

# What is the Church of God? – Part 2

## I Corinthians 1:2

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by Dr. Wayne Barber

### *THE CHURCH OF GOD IS MADE UP OF "THE CALLING ONES"*

The third thing that identifies a person who's a member of the church of God is found in the last part of verse 2. He says, "to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." They call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Corinth had a little bit of an attitude. They were a very rich and affluent city. They kind of felt like they had it all together. As a matter of fact, Paul really had to chasten them when he came out of Macedonia and had gotten an offering from the poor people over there. He says a lot about that in this letter. Corinth kind of had the idea that "We're the only ones around."

Do you know anybody in a denomination who thinks they're the only ones who are saved? Aren't they fun to be with? They're going to build a little fence around them up in Heaven somewhere. As we're walking by they're going to say, "Who are those people over there in that fenced in area." They'll say, "Shh. Don't bother them. They think they're the only ones up here."

That's kind of the way the Corinthians were. That's the attitude they had. Since they had all this affluence certainly it must be God's blessing. It sounds just like Israel in the book of Judges, doesn't it? It's no different. Flesh is flesh. So the apostle Paul was saying, "You're the church of God in Corinth." If he had stopped right there, they would have said, "That's right. See, we told you. We're the only one." He wants them to know that there are some other believers out there. As a matter of fact, these other believers are not known by their position. Position is what you talk about sometimes, but you've got to remember the practice has got to somehow equalize the position. So he doesn't point to their position in Christ as being sanctified. He points to their practice. Being sanctified means you live a certain way.

He says, "There are those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and our Lord." He wanted Corinth to know that there were some others out there. Isn't it wonderful the identifying mark on other believers outside of Corinth? By the way we're outside of Corinth, and we are known to be sanctified by the fact that we call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm going to spend some time on this. We've got to understand this, folks. To call upon the name of the Lord means more than when your children are sick in the middle of the night and you call out to God and say, "Oh, God, help me." Calling upon the name of the Lord is more than being in a foxhole in a battle somewhere and saying, "God, if you'll get me out of this foxhole I'll do anything for you." Calling upon the name of the Lord is more than when the stock market crashes and all of a sudden, financially, you're doomed and you cry out unto God. It's much more than that. It's the lifestyle of people who are a part of the church of God.

The word "call" is the word that's used in Acts 2:21: "And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Do we understand that verse? Do you understand why the

people are calling upon the name of the Lord? They're calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved. What does that mean? The implication is they know they're lost. They know they're helpless. They know they're hopeless, and so they're crying out in desperation, "Oh, God, I can't. Oh, God, if you don't, it won't get done." It's that kind of attitude.

"Now, wait a minute. Are you telling me that people who are part of the church of God live that way, dependent upon Him?" Well, why is that a problem? If you're purchased by His blood and you only have one purpose, to be a saint, to be set apart for His use, then why would you not cry out to Him? He's the only one who has the plan. He's the only one who has the strength. He's the only one who can do in and through you what He says He wants to do.

It's in the present middle voice. Go back to 1 Corinthians 1. Kind of keep a marker there because we're going to jump every now and then. I want you to see the tense here of calling upon the Lord. The word "call" is the same word we've been looking at. But the word is in the present middle voice. Present tense means it's a constant lifestyle. It's moment by moment. We sing the hymn, "I Need Thee Every Hour." That's the idea of a person who's blood bought, sanctified, a person who's a saint, part of the church of God. He lives that way. He constantly cries out unto God that way.

It's in the middle voice. Middle voice means no preacher has to come in and make you feel so guilty that you'll cry out to the Lord. Middle voice means you do it when you're by yourself, on your own, by your own choice. You choose to cry. It's a choice of life you've made. You've chosen not to put any confidence in your flesh as Paul said in Philippians 3. You've chosen instead to cry out and depend upon and call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, this is interesting to me. There's a subtle rebuke in this. We've already looked at the church at Corinth. If that church was located in your town you would not want to join this particular group. They have all kinds of problems. And yet at the same time they weren't living what Paul's saying; Paul knows that. It's sort of a gentle rebuke to them. He's going to start addressing their problems. But you see, the reason they have their problems is because they stopped crying out unto God. You start depending on your own flesh and crying out to your flesh and you end up like the church at Corinth. The whole sixteen chapters deals with all the problems they had.

The word name means more than just to identify someone. Have you ever looked up the meaning of your name? I found out my name Wayne means wagon. I wonder why someone named me wagon. Then I found somebody who felt sorry for people named Wayne and so they called them "burden bearer." A wagon bears a burden. We named our children Stephanie and Stephen. That came from the Greek word *stephanos* which means crowned one. That kind of crown is the kind you get because of righteous living. It's not the diadem which is given to Christ but it's the crowned one. We do pray that our children will live in light of their name.

Back in Scripture names meant much more. Some of us have a little to do with that today. But in their culture it was big time. Remember Jacob who was going to be the leader of all the tribes of Israel? Jacob's name had to be changed to Israel. That's how Israel got here. His name was changed to Israel, because his name meant deceiver. Jacob meant deceiver, conniver. I'll trick

you. He tricked his own brother, Esau, out of the birthright. God had to deal with him. He crippled him and changed his name to Israel, the son of God. Israel had twelve sons and those twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel. So the name meant something to them.

In fact, every time they would discover the name of God or God would reveal His name to them it would come in the midst of crisis. When Moses was up on the mountain and they were holding his hands up and Joshua was in the battle fighting and finally they won the battle. Jehovah became the word for provider, my provider, Jireh. Then Jehovah Nisi, my banner. Then Jehovah Jireh comes in and Jehovah Ropeh. But they always come in at times when they cried out to God and God had revealed Himself unto them. There's a wonderful Precept course called "The Names of God" that I suggest everybody take. As you go through you begin to understand who God really is and you realize who you're crying out to. They weren't just crying out to some name that identified Jesus apart from somebody else. They were crying out to the One who had for them what their need was for the moment. They understood who He was and they understood what His character was all about.

When you study something in Scripture, it's very helpful to go back to the first time it was ever used. A lot of times it will tell you a little bit of the root understanding of where it came from. This little phrase, "call upon the name of the Lord" is first found in Genesis 4:26. I want you to turn back there with me. I think it might be helpful to us to realize this. Who is it that calls upon the name of the Lord? It's the church of God. But where does it come from?

In Genesis 4:25, remember Cain, the unrighteous son who would not depend upon God, provided an offering that God rejected. Abel, however, evidently provided one that was acceptable. It doesn't tell us that God said anything to him, but evidently He did because God approved of his offering. Therefore, Cain got jealous and killed his brother.

Look at verse 25: "And Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, 'God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel;'" Ha! Now we've got a group of people who are starting to put their trust in God like Abel did.

Verse 26 continues, "And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord." In other words, now we have a generation of people who are going to depend upon God, starting with Seth. Abel was killed. Seth takes his place. Then men begin to call upon the name of the Lord.

The next time you find it it's in the past tense. It's over in Genesis 12 with Abram. He became Abraham in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis. Abram was told by God, "Get your family. Leave your house and follow Me to a land. I'll tell you when you get there." How'd you like to have those kinds of instructions? Abraham, remember, is the one through whom the everlasting covenant was given. It's a covenant of faith. So you see the picture of it right there. Genesis 12:8 says, "Then 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 the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord."

What I'm trying to get you to see is calling upon the name of the Lord is the attitude that governs the lifestyle of people who are sanctified, blood bought, saints, people who possess all of Him

but are possessed by Him. That's their lifestyle. They don't know anything else. The intellects of the world would look at them and say, "You're stupid people who walk by faith." Well, fine. That's alright.

A little lady one day was in her apartment and didn't have any groceries. But she was the church of God in that apartment building. She got down on her knees and cried out to God, "God, I need food. I'm working and I can't do anything more than I'm doing. God, would you give me food?" Her landlord called himself an atheist. There are no true atheists, you know. He heard her pray every day because his apartment was next door to hers. So one day he said, "I'll fix her." He went out to the store and bought about twenty-five bags of groceries, everything he can think of. He stocked up the pantry. There were groceries flowing out onto the floor. She came home and had a fit, I mean a spell. She start praising God, jumping around, and doing everything but stand on her head thanking God for providing for her because He is Jehovah Jireh and that is who she cried out to. That is His name. The man burst out of a closet he was hiding in and said, "Hey, Christians are all alike. You think God gave you those groceries. I went and bought those groceries, I'll have you know." She said, "Sir, I don't where in the world you're coming from but I asked God to give me groceries and if God chose to use the devil to bring them to me, He still gave them to me." That's the church of God.

I want to tell you something. If the world doesn't like it, I'm sad for you. You need to know the same Christ we know and you can trust in Him that way. That's what it means. It means to live a lifestyle of total dependence upon the name of the Lord. It's not a one time anything.

The next time you find the phrase is in Psalm 116:1. If this doesn't say anything to you, folks, there's something deeply wrong in your life. There comes a time in every man's life when he is not calling upon the Lord. There comes a time He reveals Himself to them and when they cry out He answers them. They realize He's the only one who has ever answered. He's the only one that can help me. At that particular point, that sets off a lifestyle that you live from then on. You see this picture in Psalm 116:1: "I love the Lord because He hears my voice and my supplications."

You know there are times when I don't think anybody's listening to me. I love my wife more than anybody in the world. She's my best friend. But there are times she thinks I don't listen to her either. There are times when we don't think we have an audience with anybody. But I want to tell you something, folks. Once you start crying out to the name of God you're going to find you have His ear any time you ever cry out to Him. I'll tell you, you're going to end up like the Psalmist and you're going to say, "I love the Lord for He hears my voice and my supplications."

It says in verse 2, "Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live." Then the Psalmist is going to take you back and show you what happened to him that changed his mind. It turned him from trusting men to trusting God. It says in verse 3, "The cords of death encompassed me, and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow." All that's in the past. "Then I called upon the name of the Lord; 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, save my life,'" he says. And in the crisis God heard him and God answered him. Verse 5 says, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. The Lord preserves the simple." The simple has the idea of those who don't understand. They just cry out. They don't know. He says, "He preservens the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me."

Now the Psalmist found rest in his soul and he's telling the story. He says in verse 7, "Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountiful with you." You know, when you've cried out to God and God's answered to you, there's rest in your soul, in your mind, your will, your emotions. God just gives you the peace that passes all understanding. In verse 8 we read, "For Thou has rescued my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'" Nobody had to convince me. I believed it. I was greatly afflicted.

Then he realized that man's words could not always be trusted. He said in verse 11, "I said in my alarm, 'All men are liars.' What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" The Psalmist is thinking, "Man, God has been so good to me. When I was in those dilemmas I cried out unto Him. He saved me. What can I do that somehow would repay Him?"

Then in verse 13 you find that phrase the second time. "I shall lift up the cup of salvation," I shall lift it and hold it up high, the cup of salvation, the story of how God rescued me. "And call upon the name of the Lord." I'll tell you what, folks, those people who call upon the name of the Lord are grateful for what God has done in their life. They understand there was a time when they were facing eternal death. Hey, by the way, I think sometimes we forget what it was like to be lost, don't we? Be around a lost person for a while and it won't take you long. Hopeless, helpless.

We heard about this cult group out in California. Thirty-nine of them committed suicide. Folks, I want to tell you something about that group. I guarantee they were sincere. They proved that by what they did. They said they were killing themselves because they were going off to a better life. I want to tell you something, folks. That's all people have who don't have the Lord Jesus Christ. A lost person has no hope and, therefore, a lost person will even, if he can, identify with what he thought was a spaceship following a comet if he has to. He'll do whatever he has to do.

But that same lost person one day who because of the divine providence of God comes to know Jesus Christ will stand up in the congregation of the righteous and say, "I was once lost, in distress and facing destruction, and I cried out unto God and God answered me. Now I live my life differently. I live my life crying out and calling upon the name of the Lord." That's the whole attitude.

What? You didn't know that? You mean you're not living that way? Paul would say to the Corinthian church. "We may have some problems here. Have you gone back to putting confidence in men and in your flesh? Well, no wonder the misery and the upside-downness of your world." They were people who realize what God has done. He's sanctified them and made them saints usable to Him who call upon the name of the Lord. They call upon His name in everything.

I've got to tell you a story that happened to me. I was out in Denver with my son. We went skiing and we had a great time out there together. On Saturday I got a very early flight because I knew I was leaving on Sunday afternoon to go to Romania. You know how grueling a trip that is. I got up at 3:45 Denver time, got out to the airport, and got on the plane at 6:00 right on the nose. I said, "This is wonderful. They're leaving on time. I'll be home before noon. I'll have the rest of

the day to pack and get ready and rest.”

We backed out with that little truck. That little thing stopped and unhooked. The pilot started up his engines, turned the plane around and pointed it to go out. Just as he did something went wrong in the left engine. As a matter of fact, I’ve never heard this before. Boom! It shook the whole plane. You could just see the walls shaking. I’m thinking, “Hmmm.” That’s when you go through these, “I’m getting out of here if I have to rip that window out of the wall.” We just stopped. The pilot just stopped the plane. I was very grateful. He sat there forever. We sat on that runway forever. Finally, he said, “Ladies and gentlemen, this is the pilot. I’m sure all of you felt and heard that. We did too. I just want to comfort you. We heard it up here. By our gauges we cannot tell what’s wrong. We’re going to have to take this plane and turn it back to the gate.” I heard rumblings around me, saying, “Fly the plane.” I’m thinking, “Go back up to the gate! I’ll fly to Romania from Denver.”

We got up to the gate, and he had to let everybody off the plane. He said, “Guys, I don’t know. They’re going to have to fly a mechanic in here for this. It’s going to be a while.” So everybody went out to the counters. I thought, “I’ve got faith in these guys. Somehow they’re going to salvage this flight.” So I went over and sat down. I’m just fooling around with my computer. I carry my laptop with me. That’s the way I do a lot of my studying when I’m traveling. I’ve got all my programs on it and everything. So I was having a good time.

About an hour and half passed and after a while I’m thinking, “Hmmm.” The pilot came out and said that the mechanic was not here yet but we’ll let you know when he arrives. About two hours after that he came out and said, “Folks, we did the right thing. That engine would have exploded as we took off if we had not pulled back. We found it was a very serious problem in the engine. The flight is cancelled. Please get in line and let them help you.”

It’s Spring break in Denver. Every airline is full. They’ve got a waiting list. What are you going to do? I got up in line. Several had been in line. I got up in line about 8:00 and I stood in the line for almost four hours and never moved. You would get excited when someone would move their suitcase around so you could move up and feel like you’re going forward. Nobody moved. Finally I prayed, “You know, Lord, I’m just so grateful you stopped that plane from taking off. I’m just going to rest in You.”

But I began in my heart to cry out unto the Lord. “God, you know what I’m doing. You know the pressure that’s there. I’m putting this into Your hands. Deliver me from trusting in my flesh and trying to figure it out myself. You take it.” I kept doing that, and it was amazing. One guy walked up and said, “I’ve been watching you. You haven’t sat down or left the line, and you just stood here with sort of a half-smile on your face. Are you alright?” I said, “Yeah, as far as I know everything’s in control.”

I got up to the counter, and the lady in front of me had been crying. I don’t know what the situation was that had thrown her out of gear. I could tell she was nervous about it. The agent fixed her up and she turned off and was so grateful. This new guy walked in. It had been a woman doing this the whole time. This brand new guy walked in, and I walk up to him. I’m the second guy. “I’m Mr. Barber.” I hate this when they go, “Okay, you’re going to Chattanooga.”

You don't have a clue what they're doing, "Uh-huh, uh-huh." Then they pick up the phone and they turn their back to you so you can't hear them talk. "Okay, let's do this again." He gets back on the computer. I'm thinking, "Oh, no." He said, "Okay, good deal. I got it fixed up. I think you can get into Chattanooga at 12:05 in the morning." I'm thinking, "Okay, Lord. I'm gritting my teeth and I want to praise You for this, but I'm not sure." He said, "Okay, Whoa!" I said, "What's wrong?" I thought the computer had blown up. He said, "Somebody is typing for you and searching out flights while I'm doing it." I said, "That's odd. It's just you and me standing here. How'd they do that?" He said, "I have no idea. Sometimes they take people and start working out their flights." I'm thinking to myself, "Six hours later at the very time he's about to tell me I'm going to get here at 12:05?"

He just took his hands off the computer. The keys weren't moving, but you could see the thing typing. It wouldn't let him in but you could see what was happening. He said, "Look at the flight they got you." Tell me. Have you ever tried to look at a computer screen and understand anything on it. I said, "Where's the gate?" He said, "Right there. The one next door." "You're kidding me. When does it leave?" He said, "In twenty minutes and you're sitting in a better seat than you were sitting in before."

I thought to myself, "Thank you, God. Thank you that you even care about airlines and tornadoes when they strike an area. You care about everything in our life. We are those who are blood bought and sanctified. We're saints, and we have a purpose in life which is only to live in You. It doesn't make any sense for us to go to any other alternative but to turn to You and call upon Your name at all times for everything because You here us. The Psalmist said it. You the only one who listens and You're the only one who has the answer.

That's the church of God, folks. That's the church of Jesus Christ on this earth. Forget your denomination. You can join every church that's got a denominational tag to it and miss Jesus by fifty miles. But if you're blood bought and you're His, you don't live for yourself any more. You live for Him and your lifestyle is one of total dependence upon Him.

When we got to Romania and walked in that room, they were singing, "My Jesus I love Thee. I know Thou art mine." After they finished the hymn, before they let us do anything, the leader said, "Let us pray and thank God that our brethren have arrived." They started praying in Romanian. You can't understand them. But somehow in your heart you do. It was obvious. They weren't thanking God that we got there. They were thanking God that He heard their prayer and had done what they had cried out to Him.

My heart goes out to the world that thinks that there are other ways to do this. If your life's a mess and you're looking at nothing more than a blackness in front of you and there's just nothing there, I want you to know you're at the best place you've ever been in your life to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Quit looking that way and start looking this way and cry out to Him and He will hear your cry. He will hear your cry. Oh, what he's done, folks.

We sing a song that goes like this:

"He paid a debt He did not owe  
I owed a debt I could not pay

I needed someone to wash my sins away  
And now I sing a brand new song  
Amazing grace all day long  
Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.”

I tell you what. Keep singing it and keep singing it and keep singing it and then it's going to click. The One who washed them away is the one who saved you from their power every day in their life. It'll affect an attitude that says, "I'm going to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." People who live that way are people who understand gratitude for how they used to live the other way and what God's brought them from and where He's brought them to.

I hope somehow you will continue to call upon the name of the Lord in everything, every supplication, everything in your life. Call on Him and see what He does.