

# Calling Upon The Name Of The Lord

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[ 0 : 00 ] Everyone today wants to know what their calling is. They don't have to be Christians to talk about their calling.

Commentators will often speak of a talented professional footballer having a sacred calling to the game. They've been destined from birth and physically formed to excel.

They're a square peg in a square hole. What is your calling in life? To what vocation have you been destined from birth and constituted physically, mentally, and emotionally?

The great African theologian, St. Augustine of Hippo, modern-day Tunisia, famously wrote in his Confessions, Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.

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Towering above all the other callings to which you may have been called in life, your call to find your meaning, satisfaction, and rest in the God who made you for himself.

[ 1 : 25 ] One of the reasons there's so much restlessness in our world is that so many people ignore their ultimate calling to find rest in God, choosing rather to pursue satisfaction and meaning and pleasure in lesser things.

The lower callings of work and relationship and material security. One's calling is an incredibly important part of biblical theology and Christian experience.

And this is especially true of our ultimate calling, to know God and to find our meaning, our satisfaction, our rest, and our pleasure in him.

As such, talks of calling are peppered throughout the Bible. Such talk becomes even more important when we pass from the Old Testament into the New Testament.

For in the New Testament, in these days between Christ's resurrection and his return, in these gospel days, we have the sure and certain promise from God's word that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[ 2 : 43 ] There's your calling. There is where you're going to be a square peg in a square hole. Would you spend your life calling upon the name of the Lord?

Now, it may seem a simple enough thing to talk of a calling in a Christian context, where calling on the name of the Lord can, at its simplest level, be understood in terms of prayer and faith.

But simple things, you know, are really, very rarely simple. In Joel 2, verse 32, we read these words. It shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. You'll see the word calls is used twice in this verse.

First, in the context of us calling on God, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. And secondly, in the context of God calling on us.

[ 3 : 57 ] Among the survivors shall be those the Lord calls. So here in these two words, we have both the calling of God and our calling on God.

Both God calling to us and we calling on God. This is perhaps the most important verse in the whole prophecy of Joel.

And one, if you get right, will change everything about your life. It's going to calm your restlessness. It's going to lighten your darkness. It's going to cheer your despair.

For after all, these two callings, God's call to us and our call to him, coalesce around a wonderful word, which draws us to the cross and empty tomb of our Lord.

Shall be saved. First of all then, let's look at the calling of God. And among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

[ 5 : 11 ] We live in God's world. This is only our world in so much as it's been given to us in the first place by God. I say this because it's sometimes hard for us to appreciate that God is absolutely sovereign over all time and all space.

This is God's world. He's in complete control of it all. His sovereignty commands the movements of the great planets in our solar system.

And he sovereignly determines the movement of the microscopic phytoplankton in our oceans. We all like to think that we're independent, free to choose what our calling in life actually is.

But ultimately, God is in charge and not us. I say that ultimately God is in charge and not us.

But to be faithful to the Bible's teaching, I need to fill a bit of the detail in here. God created humankind with free will. To do or not to do.

[ 6 : 20 ] To choose or not to choose. But on the day our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, we lost the fullness of our free will.

On that day, it was as if we removed God from the kingdom of our hearts and enthroned self and sin there instead. And in so doing, we lost our free will.

Ultimately, God is in charge. But at a human level, because of the dominance of sin and self over us, we are now incapable of reversing our choice.

And instead of choosing evil, choose God. In fact, we are both unable and unwilling because under the guise of liberty, our sin has stolen away our free will.

That's why the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2 wrote these words. He said, You were dead in your transgressions and sins.

[ 7 : 30 ] A dead body has no freedom to choose its own fate. When we sinned, we spiritually died. So from a spiritual perspective, we no longer have freedom to do or not to do, to choose or not to choose.

We can no longer, nor do we want to any longer, choose God. Such a choice is beyond us as the power of flight or the ability to live underwater.

We have given away our free will. We have given it to another who treats us as slaves. We have betrayed ourselves and lost our capacity to choose God.

We are dead in transgressions and sins. Whenever I go to my local pharmacy in Knightswood, there's always a long line of thin and rather unhealthy men waiting to get their daily dose of methadone.

And it's sometimes really hard not to be judgmental. You want to grab one of these young men, by the lapels and say to him, get a grip of yourself.

[ 8 : 47 ] Sort yourself out. Start being an asset to society and not a drain. Get yourself a job. That is until you realize that they are so addicted to drugs that they have lost the ability to get a grip of themselves and start being assets to society and not liabilities.

They have sold their free will for a pouch of powder. They are incapable and in their worst moments unwilling to make good choices.

And at that point, our judgmentalism turns to compassion. But as I say, I exit that pharmacy and I look behind at that pathetic line of young, gormless addicts.

Lord, I thank you that I am not like these men. I thank you that I'm not a crackhead like these gormless idiots. And then Joel 2.32, together with all the other biblical texts, hit me right between the eyes.

By nature, because of your sin, you are like all other men. You are incapable, unwilling, and lacking free will.

[ 10 : 14 ] It is true for us all. We are all dead in our sins and completely incapable of choosing God. Leopards do not change their spots.

What we need, as Jesus repeatedly points out in the Gospels, is a new heart. But remember, we live in God's world.

And ultimately, he is Lord of all things, us included. Though we have rebelled against him, though we have set up our position against him, yet because he is filled with so much love for us, he sovereignly chooses to call us to himself.

In effect, we've said to God, don't call me, I'll call you. But in loving power, he overrides our opposition, and he breaks through our gormless addiction to sin and self.

His love breaks through, and he calls us back to himself. Think of the context in which the prophet Joel is writing.

[ 11 : 31 ] These are the people who have turned away from God to worship fallen idols, a people who, by their own sinful choices, had expressed their rebellion by embracing the loveless and unholy ways of the nations around them.

In effect, they had said to their God, we will not have you as our God. We want a better God than you. A God we can see.

A God who will allow us to live the way that we want to live and gratify our pleasures. And so, like that prodigal son in the story Jesus told in Luke 15, they had run away.

They had run far, far away, as far from God as it was possible to go. It had become so bad that unless God called them first, unless God does something in them first, they would never have been able nor even willing to return to him.

No amount of the prophet Joel shaking the rhapsodists saying, get a grip of yourself, people, would ever have been enough. Like a crack addict enslaved by his addiction, so those to whom Joel was writing were neither able nor willing to return to God.

[ 12 : 54 ] and that's why God had to call them first. Before ever they could love God, he had to first love them. Before they could respond to God, he had to give them new hearts and in so doing, restore their free will.

He had to make the dead live so they could choose him. And that's what Joel refers to in verse 32 when he speaks of God calling.

Not just God shouting to them to return to him, but God doing a sovereign work of grace in their hearts to give them life, to give them new birth.

All of us here want to know what our calling in life is. More important than our calling to find meaning, pleasure, satisfaction in God is God's prior calling of us.

The so-called effectual calling of which our father spoke. Before we ever loved God, he first loved us.

[ 14 : 13 ] Before any of us ever went looking for God, he found us. God and in powerful love and grace, he created our hearts anew.

He restored our free will. He changed us so that we were both willing and able to choose him. This is God's calling to us.

faith. Now some people over the years have used this doctrine of the sovereignty of God as a reason to stay away. They'll argue that they don't choose God because he has not first chosen them.

The reason they will not become Christians is because God has not called them. It's a fair argument for after all, logically speaking, how can we choose God unless he first chooses us?

How then can we answer this objection? The call of God in our lives changes two things about us. Our ability to choose Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and our desire to choose Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

[ 15 : 26 ] The sign that God is calling is both your desire to choose Christ and your ability to choose Christ. So let me say this. If you have any desire at all to have Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior tonight, if you have any desire to be his disciple tonight, if you have any desire to choose God tonight, that desire does not come from you, but from God.

It's a sure sign that he has begun a work of grace in your heart. Because it's impossible for a human being, having forfeited their free will, to desire, to want to choose God.

So do not ask yourself the question, can I choose God tonight? As if somehow to use the sovereignty of God as an excuse to stay away. Ask yourself the question, do I want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Do I want to? And if the answer to that desire question is yes, then you can be sure that God has begun his sovereign work of grace in your heart and is calling you to follow him now.

In his sovereignty, God has given you the desire to pursue your ultimate calling, to find satisfaction and meaning and pleasure in his son, Jesus Christ.

[ 16 : 54 ] You see, the sovereignty of God is no reason to stay away from Jesus, but if in your heart there is even an inkling of desire to follow him tonight, it's a sign that God's calling you.

And that you're able, as a result of his first calling of you, to call on him for faith and salvation. It's a marvelous truth. Boys and girls, are you listening to me tonight?

Do you want to be a Christian? Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus? To serve him your whole life through? If you want to be a disciple of Jesus, it's a sign that God is already working your heart to

call you to believe in him as your Lord and Savior.

But perhaps, though, for those of us who are unolder, in the last analysis, this is a truth that's only known in hindsight. It's only as we look back into our lives that we're truly able to say that unless God had first loved us, we would never have loved him.

And unless God had first chosen us, we would never have chosen him. How thankful we are for the promise of God here in Joel 2.32, that in the latter days, the days of the gospel, these days, God's going to call many to come to know him because this is his world.

[ 18 : 27 ] The calling of God. And then secondly, and a bit more briefly, calling on God. Calling on God.

As I said earlier, this may well be the most important verse in the whole book. Perhaps especially the first part, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

It's repeated both in Acts chapter 2 and in Romans chapter 10. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. So, why not just everyone who calls on the Lord shall be saved?

What need is there for the word, the name? Well, in the language and thought world of the Bible, the name of someone is a summary of everything they are, of what and who they are.

So, when it comes to God, his name is everything he has revealed himself to us to be. The God of love, the God of light, the God of righteousness, the God of compassion, the God of grace and of pity, the God of mercy and of goodness, and so on.

[ 19 : 45 ] And so, when we're calling upon the name, we're calling upon this God. The God who loves us infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably so intensely that he sent his one and only son to die on the cross to take away our sins and give us eternal life.

We are calling on the God whose face we see on the cross. We're calling on the God whose voice we hear crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

We're calling on the God we touched and we saw and we heard in Jesus Christ. When we're calling on the name of the Lord, we're calling on the totality of who he has revealed himself to be in Jesus Christ.

The fullness of his love, the fullness of his compassion, his love and his justice, his truth and his pity, his grace and his mercy. And in response to God's calling to us, we're now calling on him.

As sure as he first loved us, we will now love him. But there is a significant difference between his calling of us and our calling on him.

[ 21 : 07 ] His calling on us changes us so that we may accept his loving invitation to come to him. It gives us both the ability and the desire to come to him for salvation.

However, our calling on him changes nothing. It does not make him more loving toward us or less loving toward us.

It does not make him more willing to receive us or less willing to receive us. He already loves us infinitely, eternally and unchangeably and he has promised under whatever circumstances to hear us and to receive us when we call on him.

But then you say to me tonight, you don't know me. I'm in no fit state to call on God. I'm a total hypocrite.

Oh, I look fine dressed here sitting in church but you haven't seen me when I drink. You haven't seen me when I get angry. You think perhaps you need to smarten up your act before you call on God.

[ 22 : 23 ] Or you think perhaps I don't know what you're talking about. I'm a good person. things are going fine in my life.

A lovely family, lovely house, lovely job. What need do I have to call upon God? I think perhaps that your act is smart enough not to need to call upon God.

Or perhaps even you're saying, I don't even know whether God exists or not. How can I call upon a God that I'm not sure even exists?

You think perhaps of your doubts that God will not hear you when you call to him for help? You know, all these objections have got one thing in common. One thing in common. They all presuppose that before we call upon God, we need to do something.

the first that we need to smarten up our act. The second that we need to be in some kind of need.

The third that we need to be convinced of all the truths of Christianity before we commit.

[ 23 : 33 ] Before we call on God, we need to be in the right place, in the right condition, and in the right state of mind. Or perhaps more insidiously, most insidiously of you at all and what we've

already referred to, we think that we need some kind of supernatural sign in the sky to confirm that God has called us.

Whatever it is, all these objections presuppose that before we call upon God, we need to do something. We need to do something. There are perhaps young people here who think that they need to be older before they can call upon God.

There are perhaps new people here who think that they need to be more part of this church before they can call upon the name of God. There are perhaps older people here who think that because of their age, they've gone beyond the point where God's going to listen to their voice calling out to him.

Listen, listen, and listen again. Before you do anything else, call on the name of the Lord.

Let that be the first thing you do. Call on his name. Call on his name and let him smarten your life up. Call on his name and let him show you your need.

[ 24 : 59 ] Call upon his name and let him deal with your doubts. Call upon him and let him confirm to you his calling of you. Without any delay, without any hesitation, call upon him.

cry out to him for help and salvation from sin and from guilt, from slavery and from fear. But then again you ask the question, well, how do I ask?

How do I call on God? Can't see God. How do I call upon him? When a child is lost in a supermarket, does that child ask the question, how shall I call out to my parents?

Or does that child just naturally open up her lungs and scream at the top of her voice? Now I'm not expecting anyone to scream out loud here.

This ain't that kind of church. But I am asking you to cry out to God in your heart. Lord Jesus, I need you.

[ 26 : 09 ] I need you. I need you to forgive my sin and to give me a new heart. I need you to help me find satisfaction, meaning, and pleasure in you and in you alone.

You don't even have to use all these words. These are my words. So don't open your heart. Just cry out for Jesus to help you and to save you from your sins.

And let me assure you that a sovereign God will hear your call and receive you as his precious child right now. You may be messed up, you may be screwed up, you may be filled with all kinds of doubts and confused, but he will receive you and he will begin the process of replacing the confusion and the doubt and the mess in your heart with his comfort, with his security and with his salvation.

You'll find the rest of which St. Augustine spoke 1600 years ago and which we believe he experienced in Jesus. Finally, you'll be the square peg in the square hole God designed you to be. This surely is the most important call any of you will ever make. The call that right here, right now, this very second, based upon God's calling of you made obvious to you in your desire to follow him, you will call out in your heart to God.

[ 27 : 48 ] And here finally is the promise. You shall be saved. You shall be forgiven of all your sin. You shall become a new person. You shall be God's child.

It is too good a promise to ignore and it's here in black and white in Joel 2.32 in Acts 2 and Romans 10. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

From the youngest of us here tonight to the oldest of us here tonight and to all you watching on Zoom tonight, will you come?

Will you call? Will you believe on the name of Christ? Do you mind? Thank you. Thank you.