

Christian Perspectives: Calling upon the name of the Lord

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:21) This is one of the verses from what is the first post-Pentecost sermon given by Peter after he and the other disciples receive the Holy Spirit. Peter quotes the prophet Joel for a good portion of his 509 word sermon. You might want to ask your pastor how long their sermons are! I would like to unpack the meaning of Acts 2:21 and also deal with that tricky verse oft quoted from Matthew 7:21, 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven'.

Some of us will remember James Taylor, the American Folk Singer, who wrote many hits in the 70's, one of which was, 'You've got a friend'. Here are a few lines:

You just call out my name,

And you know wherever I am

I'll come running, oh yeah baby

To see you again.

We have all at one time or another in our lives called out the name of the Lord who, we pray, will answer our prayers. It may happen in a spontaneous way, 'O Lord, get me through this' or, in a more formalized fashion in our daily prayers. The verse quoted above from Acts ends with 'will be saved'. We call upon God for many reasons, but the primary reason should be for salvation. We therefore need to unpack further what 'calling' means in Scripture. The word 'call' is also translated 'appeal' and when we appeal, which in the original Greek can also mean submit, we submit to God's authority and serve him. This may help us understand that verse in Matthew 7:21 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven.' The second half of the verse, often left out by those who are quoting it, states that we are to submit to God's will, '...but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.' We read later in chapter 2 of Acts that three thousand repented, were baptized, and then devoted themselves to the disciples teaching, breaking of bread, fellowship and prayer. In our lives, if we repent and return to God in our Christian journeys, forgiveness is there. Calling on the name of the Lord after salvation then leads to doing God's will through obedience, worship and service.

It's the time of year when we get back out into the garden, or out on the golf course, tennis court, or walking the trails. Like most things in life, they take work to get good at it (except maybe golf), to be more enjoyable and to a part of our lives. Calling upon the name of the Lord is the same. If there ever was a time to work on a key component of our faith, calling upon the name of the Lord and all that that means in our lives, salvation, repentance, obedience, worship and service, the summer is a great time of the year to do that.

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