentance (Luke 13:3), and confessing that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 8:37), baptism is the culminating act of God’s plan to save man (Mat. 28:19-20).

The act of calling upon the name of the Lord is inseparable from obedience to the Gospel of Christ and baptism. The Gospel of Christ “is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16) and obeying the Gospel is used interchangeably with calling upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13, 16). Being baptized is an act of obedience commanded by the Gospel of Christ and is eternally connected to calling upon the name of the Lord by God, Himself, in such verses as Acts 2:21, 38 and 22:16. The Gospel is God’s power unto salvation and baptism is the act at which the Bible teaches one is saved from past sins. According to the apostle Peter, “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21) and Jesus proclaims, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16).

Calling upon the name of the Lord, therefore, is not something that is spoken; it is an act of humility and submission to the Word of God in simple obedience. Those who obey God’s plan of salvation, which culminates with water baptism, and remain faithful to God’s Word until they depart this life (Rev. 2:10) are they who are calling upon the name of the Lord and will be saved.

Lenoir City, TN

How Good and How Pleasant it Is for Brethren to Dwell Together in Unity!

Tim Smith

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“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell

together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psa. 133:1-3).

A study of the biblical subject of Unity is ever a timely one, and now is no less the case. There is now, and there always has been since shortly after the beginning of the church, much division within the ranks of those who purport to be followers of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist declared that it is a good and pleasant thing when brethren are united, but is this always the case? Is there any set of circumstances wherein unity is not good? Biblically speaking, the answer is yes. Let us take a few minutes to consider these matters.

Unity is Shared Between Brethren

As the Psalmist declared, unity is a family thing. We enjoy unity with each other based on our kinship with each other, and that kinship is based on our relationship with the Lord. We are brethren with each other because God is our Father. The point at hand is well illustrated in Paul's dealings with the brethren in Corinth. He had condemned extending fellowship to "fornicators...covetous...idolaters" and the like (1 Cor. 5:9-10). That he was dealing with a family relationship was punctuated in verse 11: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." Clearly the point is that we do not "keep company with" (fellowship) those of this world in a spiritual sense. We do not have family responsibilities to those not in the family of God. Hear Paul again: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth" (1 Cor. 5:12-13). We have family

duties toward those in the family of God, no more, no less, and none else.

Unity Between Brethren Is Predicated Upon the Brethren Respecting the Principles of Truth

We are granted salvation upon proper immersion (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21), and we are granted entrance into the body of Christ at the same time (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13). But to maintain our salvation and our good standing in the body of Christ we are obligated to be faithful and true to the truth which saved us (James 1:21). Should we, in the course of time, leave the truth and replace it in our lives with error, what happens? Consider the case of the Thessalonians: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes. 2:10-12). The sin under consideration in this passage warranted the ones guilty of it to be "damned," but what was it? Murder? Extortion? Perversion? No, it was their lack of love for and submission to the truth. When they left the truth, they left their salvation. What was to be done with them? Were they to continue to enjoy the benefits of the family relationship afforded them in Christ? Hear the same inspired writer in the next chapter: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thes. 3:6, 14-15). This man who

left the truth lost his privileges as a member of the family of God and was to be “withdrawn from” by the faithful. He was no longer in “good standing” with God, and Paul demanded that the church recognize that fact. We may not, with the approval of God, enjoy unity with those who have left the truth.

The Prayer of Our Lord for Unity

Our Lord prayed that his followers might be united, and in this wonderful prayer He linked unity with acceptance of the Word of God. Hear him: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21). Notice that the unity for which he prayed was linked with the acceptance of (belief in) the Word of Christ as revealed through the apostles. To this Paul adds: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). To do our part in answering the prayer of our Lord for unity and in obeying the command of the Lord through Paul, we must believe in and obey the truth.

It truly is a “good and pleasant” thing for “brethren to dwell together in unity,” but it is only brethren who are so to dwell, and specifically brethren who are faithful and true to the principles of truth. All others are excluded from this relationship. We love the lost, whether they be lost as unfaithful Christians or as alien sinners; but our love for them is demonstrated by teaching them the truth; not extending fellowship to and dwelling in unity with them in their sin.

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