

**BEING A VESSEL UNTO HONOR, A FULLY EQUIPPED MAN OF GOD,
BY BEING EMPOWERED IN THE GRACE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS
TO FULLY ACCOMPLISH OUR MINISTRY
IN THE UNIQUE MINISTRY OF GOD'S ECONOMY**
(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

**Being a Vessel unto Honor,
and Pursuing Righteousness, Faith, Love, Peace
with Those Who Call on the Lord out of a Pure Heart**

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 2:20-22; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7

- 2 Tim 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.
- 2 Tim 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
- 2 Tim 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
- Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
- 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

I. In 2 Timothy 2:20-21 Paul speaks of honorable and dishonorable vessels:

- 2 Tim 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.
- 2 Tim 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
- A. Honorable vessels are constituted of both the divine nature and the redeemed and regenerated human nature; dishonorable vessels are constituted of the fallen human nature—Eph. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 1:4.
- Eph 2:2 In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience;
- Eph 2:3 Among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest;
- 2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
- B. In Romans 9:21 Paul speaks of vessels unto honor, and in Romans 9:23, of vessels of mercy prepared unto glory.
- Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
- C. The fact that we are vessels of honor prepared unto glory means that we have been designed to contain God as our honor and glory.
- D. God chose us so that we may be vessels of honor filled with the processed and consummated Triune God—vv. 21-23; 2 Cor. 13:14.
- Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?

- Rom 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
- 2 Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- E. God wants an open vessel—Rom. 9:23; 2 Cor. 4:7:
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
- 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
1. God's intention was to create a vessel to contain Him and to express Him, so God only wants an opening of the vessel—2 Tim. 2:21; Rom. 11:24.
 2 Tim 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
 Rom 11:24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into the cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree!
 2. If the vessel is open, God can fulfill His purpose, but if the vessel is closed, God's purpose is frustrated—Col. 4:3.
 Col 4:3 Praying at the same time for us also, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ (because of which also I am bound),
 3. God does not want us to do anything; He wants us only to be a living vessel, a clean, empty, and open vessel.
 4. The summary of Paul's fourteen Epistles may be expressed in two words—*open vessel*.
- F. If we cleanse ourselves from vessels unto dishonor, we will be vessels unto honor— 2 Tim. 2:21:
- 2 Tim 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.
1. To cleanse ourselves is to depart from unrighteousness (v. 19), as an outward evidence of the inward divine nature.
 2 Tim 2:19 However the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.
 2. We should cleanse ourselves not only from anything unrighteous but also from the dishonorable vessels; this means that we must stay away from them.
 3. If we cleanse ourselves from these negative things and negative persons, we will be vessels unto honor.
 4. In 2 Timothy 2:21 *unto honor* is a matter of nature, *sanctified* is a matter of position, *useful* is a matter of practice, and *prepared* is a matter of training.
 2 Tim 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.

II. We need to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace—v. 22:

- 2 Tim 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
- A. A governing principle of our Christian life should be pursuing the experience of Christ and the enjoyment of Christ—Phil. 3:12.
 Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
- B. Our experience of Christ rests on the foundation of God's righteousness, the unshakable foundation of God's throne—Psa. 89:14:
 Psa 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; / Lovingkindness and truth go before Your face.

1. Whereas holiness is related to God's inward nature, righteousness is related to God's outward acts, ways, actions, and activities—Eph. 4:24.
Eph 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.
 2. Everything that God does is right—Psa. 89:14.
Psa 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; / Lovingkindness and truth go before Your face.
 3. The righteousness of God is what God is in His actions with respect to justice and righteousness.
- C. In the New Testament *faith* bears two denotations—objective and subjective:
1. In the objective denotation, *faith* refers to the entire revelation of the New Testament concerning the person of Christ and His redemptive work—Acts 6:7; 14:22; Rom. 16:26; 1 Cor. 15:14; 1 Tim. 1:19b; Jude 3, 20.
Acts 6:7 And the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith.
Acts 14:22 Establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.
Rom 16:26 But has now been manifested, and through the prophetic writings, according to the command of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles for the obedience of faith;
1 Cor 15:14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is vain; your faith is vain also.
1 Tim 1:19b ... thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith;
Jude 3 Beloved, while using all diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.
Jude 20 But you, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,
 2. In the subjective denotation, *faith* refers to the act of believing—Luke 18:8; Mark 11:22.
Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?
Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered and said to them, Have faith in God.
 3. By faith we are born of God to be His sons, partaking of His life and nature to express Him—Gal. 3:26; John 1:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:4.
Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,
John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
 4. By faith in Christ, we are put into Christ to become the members of His Body, sharing all that He is for His expression—John 3:15; Rom. 12:4-5.
John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
 5. Genuine faith is Christ Himself infused into us to become our ability to believe in Him; after the Lord Jesus has been infused into us, He spontaneously becomes our faith—Heb. 11:1, 3; 12:2.
Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

- Heb 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe has been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not come into being out of things which appear.
- Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.
6. *The faith* in 1 Timothy 1:19 is objective, referring to the things in which we believe, whereas *faith* at the beginning of this verse is subjective, referring to the act of our believing.
- 1 Tim 1:19 Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith;
- D. Love is the nature of God's essence—1 John 4:19:
- 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.
1. The divine love as God's essential attribute is mainly expressed in sending His Son to redeem us and impart God's life into us so that we may become His children—John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10.
- John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.
- 1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested among us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might have life and live through Him.
- 1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins.
2. God is love; we love because He first loved us—vv. 8, 19.
- 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.
- 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.
3. To abide in love is to live a life in which we love others habitually with the love that is God Himself—v. 8.
- 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.
- E. The New Testament speaks about both the peace of God and the God of peace —John 20:19; Eph. 2:14; 2 Pet. 1:2:
- John 20:19 When therefore it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and while the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be to you.
- Eph 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, He who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity,
- 2 Pet 1:2 Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;
1. Concerning the God of peace, we need Romans 16:20 and Philippians 4:7.
- Rom 16:20 Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
- Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.
2. The God of peace guards over our hearts, and He patrols before our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus—Rom. 15:33; Phil. 4:9.
- Rom 15:33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.
- Phil 4:9 The things which you have also learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace will be with you.
3. The peace of God and the God of peace are one—1 Thes. 5:23.
- 1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. In our experience peace is a condition that results from grace; grace is a substance, and peace is a condition—1 Cor. 1:3.
- 1 Cor 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. We all should be those who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart—

2 Tim. 2:22:

2 Tim 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

A. Calling on the name of the Lord is not a new practice in the New Testament; it began with Enosh, the third generation of mankind, in Genesis 4:26:

Gen 4:26 And to Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of Jehovah.

1. Calling on the name of the Lord was continued by Job (Job 12:4; 27:10), Abraham (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21:33), Isaac (26:25), and Moses and the children of Israel (Deut. 4:7); all of these and many others practiced calling upon the Lord in the Old Testament age.

Job 12:4 I have become a laughingstock to my friends, / I, who have called out to God and He answers me. / The righteous man, the perfect man, is a laughingstock.

Job 27:10 Does he take delight in the Almighty? / Will he call upon God at all times?

Gen 12:8 And he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to Jehovah and called upon the name of Jehovah.

Gen 13:4 To the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah.

Gen 21:33 And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and there he called on the name of Jehovah, the Eternal God.

Gen 26:25 And he built an altar there and called upon the name of Jehovah and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Deut 4:7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as Jehovah our God is whenever we call upon Him?

2. In the New Testament, calling on the name of the Lord was mentioned first by Peter: "It shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"—Acts 2:21.
3. According to Acts 7:59, when Stephen was being stoned, he was calling upon the Lord and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"
4. When we preach the gospel and help others to be saved, we need to encourage them to call on the name of the Lord and say, "O Lord Jesus"—cf. Rom. 10:9-13.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Rom 10:10 For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation.

Rom 10:11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes on Him shall not be put to shame."

Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;

Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

5. Calling on the name of the Lord is the secret not only to our salvation but also to our enjoyment of the Lord's riches—Eph. 1:18; 3:16.

Eph 1:18 The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,

B. Second Timothy 2:22 says that we need to "call on the Lord out of a pure heart":

1. In the Bible to be pure means to be only for God.

2. A pure heart is a heart fixed on God—Matt. 5:8.

Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

3. In serving the Lord, we should be purely for Him and not for anything else; we should be wholly for God—1 Thes. 5:23.

1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul

and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Our focus should be on calling on the Lord and having a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.
2 Tim 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Another attribute of God is righteousness. God is righteous as well as holy. Whereas holiness is related to God's inward nature, righteousness is related to God's outward acts, ways, actions, and activities. Everything God does is righteous.

What is the righteousness of God? The righteousness of God is what God is in His action with respect to justice and righteousness. God is just and right. Whatever God is in His justice and righteousness constitutes His righteousness.

Revelation 15:3 says, "Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations." God's works are His acts, whereas God's ways are His governing principles. God's ways are righteous in His principles. If you know God's ways, you will not need to wait to see His works in order to praise Him. Although His works have not yet come, you will know they will come because you know the governing principles by which God does things. God's ways are righteous according to His principles.

In Romans 1:16b and 17a Paul says that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek. For the righteousness of God is revealed in it." In John 3:16 God's love is the source and motive of God's salvation. In Ephesians 2:5 and 8 God's grace is the basic element of God's salvation. But here God's righteousness is the power of God's salvation. Legally speaking, both love and grace can fluctuate, but not righteousness. This is true even the more with God's righteousness. Because God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

According to John 3:16, salvation is out of God's love, and according to Ephesians 2:5 and 8, salvation is by God's grace. But in Romans 1:17 Paul says that salvation comes by the righteousness of God. Neither love nor grace is related to the law. No law forces us to love or to give grace. Whether we love or not we are still lawful, and whether we extend grace or not we are still legal. In a sense, God is not bound to love us. Furthermore, He is not legally bound to show us grace. Righteousness, on the contrary, is very much related to the law. Because Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of God's law, God is bound to save us. If you say, "Lord Jesus, You are my Savior," you can turn to God and say, "God, You must forgive me, whether You like it or not. You are righteous if You forgive me, but You are unrighteous if You do not forgive me." We can say this to God because Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law, and, as a result, God is bound by His righteousness to save us. Righteousness, therefore, is a mighty bond God cannot escape—He must save us because He is righteous.

First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God is faithful in His word (1 John 1:10) and righteous in the blood of Jesus His Son (1 John 1:7). His word is the word of the truth of His gospel (Eph. 1:13), which tells us that He will forgive us our sins because of Christ (Acts 10:43), and the blood of Christ has fulfilled His righteous requirements that He may forgive us our sins (Matt. 26:28). If we confess our sins, He, according to His word and based on the redemption through the blood of Jesus, forgives us, because He must be faithful in His word and righteous in the blood of Jesus. Otherwise, God would be unfaithful and unrighteous.

In Romans 3:21 Paul speaks a further word concerning the righteousness of God: "But now without law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the

prophets.” To say that the righteousness of God has been manifested without law means that the righteousness of God is not based on our doing; that is, it is not based on our keeping the law. Although the righteousness of God has existed for ages, it was not manifested to us until we believed in the Lord Jesus and called on His name. Then the righteousness of God was revealed to us. When God’s righteousness is revealed, it is manifested. It is manifested to us when we believe in the Lord.

The manifestation of God’s righteousness is mentioned twice in the book of Romans. Romans 1:17 says that the righteousness of God is revealed out of faith to faith. Then Romans 3:21 says that the righteousness of God has been manifested without the law. Now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested through the faith of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22).

By forgiving us God shows forth His righteousness. He makes a declaration to the whole universe that because He is righteous, He must forgive us for our sins. Because His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was put to death by Him on the cross on our behalf, God is legally obligated to forgive us. Whether He is happy with us or not, He must forgive us according to His righteousness. God knows that whenever a person points to the resurrected and ascended Christ as a “receipt” for sin, God must forgive that one. In this matter the righteous God has no choice.

Whenever our conscience condemns us because of our failures, we need to remember to stand upon the foundation of God’s righteousness. You may be fervent for the Lord today. But in the future you may fail Him and become very disappointed with yourself, unable to believe that God could ever forgive you. At such a time you need to praise God for His righteousness. Tell Him that no matter how much you have failed, Christ is still at His right hand as the receipt for payment for all your debts (Heb. 1:3). Our experience may fluctuate, but God remains righteous forever. Whenever we confess our sins, claim the blood of Jesus, and appeal to God’s righteousness, God has no choice except to forgive us.

Our experience of Christ rests on the foundation of God’s righteousness. The foundation is not our fervency or victory; it is God’s righteousness, the unshakable foundation of God’s throne (Psa. 89:14). God has shown forth His righteousness by forgiving us of our sins. In this way God has proved that He is righteous. Now such righteousness of God is our solid foundation.

We have seen that both love and grace may change, but righteousness is solid and steadfast. God is free either to love us or not to love us; however, He is bound by His righteousness. Because Christ died to fulfill God’s righteous requirements, God has put Himself into a position where He is legally bound to forgive everyone who believes in Christ. God is bound by His own righteousness to forgive us. Therefore, the righteousness that is the foundation of God’s throne is also the foundation of our salvation. Can the foundation of God’s throne be shaken? Certainly not. Likewise, the foundation of our salvation cannot be shaken.

If we consider ourselves, we shall realize that we are not lovable or worthy of God’s grace. We simply do not deserve anything from God. But God is righteous. He put Christ to death on our behalf, and He has recognized the death of Christ as the full payment of our debt. Therefore, we can boldly say to God, “If You do not deal with me according to Your righteousness, Your throne will be shaken. The important issue is not whether or not I shall be saved or perish; it is whether or not You will allow the foundation of Your throne to be shaken. God, I remind You of Your righteousness. Christ has died for my sins, and He is now at Your right hand as proof that You have received His payment for all my debts. According to Your righteousness, You have no choice except to forgive me. You are legally bound to forgive me of my sins. O Father God, I appreciate Your love and grace. But now I stand before You in Your righteousness. Because You are righteous, You must forgive me.” Have you ever prayed to God in this way? It pleases Him when we pray like this. This is a prayer that knows God’s righteousness and appeals to God according to His righteousness. Our God is righteous, and the gospel of Christ is the power of God because the righteousness of God is revealed in it. Such a divine righteousness is a strong attribute of God. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 87-91)

**The Holy Spirit Poured Out
So That We May Call On the Name of the Lord to Be Saved**

Acts 2:19-20 says, “I will show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord comes.” Literally, the Greek word translated “show” in verse 19 means “give.” Verses 19 and 20, quoted from Joel’s prophecy, are not related to the things that occurred on the day of Pentecost but to the calamities of the judgment day of the Lord in the future. For a detailed consideration of the day of the Lord, I would refer you to footnote 3 in 2 Peter 3:12.

In Acts 2:21 Peter went on to say, “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” 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, in Genesis 4:26. It was continued by Job (Job 12:4; 27:10), Abraham (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21:33), Isaac (26:25), Moses and the children of Israel (Deut. 4:7), Samson (Judg. 15:18; 16:28), Samuel (1 Sam. 12:18; Psa. 99:6), David (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), the psalmist Asaph (80:18), the psalmist Heman (88:9), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), Isaiah (Isa. 12:4), Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55, 57), and others (Psa. 99:6), all of whom practiced calling on the name of the Lord in the Old Testament age. Isaiah charged the seekers of God to call upon Him (Isa. 55:6). Even 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). The Gentile raised up by God from the north also called upon His name (Isa. 41:25). 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. This 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). Such a jubilant practice was prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:32) for the New Testament jubilee.

In the New Testament, calling on the name of the Lord was mentioned first by Peter, in Acts 2:21, on the day of Pentecost, as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. This fulfillment is related to God’s outpouring of the all-inclusive Spirit economically upon His chosen people so that they may participate in His New Testament jubilee. Joel’s prophecy and its fulfillment concerning God’s New Testament jubilee have two aspects: on God’s side, He poured out His Spirit in the ascension of the resurrected Christ; on our side, we call on the name of the ascended Lord, who has accomplished all, attained unto all, and obtained all. Calling on the Lord’s name is vitally necessary in order for us, the believers in Christ, to participate in and enjoy the all-inclusive Christ with all He has accomplished, attained, and obtained (1 Cor. 1:2). It 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). The early believers practiced this everywhere (1 Cor. 1:2), and to the unbelievers, especially the persecutors, it became a popular sign of Christ’s believers (Acts 9:14, 21). When Stephen suffered persecution, he practiced this (7:59), and his practice surely impressed Saul, one of his persecutors (vv. 58-60; 22:20). Later, the unbelieving Saul persecuted the callers (9:14, 21) by taking their calling as a sign. 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. 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.

The Greek word for *call on* is *epikaleo*, composed of *epi*, *on*, and *kaleo*, *call* (by name), that is, to call out audibly, even loudly, as Stephen did (Acts 7:59-60).

Acts 2:21 speaks of calling on the name of the Lord. The name denotes the person. Jesus is the name of the Lord, and the Spirit is His person. When we call, “Lord Jesus,” we receive the Spirit.

According to the context, 2:21 is the conclusion of the quotation of Joel’s prophecy, which began in verse 17. The fact that verse 21 is the conclusion of the quotation indicates that the issue of God’s pouring out of His Spirit upon all flesh is their salvation through calling on the name of the Lord. God’s outpouring of His Spirit is the applying of the Lord’s salvation to His chosen people. To be saved is to

receive this Spirit, who is the blessing of the gospel in God's New Testament economy (Gal. 3:2, 5, 14). This Spirit is the Lord Himself as the breath (John 20:22) and the living water (4:10, 14) to us. To breathe Him in as our breath and drink Him as our living water, we need to call on Him. Lamentations 3:55-56 indicates that calling on the Lord is our breathing, and Isaiah 12:3 and 4 indicate that calling on the Lord is our drinking. After we believe in the Lord, we need to call on Him so that we may not only be saved but also enjoy His riches (Rom. 10:12-13). When we exercise our spirit to call on Him, breathe Him in, and drink Him, we enjoy His riches; this is the real worship to God. The Lord connected such worship (John 4:24) to the drinking of the living water given by Him (v. 14).

As we consider Acts 2:21 in its context, we see that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, that is, upon all human beings, is for the purpose that people will call on the name of the Lord and be saved. This is the reason Paul says that if one is to be saved, he needs to call on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:12-13).

In Romans 10 Paul speaks of two matters—being justified and being saved. Being justified is somewhat of an inward matter, and being saved is somewhat of an outward matter. Paul says that in order to be justified we need to believe in our heart unto righteousness. If we believe in our heart that the Lord Jesus died for us and that God raised Him from the dead, we will be justified in the presence of God. However, in order to be saved, we still need to call on the name of the Lord.

When we preach the gospel and help others to be saved, we need to encourage them to call on the name of the Lord and say, "O Lord Jesus!" From experience we know that the stronger a person calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, the stronger will be his experience of salvation.

Let us suppose that someone who has heard the preaching of the gospel and who wants to be saved prays softly and weakly, "Lord Jesus, You love me, and You died for me. I believe in You." It may be difficult to recognize that one who prays in such a weak manner is saved. However, suppose someone strongly calls on the name of the Lord Jesus and says, "Lord Jesus! O Lord Jesus! I'm a sinner, Lord, but You died for me! O Lord Jesus, I love You!" No doubt, anyone who prays like this, calling strongly on the name of the Lord, is saved. He may even be beside himself with joy in the Lord for His salvation.

According to Acts 7:59, when Stephen was being stoned, "he called upon the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Saul of Tarsus approved of this killing and joined in the great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. According to 9:14, Saul had authority from the chief priests to bind all who called on the name of the Lord Jesus. Saul's intention in going to Damascus was to arrest all those who called on the Lord's name. This indicates that in the early days calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus was a sign of being a follower of the Lord. This calling must have been audible so that others could hear. Thus, it became a sign. At the time of Saul, the believers were those who called on the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord appeared to Saul on the way to Damascus, and Saul said, "Who are You, Lord?" (v. 5). Later, Ananias came to Saul and said to him, "Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (22:16). Here Ananias seemed to be saying, "Brother Saul, you persecuted the saints for calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. They regard you as a persecutor, one who arrested the believers because they called on the name of the Lord. Now you have repented and have turned to the Lord. But how can those who consider you a persecutor recognize that you are now a brother? The only way for them to recognize you is that you call on the name of the Lord. So arise and be baptized by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. While you are being baptized and calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, the saints will be very happy to hear that you also call on this name."

Today many believers do not have the practice of calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. Some who follow only traditional practices criticize those who call on the Lord's name. As we have indicated, calling on the name of the Lord is not a new practice; it is not something invented by us. According to the Bible, calling on the name of the Lord was first practiced in Genesis 4. (*Life-study of Acts*, 2nd ed., pp. 67-71)