

The Call of God - Acts 2

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[0 : 0 0] Well good morning. Last week we looked at Peter's sermon in which he kicked off the church so to speak. Pentecost had come, the Holy Spirit had indwelt him, and he proclaimed this message powerfully in Acts chapter 2. There was something in that section though of Scripture that made me think, you know, I should go back this week, and I rarely do this. In fact, I don't think I've ever done this. I should go back this week and look at a couple of verses because there's some verses that are crying out and begging for clarity. And so I don't know if you heard those verses cry out to you last week, but I did, and so this week we will go back and look at a few verses. Those verses, we will look at here in a moment, we'll actually will do that now, are Acts chapter 2. So if you weren't here this last week, I would encourage you to hear the entirety of the message with regard to what Peter proclaimed beginning in Acts chapter 2 verses 14 through 41. We did that large section last week. There were a few verses though we're going to look at one. Peter is proclaiming and he's quoting from

Paul, or sorry Joel from the Old Testament in verse 21. He concludes this passage and he says this, quoting Joel, and it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Now why is that the first verse that I want us to look at? It's begging for clarity. It's because if not careful we can look at that verse and we can impose upon it some meaning that isn't there, and the meaning would maybe go like this, that I of my own will can call on the Lord and because of my calling on the Lord to save me, I impose upon God this request that he has to fulfill to save me, and it can kind of have this manner of thinking which is not what this verse is saying. And so we go on in verse 23 we read speaking of Jesus. Peter is talking to those who killed Jesus, the Jews who asked Pilate to crucify him. We see in verse 23, this

Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. So God in his sovereignty delivered up his son to be crucified and then he says, you crucified, the audience of the Jews, and then he speaks of the Romans and he says, and killed by the hands of lawless men, Rome. And then we drop down in verse 39 it speaks of this promise of those who call on the name of the Lord for this the promise, those who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. That salvation, that gospel for the salvation, that promise is for you. It's for your children and for those far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

So this salvation that is speaking of in Joel, that this salvation, that promise is for you, it's for your children and those who are far off. So in this we see two concepts of what part of salvation is under God's sovereignty and what part of this is human responsibility and this concept is a difficult concept it has been wrestled with for millennia. So if you go back to the late mid 300 AD you have a gentleman who was born, his name is Augustine, and he would argue, there's letters written back and forth between Augustine and this gentleman who is Palladius, his name is Palladius. Augustine was a huge God's sovereignty person and Palladius was this human will person and so they were writing back and forth in disagreement of how much of salvation is up to God's sovereignty and how much of your salvation is up to human will. You go on about a millennia later, a thousand years later, you find gentlemen Martin Luther, many of you are familiar with him. Martin Luther was writing and he was arguing, Martin

Luther was a huge sovereignty of God person, he was writing to a gentleman who is a Roman Catholic scholar whose name was Erasmus and so these two were writing back and forth and so you have Martin Luther and you have Erasmus and Erasmus was a proponent of human will and then you get a generation later you find when Martin Luther was writing you have John Calvin who was a teenager at the time who didn't know the Lord but as he grew a generation later after Luther you have John Calvin and he was writing to Jacobus Arminius and so he those two were writing and so you get John Calvin who was a huge God's sovereignty person with regard to salvation and then you have Jacobus Arminius on the free will or human will side of things and today we get Arminianism from Arminius his name.

[5 : 43] So you say Scott well what do you intend to do with a subject that has been argued for millennia what light are you going to shed for us probably not much that isn't already been said but this this doctrine between God's sovereignty and human responsibility has been fought in the church for millennia and yet so I want to add clarity and it's in our text and it is begging for clarity and it it has deep implications for us today and toward the end of the message I hope to share those deep implications in fact one of the implications for me about seven years after I was saved saved at 19 transform my life and I'll share a little bit about that but what do we to think about this where do we begin what does God's words say and at first this may seem like you're Scott you're not answering any questions but you're just giving us theological truths and then we hope to get toward the latter end of the message more practical and that may be true but hang in with her with me first thing I want to share is that my screen first thing I want to share is God is sovereign over all things including evil and yet is not him is not tainted he is untainted by evil so Jesus it says it was delivered up look with me in verse 23 this Jesus is delivered up according to the definite foreknowledge definite plan and for knowledge of God he is delivered up and so we see that the in Acts chapter actually if you turn with me to chapter 4 we're going to look in two verses again to speak to this God is sovereign over all things including evil and yet he is not tainted by evil look with me in verses 27 and 28 of Acts chapter 24 the church is praying and in this prayer we find these words in 27 for truly in this city there are gathered together against the holy servants of Jesus whom you anointed both Herod and Pontus Pilate along with Gentiles and other peoples of Israel to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place notice those men Pontus Pilate Herod the Gentiles the people of

Israel all who put Jesus to death they did this these these early church are praying to do whatever was in your hand that your plan had predestined to take place none of this happened without you Lord predestining these things ordaining these things so Paul states that with regard to our salvation then how does this look with regard to our salvation that we have been predestined according to his purpose and he works all things out according to the counsel of his will in Ephesians 1 verse 11 so let us explore some aspects of this number one God's eternal decree encompass sin yet he is not the author of sin nor responsible for it to say that God is totally sovereign even over sin immediately raises a charge if God decreed sin then isn't he the author of it while I confess that fits good human logic it is lousy theology we are finite beings and we must admit our ways that are not his ways and our thoughts are not his thoughts the point may be good logic but God's word has the final authority on matters of doctrine and faith and so let us look if God let's use some reasoning this if God did not decrease in there and there would have we would have to agree there would exist an evil power that is equal or greater to God if God did not decrease in then there's this thing out there that exists apart from him that are out from his decree that would exist that is equal and opposite to his power this is what we would call this is an erroneous view that we would call as dualism this equal and opposite force that opposes God and

God is just trying to get the upper hand so let's cheer for God and hope that he gets the upper hand over evil that would be the way we would have to think of God if we were to believe that if God could have prevented it and he did not then clearly he decreed it some try to get God off the hook by saying that no he did not decree it but he only merely permitted it but we read in an example of God decreeing something even putting his son up for to death but not holding but holding mankind responsible for it we find another example like that in the Old Testament God wills in first Kings 22 20 through 22 God wills through his purposes to bring down the wicked King Ahab the prophet sees into heaven he sees all these spirits before the Lord and the Lord asks who will be go and be a deceiving mouth deceiving spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets an evil spirit offers himself the services to that end and God grants that evil spirit to be permitted to be in the mouth of Ahab's prophets God ordains this evil to be deceitful and the prophets therefore lie to Ahab Ahab goes into battle and he is killed thus the wicked prophets are lying in disobedience to God and yet they are willing to fulfill what God had determined to take place many more examples of this kind of thing could be cited in scripture look with me in 23 one more time Acts chapter 2 verse 23 this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God God ordained this to occur but do you can you think with me this is the worst most heinous sin one could ever commit to crucify that the the the innocent would be killed on behalf of the guilty that

God would offer himself to make up a sacrifice on behalf of others from a human's perspective though that is the highest crime you could ever commit is to kill the Lord Jesus Christ and yet God decreed this for his purposes that sin would be forgiven let's move on to the second point that is God is sovereign over all things including evil yet he's untainted by evil God's sovereignty is not contingent upon his foreknowledge and I know this is a little bit heady but hang in there with me obviously God knows everything in advance God didn't make up his eternal decree in response to seeing what man would do that would make man sovereign not God let me illustrate it this way can you imagine God passively sitting in heaven ringing his hands because he saw in advance his foreknowledge he saw in advance that man would sin against him and crucify the Lord Jesus and he couldn't do anything about it because after all he had given mankind free will and he dare not violate their freedom this makes God look like he is constantly scrambling coming up with a plan responding to human activity and the cross of Jesus Christ wasn't plan B it's plan A this Jesus was delivered up according to foreknowledge and the definite plan of God this is another example I'll say it this way nor did God seen advance that I would believe in him and say hmm because I can see Scott will believe in me boy I better then put him on the elect list that he would then be saved and since that since I see that he will choose me that would make Scott the will of man sovereign over the eternal will of God and that would place humanity as the determiner of God's plan not God that thinking in that illustration those illustrations also contrast what scripture clearly and plainly asserts that fallen man in our condition of fallen that is those who are lost without Christ are unable they are blinded to choose God apart from his first imparting on them a new nature let me illustrate second Corinthians chapter 4 verse 4 reads this in their case the God of this age being Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel the glory of Christ who is the image of God so in a lost person's condition what is true of them Satan has blinded their minds number one number two in this verse we see that they are blinded from seeing the light of the gospel so in my lost condition there's no way that I could choose to be saved because I'm blinded I am being deceived I cannot possibly see the light of the gospel second in 1 Corinthians 2 14 it says those with reads this the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned so that without

Christ without Christ I am unable to accept the things of God they would be foolishness to me they would be folly to me they cannot be understood by me and if you combine those two verses I would add Satan has blinded me from becoming to know him as an unbeliever and seeing the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ so no one in their lost state they are spiritually dead can choose God if it were so it would make salvation dependent upon something in us our faith our reasoning our wisdom our knowledge our intellect rather than upon the unconditional grace of God let me go to my third point God sovereignty is our only hope for salvation if salvation depends on fallen man's will to believe we are in big trouble I'm in big trouble you're in big trouble those in the remotest parts of the world are in big trouble but if salvation depends upon the sure purpose of God who ordained it in eternity past who brings it to bear in time who will perfect it into eternity future it is a sure thing according to scripture my will before I was saved is enslaved to sin in our own strength we cannot break free we are unable to do anything that pleases

[17 : 30] God Rome 8 Romans 8 8 so we would describe this condition and a lost state is this what are we told in scripture we are spiritually dead in our transgression and sin we are blinded in sin we are enslaved to sin we are without hope all things of God are foolishness to us and we cannot accept the things of God the portrait of scripture paints for us someone without Christ as horrifying as horrifying one cannot come to know God on one's own one must wholly depend on God sovereignty for salvation his sovereignty and his choosing someone to believe in the gospel is one's only hope since believing in Jesus Christ is pleasing to God the natural natural man cannot even do that apart from God's imparting saving faith in him if any part of the process depends upon us rather than God's sovereignty sovereign will the chain has a very weak link and could snap at any time the only way we can have hope to be saved is if God sovereignly undertakes all the concerns our salvation so what does the process look like that this sovereign God uses for salvation for us this brings us to our second largest point in God's sovereignty it gives an open invitation for everyone to call upon his name for salvation look with me in verse 21 and it was and it will come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved now keep in mind this follows verses 20 19 and 20 where we're talking about the Lord's day this great and magnificent day where this there's judgment coming and so to avoid judgment he says therefore verse 21 and and it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved so let's now look at the meaning of this these verses first we will see that the scope of the end of invitation includes everyone it is unlimited verse 21 and it will come to pass everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved everyone is about as broad as you can make it it doesn't say everyone except those who are really bad sinners in fact in the context God just warned of the impending cataclysmic judgment fire blood vapor of smoke the Sun will be turned to darkness the moon will be turned to blood God wouldn't impose such terrible judgments unless people were more deserving of them and yet to such sinful people the Lord promises everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved there is hope for the worst of sinners right up to the brink of judgment furthermore the invitation is open to people from every race and walk of life Peter tells the Jews whom he had just indicted for in crucifying the Messiah remember when he says and you crucified him that the promise was for them now look with me down in verse 39 for this promise of those who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved for this promise is for you those of you who crucified the Lord so salvation is for the worst of sinners including the worst sin of crucifying the Lord furthermore the invitation is open to people from every race and walk of life and perhaps it is an undoing of what Pilate said Pilate when he didn't want

to condemn Jesus to death he does so and he says to the crowd who didn't want to take Barabbas he says to them his blood should be upon us and our children is what Pilate said but notice this in verse 39 for the promise is for you and for your children so the very ones who crucified Jesus and said his blood will be on me and he'll be on our children for we crucified the this innocent man Pilate likely thinks and and and Peter is writing and in this sermon he is declaring and he says no no no no this salvation this promise for those who call upon the name of the Lord is for you yes the very ones who crucified the Lord and your children and for those who are far off and what Peter didn't know at the time is in a few chapters later Acts chapter 10 that will include the Gentiles and I will also say on a personal note I am glad that it says and those far off because I'm in that category if we take this as a succession you your children and those who are far off yes it includes every race and every nation every tribe every tongue but also it's a generational thing perhaps yes you and your children and those who are generationally far off and

I'm in that category 2,000 years later I am thankful that salvation that promise is for those including those who are far off thank you even if your parents are horrible sinners if you call on the Lord you they can be saved if they call on the Lord they can be saved if if if you have come from the deepest atheistic family call on the name of the Lord and you shall be saved if you came from a background of abuse call on the name of the Lord and you shall be saved if you came from a religious family and a godly family a church attending family but no no the Lord call the name of the Lord and you will be saved if you've come from a sinful family full of debauchery incest perhaps even Satan worship deserving of judgment call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved the gospel is offered to all who call on the name of the Lord let's look at the second point the invitation is to cry out to the Lord in faith for salvation from judgment to do this you realize that you are lost and under God's deserving judgment salvation refers to being delivered from God's judgment that he will bring in order to cry out for salvation is to avoid judgment one must recognize that he or she is under judgment to begin with you are lost no one for anyone you are lost no way for anyone to get into heaven and to avoid judgment by their good works or by their religious past by attending church no one gets into heaven for these reasons to call on the name of the Lord is to imply that a person knows something about who God really is if we're to call upon the name of the Lord we have to know who he is because his name refers to his character or his attributes God is revealed in scripture as the triune father son and Holy Spirit he is holy and up he is apart from sin he is revealed in flesh to us in person of Jesus Christ read with me again verse 20 well read with me again verse 39 for the promise is for you and for your children and for those who are far off if here's some encouragement when you are witnessing to someone it's good for them to read scripture so why because they are reading and one of the Gospels may be preferred Matthew Mark Luke or

John I often either offer the Gospel of John with someone who doesn't know the Lord or I start with a Gospel of Mark why do I do that because if they call upon the name of the Lord well who is he the Gospels declare who Jesus is he is the Son of God he is the Messiah he is sinless he his miracles confirm who he is he walks on waters he heals the blind and I may step on some toes but right now it's a matter of eternity so I'm going to step on toes why is it important to call on the name of the Lord and understand who it is because there are many people who cry out to God God a sincere Muslim may call out to Allah to save him but he cannot because he is not the Lord Jesus Christ a sincere Hindu may call on a number of deities to save him but they cannot because he they are calling upon a demon or a pantheon of false deities and not the Lord Jesus Christ there is no other name under heaven by which someone could be saved there may be a sincere Mormon who calls upon the name of the Lord to save him but there Jesus is the half brother of Satan and not the Jesus of

God's word that Jesus cannot save you there may be someone who is a sincere Buddhist and they call on Buddha for salvation but that prayer is not heard because Buddha is not the Lord nor does he exist there may be a sincere Jehovah witness who may call upon the name of the Lord but that Jesus cannot save him because their Jesus is not co-equal with the father and that Jesus cannot save them and there may be a sincere Roman Catholic who prays to the Pope Mary or some other saint for salvation but they cannot save him because he is not the Lord Jesus Christ he who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved so call upon the name of the Lord implies faith in him that Jesus has the ability to save you no mere man not even an angel can save you from God's wrath only God can do that that everyone includes everyone here the promises for you your children and those who are far off no matter who you are or what you have done or how far from God you may be if you call upon the name of the Lord in faith you will be saved so let's now go full circle back to God's sovereignty everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord for salvation does so because God first called them to himself after saying this promises look with me in verse 39 after saying the promises for you your children and those are far off Peter adds and as many as the Lord our God wills call to himself or another translation says everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself Peter links these so God must first call us and send his spirit to convict us of sin of righteousness and of judgment before we can call upon him Paul links these two ideas in Romans 8 28 he says and these whom he predestined he also called and these whom he called he justified and these who he justified he also glorified then what shall we say to these things if God is for us who can be against us he predestined he called he called he also justifies he justifies he will glorify if you have called upon the name of the

[30 : 17] Lord for salvation you know that it is because God has first called you thus he gets all the glory and praise as Paul puts it in Ephesians 1 5 through 6 if love in love he predestined us to the adoption of his son through Jesus Christ according to his kind intention of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace we can take no credit for calling upon the name of the Lord for our salvation he did it all for us by his grace and mercy and for his ultimate glory the bottom line is this the sovereign God invites everyone to call upon him for salvation and calling upon him for salvation are those whom he will he has already decreed to know him he called them and that in that no one can boast so here's the my favorite part of this the message in terms of application what is the application of this that God is sovereign over our salvation and he calls people unto himself and we respond to his call and he gives us the faith to believe in him says Ephesians and he saves what is the implication and the application for us this doctrine gives all glory to God for salvation if we think that we have come to God because of our own free will we will boast in our brilliant decision I am smarter than my neighbor across the street who doesn't know the Lord that would be a natural inclination of my heart we have made a smarter decision than those who rejected Christ if we think that we have come to know God because of our great faith we will boast in our faith we will boast in our discernment we will boast in our wisdom we will boast in something that we think that because of I am a part of my salvation I'm gonna boast that there must be something in me that God sought that wow I have something to offer him that is so arrogant that is so arrogant which brings me to my second point this doctrine humbles us from all our pride when we read Ephesians 2 8 and 9 commonly memorized verses for by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves so by the grace of God in his sinless life in his death for sin and raising victorious over sin and death that act of grace of God that he has done on my behalf I am saved by grace through faith and this verse insults me even further and it says and this faith that you just exercised it's not even from yourself it's a gift of

God so not only is the grace a gift of God the faith to believe in him is a gift of God so what is it that I can boast nothing so that's why the verse goes on for by grace you've been saved through faith and this not of yourselves it is a gift of God not by works not of your own doing so that you may not boast so no one may boast that is so humbling but that's exactly the intention it humbles us from all of our pride it gives the assurance of salvation if salvation depends on anything in myself it is absolutely shaky salvation if I did something to earn it get it achieve it then there's something I must be able to do to lose it no longer have it or be assured of it and it is in this situation that I was in when I said seven years after salvation there was a doctrine that became beautiful to me it was the realization and coming to understand this there were multiple times after coming to know the Lord that I would say the sinner's prayer if you will again and again and I would do that often after knowing the Lord but I would be deeply convicted of my sin and I thought I would lost my salvation and so I would make sure I was saved and I would pray again and for years I was tormented with that fear that I lost my salvation but then when I learned that my salvation had nothing to do with me and there's nothing I can do to then lose it all the assurance that that brought to my heart and I lived now in freedom knowing I'm his child yes I sin but first John 1 9 tells me what to do about that when that occurs confess your sin and he is faithful and just to forgive you of sin and cleanse you even from all unrighteousness that is so beautiful but if God's but if salvation depends on God's sovereign purpose his determined salvation before the foundation of the earth his effectual calling his safekeeping you can be sure of and Paul puts it this way he who began a work in you will perfect it until the day of

Christ Jesus fourthly this should give comfort in our trials whenever trials come our way whether mild or severe even unto death they come at the hand of God's sovereignty they come at the hand of God's sovereign will and a loving God who is at work to conform you to his image Romans 8 28 another commonly memorized verse says we know that God calls causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God and to those who are called according to his purposes I was visiting with Dr. Vreeland this week we shared some time together and he recounted a story of a woman who had lost her son and this devastated her and she was in mourning and and she came up to Dr. Vreeland and she said why did this happen why did the Lord take my son why and Dr. Vreeland I thought his response was just amazing he said as to your question why I must confess I do not know but I do know who I don't know why but I know who meaning this I know who

God is and I know he doesn't do anything without person he is sovereign even over salvation and I don't understand all of the purposes for why God does things but I do know this there's purpose so I don't know why but I do know who and this doctrine of God's sovereignty even over salvation is beautiful and it should comfort us in our trials lastly it should encourage evangelism sadly those in this position if you take this too far it discourages evangelism and some people think this way well if God is gonna choose those whom he chooses for salvation and they're going to believe whether they like it or not well then I don't have to say anything to anybody and that's the way an extreme person could think about this but it should encourage evangelism in this way if salvation depends on man's will we have no guarantee that anyone will be saved because he is dead in their transgressions and sin a lost person cannot choose God they do not have the capacity to read and receive the gospel but if it depends upon God's will and God's working we know that we will use the gospel this and he will use his gospel to save many then the Lord encourages Paul who is scared he was afraid to go to the city of Corinth and he says to him go to the city of Corinth this is the Lord asking Paul and this is what this is what the Lord says to Paul in Acts 18 verse 10 he says for I have many people in that city they don't yet believe in me they don't they don't know me but go to the city and proclaim the gospel Paul and he is not wanting to he has he's had reason to not do this he's even afraid for his own life but but Paul but the Lord says to Paul go I have I have many people in that city so yes God has chosen them but he but will you be the one to proclaim the gospel to them Paul

I'm inviting you to be a part of that this should give us encouragement let me conclude here this should give us encouragement sometimes we we grow discouraged because that person who we've been sharing with hasn't known the Lord and we keep testifying of the Lord we keep sharing the gospel and that co-worker and that neighbor and that family friend hasn't responded to the gospel that's okay this should encourage us in this way that God is sovereign he knows and we know that in John we know that from the gospel of John that God draws people unto them himself so if they are not responding to the gospel at that time as we share we don't need to use coercion we don't need to put a lot of pressure a sales event on the person we can just say listen here's the gospel here's what I know to be true and if a person is responding to that God may be drawing to him and we will go further in the conversation but if they reject it we can let it lay let it lie whatever leave it down when Paul preached at Pasidian Antioch many Jews opposed the message but others this is what it says began rejoicing and glorifying in the word of the Lord and many had been appointed to eternal life believed in Acts 13 Paul summed up his ministry this way I endure all things for the sake of the elect so that they also may obtain the salvation in which Christ Jesus with his eternal glory and that is our hope this should encourage us to share the Lord

[41 : 58] Wendy and I have neighbors that live across the street and we are in the process they we've invited them into our home and they are now reciprocating that and inviting us into their home we have folks just like you have that we are in the process of sharing Christ with testifying to what who the Lord is and what he has done and we are sharing the gospel along with you and this should encourage us to evangelize God saves as we proclaim the gospel and so God has the responsibility to save we have a responsibility to declare the gospel and so we ought to do so let's pray father thank you for this day thank you for your grace thank you for giving us even the faith to believe in the grace that you have given Lord I thank you that those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved and I thank you that you have called those individuals unto yourself first thank you that salvation is not upon us not any part of us not of our own doing and thank you that we cannot even boast in our salvation so may we boldly declare that wonderful gift of salvation to others we love you Lord thank you for the opportunity to declare your name in the city of Spokane where we have influence where you have given us we love you Lord amen