

CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Message Two

The History of Calling On the Name of the Lord

Scripture Reading: Gen. 4:26; 21:33; Job 12:4; Deut. 4:7; Judg. 16:28; Psa. 99:6; 116:13; 80:18; 88:9; 1 Kings 18:24; Isa. 12:4; 41:25; Lam. 3:55-57; Jonah 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 9:14, 21; 2 Tim. 2:22

- I. **Calling on the name of the Lord is not a new practice that began with the New Testament; rather, it began with Enosh, the third generation of mankind—Gen. 4:26:**
 - A. Seth called his son's name Enosh meaning *frail, mortal man*; because men realized that their life was vanity and that they were frail and mortal, they spontaneously began to call upon the name of Jehovah, the eternal One.
 - B. Although they were vain and weak, by calling on the name of the Lord, they were made rich and strong, for they entered into the riches and strength of the One on whom they called—Rom. 10:12-13.
- II. **The practice of calling was continued by Job—Job 12:4; 27:10.**
- III. **Abraham called on the name of Jehovah—Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21:33:**
 - A. In Genesis 21:33 Abraham called on the name of Jehovah, the eternal God (Heb. *El Olam*).
 - B. By calling on the name of Jehovah, the Eternal Mighty One, Abraham experienced God as the ever-living, secret, mysterious One, who is the eternal life.
- IV. **Calling on the name of Jehovah was practiced by Moses and the children of Israel—Deut. 4:7.**
- V. **Samson called upon the name of Jehovah—Judg. 15:18; 16:28.**
- VI. **Samuel was among those who called on the name of Jehovah—Psa. 99:6; 1 Sam. 12:18.**
- VII. **David called upon the name of Jehovah—2 Sam. 22:4, 7; 1 Chron. 16:8; 21:26; Psa. 14:4; 17:6; 18:3, 6; 31:17; 55:16; 86:5, 7; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17; 118:5; 145:18:**
 - A. David called upon Jehovah and was saved from his enemies—2 Sam. 22:4.
 - B. David took up the cup of salvation and called upon the name of Jehovah—Psa. 116:13.
 - C. David called upon Jehovah out of his distress, and Jehovah answered him and set him in a place broad and free—118:5.
 - D. David testified that Jehovah is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth—145:18.
- VIII. **The psalmist Asaph called upon the name of Jehovah—Psa. 80:18:**
 - A. In Psalm 80:18 Asaph prayed, "Revive us, and we will call upon Your name"; whoever calls upon Christ, who is now at the right hand of God, will be restored and revived—Psa. 80:18; Rom. 8:34; Acts 2:33, 21.
 - B. In Psalm 50 Asaph spoke concerning those who call upon the Lord according to His covenant—vv. 5, 15:
 1. In the Bible, a book of covenant, God has covenanted Himself to us through the redeeming Christ, typified by the sacrifices—v. 5.

2. Now we need to call on the Lord according to this covenant that we may enjoy Him as our portion.

IX. The psalmist Heman called out to Jehovah in his affliction—Psa. 88:9.

X. Elijah called on Jehovah, and was answered with fire out of heaven—1 Kings 18:24.

XI. Isaiah called on the name of Jehovah—Isa. 12:4:

- A. Isaiah 12:4 indicates that by calling on the name of the Lord with rejoicing and praising, we draw water out of the springs of salvation.
- B. Isaiah charged the seekers of God to call upon Him—55:6.

XII. Jeremiah prayed, “I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, from the lowest pit. You have heard my voice; do not hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry”—Lam. 3:55-56:

- A. To call on the Lord means to cry to Him and to experience spiritual breathing—cf. 1 Thes. 5:16.
- B. By calling on the name of the Lord all the sinful, evil, and unclean things will be breathed out, and all the positive things—the riches of the Lord—will be breathed into us—*Hymns #255*.
- C. Jeremiah did this when he called upon the Lord out of the lowest pit:
 1. Whenever we are in a spiritual dungeon or pit, under a certain suppression, we can call on the Lord, breathing out the heaviness within us, and thus be delivered from the lowest pit.
 2. Whenever we are in “the lowest pit,” we should not murmur or complain; instead, we should simply call, “O Lord Jesus,” and we will be in the third heaven.

XIII. The Gentiles knew that the prophets of Israel had the habit of calling on the name of God—Jonah 1:6; 2 Kings 5:11.

XIV. The Gentile raised up by God from the north also called upon His name—Isa. 41:25.

XV. The early believers practiced calling on the name of the Lord everywhere—1 Cor. 1:2:

- A. To the unbelievers, especially the persecutors, calling on the name of the Lord became a popular sign of Christ’s believers—Acts 9:14, 21.
- B. When Stephen suffered persecution, he practiced this (7:59), and his practice surely impressed Saul, one of his persecutors (vv. 58-60; 22:20).
- C. Later, the unbelieving Saul persecuted the callers by taking their calling as a sign (9:14, 21); immediately after Saul was caught by the Lord, Ananias, who brought Saul into the fellowship of the Body of Christ, charged him to be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord, to show others that he too had become such a caller.
- D. By his word to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul indicated that in the early days all the Lord’s seekers practiced such calling; undoubtedly, he was one who practiced this, since he charged his young co-worker Timothy to do this that Timothy might enjoy the Lord as he did.
- E. Calling on the name of the Lord is a major practice in God’s New Testament economy that enables us to enjoy the processed Triune God for our full salvation—Rom. 10:10-13.

XVI. It is God's commandment (Psa. 50:15; Jer. 29:12) and desire (Psa. 91:15; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9) that His people call on Him; calling is the joyful way to drink from the fountain of God's salvation (Isa. 12:3-4) and the enjoyable way to delight oneself in God (Job 27:10), that is, to enjoy Him; hence, God's people must call upon Him daily (Psa. 88:9).

Excerpts from the Ministry:

Realizing the Vanity of Human Life

In Genesis 4 we find two names which are especially meaningful. The first one is Abel, which means "vanity." As a result of the fall, the human life became a vanity. Look at people today. Although they are very busy, within them there is a gap, a void. Deep within them is a sense of emptiness. Regardless of your social status, regardless how wealthy or how successful you are, when you sit alone in the quiet of the night or early morning, you know there is a gap within you. That emptiness is the vanity that I am talking about. This is exactly what the wise King Solomon meant when he said, "Vanity of vanities, all under the sun are vanity" (Eccl. 1:2-3). In order to escape the second fall of man we must realize that as fallen men without God everything we are, have, and do is empty. We are nothing but vanity.

Realizing the Fragility of Man

The second name which is especially meaningful is Enosh, which means "frail, mortal man." After the fall, not only did human life become a vanity, but man also became frail and mortal. We must admit that we are frail, weak, and easily broken. How easily we fail! Man is mortal. No one can boast that he will live another week. No man knows his tomorrow. To escape the second fall of man we need to realize both the vanity of human life and the fragility of man. If we have this realization, we will have no trust in ourselves and, thus, we will not be presumptuous in departing from the way of God.

Calling On the Name of Jehovah—the "I Am"

When we see that we should not be presumptuous, but should live for God and worship Him according to His way and realize the vanity of human life and the fragility of man, we will say, "O Lord, I shouldn't be presumptuous. I must live for You and worship You in Your way. Lord, my life is vanity. I am frail and mortal." When we see that our life is vanity and that we ourselves are frail, spontaneously we will call upon the name of the Lord. This is the reason that Genesis 4:26 says, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." From the time of Enosh, the third generation of mankind, men began to call upon the name of the Lord, realizing their weakness, fragility, and mortality.

In Hebrew, the word for "the Lord" is Jehovah (4:26; cf. Exo. 3:14). The title "God" is primarily used for God's relation to His creation in Genesis 1. The name Jehovah is primarily used for God in relation to man starting from Genesis 2. Jehovah is the name for God coming into an intimate relationship with man. Hence, Genesis 4:26 does not say that men began to call on the name of God, but on the name of Jehovah. Men did not call on the One who created all things, but on the One who was so near to them, on the One who was closely related to them. The name Jehovah means "I am that I am," that is, He is the One existing from eternity to eternity. He is the One who was in the past, who is in the present, and who will be in the future forever. He is the everlasting One. When men realized that they were fragile and mortal, they began to call on Jehovah, the everlasting One. This is the calling on the name of the Lord. This calling began even with the third human generation.

When we are careless about God, we do not call on His name. However, when we realize that we must live for Him and worship Him in His way, and when we realize that we are frail

and mortal and that our life is nothing but vanity, spontaneously, from deep within us, we not only pray, but call upon the name of the Lord. Therefore, we must consider this most important seed of calling on the name of the Lord. It is a most significant matter in both the Old and New Testaments.

The History of Calling On the Lord

Do not think that calling on the Lord was invented by us. It is not a new invention. At most, it may be called a new discovery or a part of the Lord's recovery. Calling on the Lord began, as we have seen, with the third generation of the human race. Enosh, the son of Seth, was the third generation. Eve named her second son Abel, which means vanity. Then Seth, Abel's brother, called his son Enosh, which indicates that Seth realized that human life was weak, frail, and mortal. By calling his son Enosh, Seth might have told his son that he was weak and fragile. Since Enosh realized the fragility of human life, he began to call on the name of the everlasting Lord. Therefore, when we realize that we are nothing, that we are weak and frail, what should we do? We should simply call, "O Lord Jesus."

The history of calling on the Lord's name continues throughout the Bible, and we may list the names of many of those who called on His name: Abraham (Gen. 12:8), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), Moses (Deut. 4:7), Job (Job 12:4), Jabez (1 Chron. 4:10), Samson (Judg. 16:28), Samuel (1 Sam. 12:10), David (2 Sam. 22:4), Jonah (Jonah 1:6), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), Elisha (2 Kings 5:11), Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55). Not only did the Old Testament saints call on the Lord; they even prophesied that people would call on His name (Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 13:9). Although many are familiar with Joel's prophecy regarding the Holy Spirit, not many have paid attention to the fact that receiving the outpoured Holy Spirit requires our calling on the name of the Lord. On the one hand, Joel prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit; on the other hand, he prophesied that people would call on the name of the Lord. God's outpouring needs the cooperation of our calling on Him. Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

Calling on the name of the Lord was also practiced by the New Testament saints. It began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:21). On the day of Pentecost God poured out His Spirit, and the early saints received the Spirit by calling on the name of the Lord. Their calling was a response to God's pouring out of His Spirit. Stephen also called on the Lord's name. While he was being stoned to death, he was calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 7:59). He died calling on the Lord's name. If the Lord delays His coming and we die, I hope that we die calling on His name.

All the New Testament believers practiced the matter of calling on the Lord (Acts 9:14; 22:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22). When Paul was Saul of Tarsus he received authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on the name of the Lord (Acts 9:14). This indicates that all the early saints were Jesus callers. Their calling on the name of the Lord was a sign, a mark, that they were Christians. Thus, Saul of Tarsus felt that it would be easy to identify the Christians in Damascus by the fact that they called on the Lord's name. They not only prayed to the Lord, but called on Him. There are many true Christians who pray to the Lord daily, yet their neighbors, friends, and classmates do not know that they are Christians. We may describe them as silent Christians. However, if they become Christians who call on the name of the Lord, their calling will mark them out as Christians. It was this way with the early Christians.

Do you know what happened to Saul when he was on the way to Damascus with the intention of binding all that call on the Lord's name? He was captured by the Lord and was blinded. The Lord sent a little disciple named Ananias to visit Saul and to speak a word from the Lord to him. Listen to what Ananias said: "And now, why do you delay? Rise up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:16). According to the grammar of the English language, the word "calling" modifies the verb "wash." What sin did Saul need to wash away? The sin of binding those who called on the name of Jesus. He did this at Jerusalem and intended to do it at Damascus. All the Christians knew that he was such an evil one. In their eyes, Saul sinned by persecuting the saints and by binding the callers of Jesus.

Thus, the best way for him to wash away his sins was to call on the name of Jesus. By doing this it would be made clear to all the believers that he was truly converted. He who once bound those who called on the name now called on the Lord's name.

Some Christians misinterpret Acts 22:16, thinking that "wash away your sins" modifies "be baptized." According to grammar, that cannot be the meaning. There are two things mentioned in this verse—"be baptized" and "wash away your sins"—and the Greek word kai, translated "and" in English, connects them. Thus, to be baptized is one thing and to wash away your sins is another. Saul was baptized and washed away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Saul of Tarsus, who had persecuted so many who called on the name of the Lord, was captured by the Lord. Then Ananias, who had been sent by the Lord, told Saul to be baptized and to wash away his sins by calling on the name of the Lord. If Saul had only been baptized, many of the believers would have doubted that he had actually been converted. They might have said, "Ananias, you should not have baptized such a silent believer." However, when Ananias was about to baptize Saul, he seemed to tell him, "Brother, wash away your sins by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. Brother Saul, you have bound many Christians. You are evil in the eyes of the saints. You have tried to bind all the Jesus callers. Now the best way in their eyes for you to wash away your sins is to call, 'O Lord Jesus.'" Once Saul called on the name of the Lord, all the Christians could see that the persecutor had become one of their brothers. His calling on the Lord was the proof that he had been converted.

Paul himself stressed the matter of calling when he wrote the book of Romans. He said, "For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him. For, Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:12-13). In Romans 10:12 Paul said that the Lord is rich unto all who call on Him, and in verse 13 he quoted the prophecy of Joel which says that whoever calls on the Lord's name will be saved. Paul also spoke of calling on the Lord in 1 Corinthians when he wrote the words, "with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2). Furthermore, in 2 Timothy he told Timothy to pursue spiritual things with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22). By all of these verses we can see that in the first century the Christians practiced the matter of calling on the name of the Lord very much. Therefore, throughout the Old Testament as well as in the early days of the Christian age, the saints called on the Lord's name. How regrettable that it has been neglected by most Christians for a long time. I believe that today the Lord wants to recover this matter and to have us practice it that we also may enjoy the riches of His life. (*Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 25, pp. 332-334, 338-341)

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The Bible reveals clearly that calling on the Lord is the way to partake of and enjoy the Lord. Deuteronomy 4:7 (ASV) says that the Lord is "nigh unto us whenever we call upon him." Psalm 145:18 says, "the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him." Psalm 18:6 and 118:5 say that David called upon the Lord in his distress. In Psalm 50:15 the Lord asks us to call upon Him in the day of trouble, and in Psalm 86:7 David did it accordingly. Psalm 81:7 says that the children of Israel did the same thing (Exo. 2:23) and that the Lord told them, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (v. 10). Psalm 86:5 says that the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and is plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him. Psalm 116:3-4 says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord." Verse 13 of the same Psalm says, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." In order to take the cup of salvation, that is, to participate and enjoy the Lord's salvation, we need to call upon the name of the Lord. Isaiah 12:2-6 tells us that the Lord is our salvation, our strength, and our song, and that we can draw water out of the wells of His salvation with joy. The way to draw water out of the wells of the Lord's salvation, that is, to enjoy the Lord as our salvation, is to praise Him, to call upon His name, to sing unto Him, and even to cry out and shout. In Isaiah 55:1-6 we find God's wonderful calling

to the people. He calls the thirsty ones to come to the waters, to enjoy the riches of the Lord's provision, such as wine, milk, and good food, and to delight themselves in fatness. The way to do this is to seek the Lord and to "call upon him while he is near." Isaiah 64:7 shows us that by calling upon the Lord we can stir up ourselves to take hold of Him.

Lamentations 3:55-57 makes it clear that when we call upon the Lord He draws near to us and that our calling upon Him is our breathing, our cry. By this we can realize that to call upon the Lord is not only to cry to Him, but also to experience a spiritual breathing (Exo. 2:23) in which we breathe out all that is within us, whether it be agony, pain, pressure, etc. Jeremiah did this when he called upon the Lord out of the low dungeon, that is, out of the lowest pit. Whenever we are in a spiritual dungeon or pit, under a certain suppression, we can call on the Lord, breathing out the heaviness within us, and thus be delivered from the lowest pit. This kind of calling on the Lord not only enables us to breathe out the negative things from within us, but also to breathe in the Lord Himself with all His riches as our strength, enjoyment, comfort, and rest. In this way we partake of the riches of the Lord. Hence, here in Romans 10:12 Paul tells us that "the Lord is rich to all who call upon Him." Today in resurrection the Lord is ready and available for our participation in Him and He is rich for our enjoyment of Him. We simply need to call on Him all the time. Calling on Him, we partake of and enjoy all His riches.

Calling on the Lord is different from merely praying to Him. The Greek word for "call on" or "call upon" means to invoke a person, to call a person by name. Although it is possible to pray to the Lord silently, calling on the Lord requires that we cry out to Him or address Him audibly. The Hebrew word for "call" in Genesis 4:26 firstly means to "call out to" or to "cry unto." Isaiah 12:4 and 6 show that to call upon the Lord's name is to "cry out and shout." Lamentations 3:55 and 56 reveal the same thing—to call upon the Lord's name is to "cry" to the Lord. Hence, David said, "I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God" (2 Sam. 22:7). To call upon the Lord is to cry to Him...

In addressing his first epistle to the church at Corinth Paul said, "All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:2). This indicates that all the early believers practiced this matter of calling. In his second epistle to Timothy Paul charged him to pursue spiritual things "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2:22). So, we must practice it too. The Old Testament saints called on the Lord daily (Psa. 88:9) and throughout their entire life (Psa. 116:2). How about us? We should practice it more, calling on the Lord "out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22) and with "a pure lip" (Zeph. 3:9, Heb.). If we practice this, we will certainly partake of the Lord's riches and enjoy them. To call on the Lord is not only for salvation, but also for the enjoyment of the Lord with all His riches. (*Life-study of Romans*, msg. 23, pp. 272-275)

References and Further Reading:

1. *Holy Bible Recovery Version*, Acts 2:21, footnote 1
2. *Life-study of Genesis*, Message 25
3. *Life-study of Romans*, Message 23
4. *Calling on the Name of the Lord*