

“Those Who Call Upon the Name”
 Pastor Sam Richards
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 Text: 1 Cor. 1:2

Those who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. We think of ourselves as “Christians;” but in the first years of the church Christians were known by a number of other names. Or handles. We were “disciples, Believers, saints, and people of the way” and all of these names were characteristics of first-century Christians. “Christian” was originally a jeer, a mocking term for the “followers of Christ.” We were identified as members of an obscure religious sect, or cult. It was not complimentary any more than “Yankee” was a complimentary name for New England colonists. The British derided “Yankee’s” as uncouth, and common folk. So we are going to explore the significance of: **those who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.** It is quite striking Paul uses the phrase **our Lord Jesus Christ** six times in the first nine verses of 1 Corinthians! *Exalting Him as someone wonderfully great!* This title, or usage, predates the writing of the first three gospels *and it gives us a glimpse into the thinking and worship life of the early church.*

Here is what it tells us: that Jesus was **invoked and adored** by name in their worship. By “invoked” I mean invited, welcomed into the worship service by name. *Maranatha is Greek for **Lord come quickly**.* So the urgent expectancy of the Christ’s return found “free expression” in the early church. Christians looked forward to the Second Coming, to the resolution of all things (to judgment on the final and **terrible day of the Lord**) in a fervent eschatology—or, end times scenario. It is notable that Peter’s first recorded sermon in Acts turns on this phrase **the Lord Jesus Christ—whose name is salvation.** Some of that invitational spirit remains in the lines of the lullaby hymn :”Away in the Manger:” “Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay close by me forever, and love me I pray . . . stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.” *That is calling upon the Lord, calling upon the name of the Lord!*

When Ananias embarks on the perilous path of ministering to Saul of Tarsus, who recently entered into a new life as Paul; it is of some comfort for him to know that Saul was praying to Jesus—calling on the name! When Stephen cries out, **Jesus, receive my spirit**, he also was calling on the name! He spoke out of a calm faith that suggested belief in Jesus’ full divinity. Then, there is Paul, again, praying, **Lord (Jesus), what would you have me do?** That also is calling on the name. And, furthermore, asking of his thorn to be removed three times amplifies the significance of this action! Calling on the Name shaped the direction of desires as well as expressing adoration. From first to last, from Genesis to Revelation, calling upon the Lord is exemplified in Scripture. It signifies **worship** in many places—Gen. 4:25-26 at the birth of Seth and Gen. 12:8 reads **And Abram built and altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord . . .**Rev. 22:20 states: **Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.** Invitational.

So Jesus was the “to Whom” that this adoration, these questions and petitions and invitations were directed in the early church—even prior to the gospels being written!

He was **known** as an object of worship! He reigned as Master in worship: Jesus Christ, the One and Only and this worship set Christians apart. They bowed down to no one else! Pre-eminent in remembrances, in baptism and in breaking of the bread—in fellowship and service, in invoking His return in the Second coming, in contemplation of His divine being/his perfections’ His sufficiency. His kingdom is known as those who call upon Jesus! Everywhere that the faithful met this is what transpired, was universally invoked and adored both by those called out of Judaism, and by those called out of pagan idolatry. In all their needs, they leaned on Jesus, trusted in Jesus . . . obviously this goes way beyond admiration, way beyond superficial and dismissive praises (good man, moral teacher, life tutor, ethicist and philosopher, itinerate preacher and wonderworker) Jesus was more than someone who went about doing good, while proclaiming the kingdom of God.

No, Jesus is **worshipful**. He is our **spectacle**! He is superlatively beyond fireworks and May Day Parades! He is the conquering and triumphant Lord! Death and the Devil are chained to His chariot! All the sufficiency of **Our Lord Jesus Christ** both manifest and manifested . . . complete and utter sufficiency, in all His blessings. He is more than great, He is wonderfully great!. And calling upon Him, in this framework is strength to our souls just as formerly it was said of Lord God Jehovah. He is divine nature, power and *supreme authority all in one*! Jesus is “the treasured possession” of His church,, just as Jehovah was the treasure of Israel!

He is eternal God, underived, self-sufficient and self-determining, without variation, diminution (decay, decline, or aging). He never came from anywhere because He always is! And . . . **Him only are we to serve! I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage!** What shall we say that addiction is if it not be not a house of bondage, and “enslavement to flesh, pressure and stimulation” (artificially induced euphoria and a transient chemically induced state at that!). Our God is our strong Deliverer out of the shackles of self and of self-annihilation. And that He does because of Who He is. He is capable, able, infinite in power, matchless in glory and majesty. . . our God, Jesus Christ. And this, which I just declared, is, in case you did not recognize it, this is adoration!!

In invoking Him, in calling on Him, we are edifying our souls, strengthening our faith. The Jehovah of old is our Jesus and none other—He is Jehovah incarnate, enfleshed who lives forever in exalted resurrection splendor. Again, His divine nature is power is authority and so is **Name above all Names**.

He is also the sweetness of manhood. Yes, you heard me correctly: ***sweetness of manhood . . . because He is our Brother.***

I hesitated to put my trust in Him for years because no one, I must stress according to what I “heard” growing up—according to what I heard— no one ever pulled up for me this sweetness of Jesus’ manhood! ***That*** is captivating, and alluring and wonderful: sweetness of, even beauty of manhood, so much more than sheer physical attractiveness—a deeper, better and truer manhood¹. When I ponder this, I sense how shocking the concept of “sweetness” is. Why? Because according to Satan’s plan the denigration of manhood, the devaluation of godly manhood is critical to *toppling our ability for trust in Jesus*, the Son, and/or God the Father. Our culture shrieks at us that manhood is toxic, not sweet—violent and abusive, not beautiful and redemptive! So hated is manhood that little boys (in school) are coerced to behave as little girls: sit still, be quiet, be vulnerable and hyper-sensitive. Little girls are “good” and so little boys are “bad.” What total and devilish nonsense. ***Both are good as God designed them to be and both have value.*** Gender is not a zero sum game! It is not true that we can only elevate boys at the expense of girls, or vice versa. And, Jesus is the perfect manifestation of manhood, positively and marvelously good. Is this not reasonable and right? Do we not know it down to the DNA of our bones? But more than reason, this is adoration speaking.

Our Brother. Think of it as Jesus knowing our constitution, our frame, our being. He knows the fragility and weakness of mankind in all its contingency, and dependency. He knows our finitude and limitations because He voluntarily subjected Himself to all that defines us as human. Hunger and thirst, He knew firsthand. He shaped His appeals to us based on what we long for most of all. Living waters, the bread of life! He knew our bitterness of frustration—our fuming insufficiency. *And He took pity on us just as we are.*

These truths should tenderize our adoration—bring its compassion into view so that when we say, “He suffered for us” it means something sublimely kind, good, sweet and beautiful. In Jesus both natures, human and divine, were harmonized, interwoven with each other—each the accompaniment of the other.

If I were to attempt to express Jesus’ manhood another way, I might assert that to accept Jesus is to embrace the entire messiahship of Jesus as the Anointed One of God, anointed with the fullness of the Spirit.

Jesus is the climax of all prophecy (**all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets**), all revelation. In that light, we are to receive His claim that the Holy Writings were **all about Me**. (Luke 24:44) Thus He is the long expected, anticipated, awaited One that Israel was to look for. And that, despite many false starts and claims, faked incarnations by imposters who were **robbers and thieves—the Jews were wise to be suspicious and not just**

¹ A manhood that protects and provides for women, loves children, defends the poor and wretched is righteous, good, brave and honorable. Someone who values others.

obdurate, stubborn and unwilling to believe—although they were that as well!

There is a sense in which Jesus came as an “abolitionist,” ending the necessity of animal sacrifice in the temple as atonement for sin. He also fulfilled the aspiration for a Davidic king, and a high priest and, speaking of prophecy, there is a sense that He completed a certain line of prophetic utterances (messianic expectation) entirely. But Jesus carefully framed this as a completion, or fulfillment and not as abolition—yet, the end result be identical.

The next marvelous thing about Jesus is that, through the Holy Spirit, He imparts some of His divine nature to us, to believers. As His presence in us grows, as He shares His life with us, we become more and more like Him! All this is the work of our human/divine Messiah, God’s anointed One. I can almost “see” His glistening head and beard! Smell the scent of nard! Jesus is Lord of the Spirit realm, Deliverer, Savior as well as Redeemer and Friend. He is a multi-purpose Messiah!

Calling upon the Name of the Lord Jesus has specific results: it gives us peculiar distinctive, it marks us off and characterizes us as worshippers of Jesus. We are not merely imitators, nor followers, nor disciples even. ***We meditate upon Jesus daily, worship Him regularly. We exalt Him as our All in All.*** When someone asks does He gladden your day? Does He refresh you with “living waters,” sustain you with “the bread of life?” We gladly respond, “Yes, indeed, He does!” ***That is what makes us Christian!*** The fountain we draw from is triple-headed: Lord, Jesus and Christ to us.

We resort to Him habitually seeking renewal, power, strength and help. “Lord, help me!” Is our cry.

We cry out sharply, briefly and loudly like chicks peeping for food, water, or rescue—our needs are daily, hourly and sometimes minute by minute. We are the ones in need of urgent care, prone to mishaps and crises and urgent care is His specialty. He offers it here, there and everywhere. Call out, He’s there. We call upon Him lest we perish—or, are in danger because our lives are “work and warfare” situations and Jesus is concerned about our spiritual welfare. Sometimes we are in battle, with flashing swords and flying arrows metaphorically speaking, with clamor, noise and din. Or, we are facing quieter times of temptation—that comes in bursts, like wild fires needing to be extinguished quickly. We aim our jets of prayer and Christ puts the fires out. So sudden or continuous needs are well met in Him and by Him. The interminable stuff, the unending afflictions may, for the moment appears as if unanswered but later recall discovers reinforcements and strengthening that occurred upon the way—mercy was entwined all along. In, and on and by the Name, we call and are answered. *Sometimes the Red Sea has to part, and sometimes only a change of heart.* All it takes is a praying heart. If where you are is not amenable to prayer, it would be best to get out of there. If prayer is disallowed, excuse yourself and find a better place on river bank, or under a tree!

Christ brings light into the most dismal places—even places entirely unlit. ***It is up to us to sanctify our circumstances*** not to recount and complain about them. *Your circumstances are not to rule you, dominate and innervate you.* Nothing is too bitter. And nothing is too hard for Christ to master through you. Saying “no” to dishonesty, and to immorality are right up there with saying “no” to discouragement—*these are things commanded of us!* We say “no” to these things by saying “yes” to strength, to purity and honesty!! Either take the standard to our circumstances, or sign them over to Jesus.

How? ***By making Him the object of our worship, our adoration, gratitude and invocation. By exalting Him as Lord of All.*** Yes, just as I have done in this sermon.

He is the Hearer of our petitions, it's up to us to utter them. Our Helper is at hand; He's everywhere present! He is near; call upon Him! Jesus brightens and enlightens. He guides, protects, provides, leads us on and follows up. Indeed. **He is the rock that follows . . . He is our sanctuary, refuge shelter and strength,** What should we fear, of what should we be afraid? Every place is a place of worship waiting to occur. We are tabernacled where we stand! Every moment offers a gateway to heaven! Yes, accessible, available and capable . . . alive, aware and active.

And when we thus deploy ourselves the earth is filled with the glory of G
Amen.