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Answering the Call



Genuinely Following Jesus - Steve Gregg

In "Answering the Call," Steve Gregg discusses the topic of discipleship, specifically focusing on Matthew 23:37 where Jesus expresses a desire to gather the children of Jerusalem. Gregg emphasizes the need for a response to this call and encourages the audience to consider their own commitment to discipleship. Throughout the discussion, Gregg stresses the importance of fully embracing the teachings of Jesus and actively seeking to follow in his footsteps.

Transcript

We're going to be talking tonight about answering the call to discipleship. In a previous lecture, we talked about the call to discipleship and what that call involved. And, of course, the call is given out by God or by Christ, I believe, to all people.

But, obviously, not all people become disciples, and therefore there's something expected on our part to finish up that transaction, and that is we must answer the call. In Isaiah chapter 66, God complains about Israel that he had called, but they had not answered his call. In Isaiah 66 verse 4, he said, So I will choose their delusions and bring their fears on them, because when I called, no one answered.

When I spoke, they did not hear. Now, this makes it very clear that God calls generally, including people who do not answer. And, while that could be, if you're theologically savvy, you might recognize that there's something controversial about that statement.

But, if you're not, that's well and good. We won't get into that. But the point is, not everybody that God calls comes.

And we see that also in the New Testament, in Matthew 23, 37. Jesus said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. He wanted to gather them.

He called, but they didn't answer. He spoke, they did not listen. He sought to gather them, but they were not willing.

So, it's very clear that it's not an automatic thing, that if the call comes to you, that you will respond. There's something that's related to your volition in the matter. And, there is something called choice.

And, many people use their free choice to say no to the call of God. But, that's not, hopefully, what we want to do. You wouldn't be in these classes, if you had already decided you don't want to be a disciple.

You may decide not to be, after we finish. But, the point is, the reason you're here is because, at this point, you're open to that. Matthew 20, verse 16.

And again, Matthew 22, verse 14. In two places, Jesus says, For many are called, but few are chosen. Now, those who are chosen will be those who answer the call, essentially.

The call goes out generally. But, the chosenness of the disciples only applies to those who respond to the call. If you are a responder to the call, then you have not only been called, but you've also, now, come into the ranks of the chosen.

And, that's a smaller group. Many are called. Everyone who hears the gospel is called.

But, only those who respond belong to the class of those that can be called the chosen. Or, which, in the New Testament, is sometimes called the elect. Which is the same category as those who are called disciples.

Now, interestingly, in Revelation 17, verse 14, those who respond to the call are chosen. But, you have to be called, and chosen, and faithful. Which just means you don't break faith with Christ.

When you come to Christ, it's like when a man and a woman get married. They make a promise to each other. They make certain agreements.

It's a covenant relationship. And, faithfulness to that agreement is required. And, those who come with Christ at the time of His victory at the end of the world, are those who were called, and chosen, and who have remained faithful.

It is incumbent upon you to make some response. And, tonight, we want to talk about that response. I want to remind you from an earlier lecture that the Bible says the call to discipleship is really simply the preaching of the gospel.

When you hear the gospel preached, then you are hearing a call that God has put out to all people to become disciples of Jesus. And, Paul said that in 2 Thessalonians 2.14. He said, To which He called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The call of God has come to us through the hearing of the gospel.

He has called us. The call to be disciples has come through hearing the gospel. But, what is the gospel? Now, I have asked many evangelical groups this question.

How would you summarize the message of the gospel? And, I have been surprised how many evangelical Christians give an answer that cannot be justified scripturally. Many times people say, Well, the gospel is that you have to accept Jesus into your heart and you will go to heaven. Well, there is nothing in the Bible that talks about accepting Jesus into your heart.

Nor is the matter of going to heaven ever a central issue in the preaching of the gospel in the New Testament. It is an issue in our minds, but it is not the central issue to the New Testament presentation of the gospel. And, you know, I find that the churches, especially in America, which is the churches I am most familiar with, although I have been in other countries, I am certainly much more acquainted with the state of the churches in America than anywhere else.

But, the churches in America are typically filled with a mixed kind of converts, if we could call them that, members. And, you know, many of them don't seem to have their lives changed very much after they have become believers. Some of them don't even stay believers.

And, the ones who do sometimes tend to rot on the vine. They just never grow. And, then of course you have a few people, a relative few, and it may be a fairly large number in a large church like this, but it is still relatively few, who seem to really thrive and prosper.

And, you can tell they have latched on to something in Christ that is different than what a lot of the other people are on to. Other people come and they sing and they are, maybe they don't sing, and during the song service they are looking around, their mouth is not moving, and, you know, they look bored during the service, they are looking at their watch and you think, well, why are they even here? Why do they even come? It is obviously not the case that this is really resonating with them internally like it does presumably with some. And, what is the difference? Why is it that in this country, I believe in modern times, we have a very large number of people in the pews in the churches, in the evangelical churches, not just liberal churches or cultic groups, who don't seem to really be disciples in the sense that we have read the description of disciples in Scripture.

I mean, if you were here for our first lecture, I gave sort of an overview of what the Bible says about discipleship and, you know, that's a pretty... If people are like that, we usually think, well, they should be missionaries or something. They should be full-time pastors or something because they are really dedicated to Christ in a way that other people are not. But in the early church, everyone in the church had that kind of dedication to Christ.

They weren't allowed in if they didn't because they were all disciples. And disciples was a term that had a definition that Jesus himself had provided. If you don't forsake all that you have, you can't be my disciple.

If you don't hate your father, mother, wife, and children in your own life also, you can't be my disciple. If you don't take up your cross and follow me, you can't be my disciple. He said, if you continue in my words, you are my disciples.

Indeed. And so, we think, well, people like that, if I know any people like that, they're really kind of the unusual, almost oddballs. We might even call them fanatics now because they kind of let their religion, so to speak, they kind of dominate their whole life.

And that just doesn't seem very normal. And yet, that was what was normal for Christians in the first century because of the gospel that was preached to them. You see, the gospel that was preached in the early days of the church was clearly and unmistakably a call to discipleship.

I think that many people who watch Christian television or go to evangelical churches when they hear gospel presentations, it is not perceived by them as a call to discipleship. In many cases, they see it primarily as a call to salvation. Now, salvation and discipleship are both biblical concepts and they're both related to the gospel.

But unfortunately, some people are thinking only about salvation. And to them, that just means going to heaven when I die. That's what salvation means to the average person probably when they think of being saved instead of being lost.

They go, lost people go to hell when they die, saved people go to heaven when they die, okay, I want to be on the saved side of that. So what do I have to do? I have to say this prayer, I have to do this thing, I have to jump through these hoops. And people respond to a message which they perceive as a message giving them some kind of security about their future.

Just like they would want to have financial security or security about their health in the future, they want to have security about what happens after they die. And so, in other words, they're looking out for themselves. And the gospel is often presented to them in such a way as to encourage them to do that, to look out for themselves.

And they see the gospel as something that is the big offer. The big offer which they don't really have to pay anything for but they sure get a great package for it. And so that's how many have responded to a message like that.

I'd like you to go back with me to the New Testament and see the gospel as it was preached by Jesus, as it was preached by Peter, and as it was preached by Paul. Chronologically, because those were the main preachers in our Bible. Now, the first gospel proclamation in the New Testament was that of Jesus Himself.

In fact, it's the earliest recorded statement of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark in Mark chapter 1, verses 14 and 15. Now, we've seen some of these verses that I'm going to cover tonight under a different heading. It says, Now, after John was put in prison, Jesus came

to Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. Now, this is not only the first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, but this is the first presentation of the gospel as it was preached from the mouth of Jesus. It was that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

And it called to come into that Kingdom by repenting and believing in the gospel. The declaration was not God wants you to go to heaven instead of hell so do yourself a favor and become a Christian. It was this.

There is a Kingdom. It's God's Kingdom and you need to repent of the way you've been living and believe in this message of this Kingdom. Now, the word preaching it says, Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The word preaching does not mean inviting or appealing or convincing people. We sometimes think of preaching the gospel as inviting them to something trying to appeal to their better self-interest to come and look out for themselves. The word preaching doesn't mean any of those things.

The word preaching means heralding. A herald proclaims it's proclaiming or announcing an official decree or announcement. That's what the word preach meant.

Now, we think of preaching as something that's done in a pulpit in a church. But in the Greek world when the New Testament is written and it says Jesus came preaching or when it says the apostles preached a word was used that was not in the people's mind associated with pulpits or religious sermons. It was associated with a proclamation generally from an official from a king from the governor from somebody in authority who sent a messenger a crier to announce to people what was on his mind.

And often it was an announcement of victory when there was a war going on and they didn't have newspapers to hear how things were going so a runner from the battlefield would often be sent with a message back to home with a message of how the battle was progressing and he would stand in a public place and he would proclaim it. That proclamation was called *caruso* that verb of proclaiming that kind of a thing was the verb *caruso* and that's what Jesus did. Jesus came proclaiming he didn't invite he didn't convince people he just proclaimed something and what he proclaimed was the gospel of the kingdom of God the word gospel also we tend to think of it as a religious term because when we use the word gospel in western civilization modern times we only think of the gospel of Jesus Christ but the word gospel *euangelion* in the Greek actually meant good message or good tidings and it too was a word already in common currency in the Greek culture before Christians began to co-opt it for their message it was it was that what a herald would proclaim especially if he had good news about how things are going on the battlefield if their side had won some decisive victory the runner would come

back and proclaim the good tidings the good message namely that they were on the winning side that their team was conquering the enemy that's the kind of thing that a euangelion a gospel a good tidings was now when we think of preaching and when we think of gospel we're thinking of evangelism we're thinking of what goes on in a church what goes on in Christian television but those words that appeared in the new testament did not originally have those connotations these Greek words had much more to do with a town choir proclaiming an encouraging message about something typically it was not a religious message although Christians co-opted because you have to understand the Christians of that time did not think as we do of Christianity as a religious thing it was the kingdom of God there's another king that was their message remember in Acts chapter 17 in the town of Thessalonica that the people were complaining about Paul's preaching there and they complained to the rulers of the city saying this man is teaching us things that are contrary to our loyalty to Caesar he's saying that there's another king one Jesus that was how they understood his message and they didn't get it wrong that was his message it was a proclamation that didn't sound religious at all because it was not primarily religious the disciples realized that when they came to Christ they were coming into a new empire under a new emperor a new kingdom under a new king they were making a political transition of sorts however it didn't necessarily involve them being disloyal to their existing political loyalties because you could be a citizen of Rome or a citizen of Ethiopia or a citizen of Jerusalem or a citizen of Antioch and you could still be a follower of Jesus because his kingdom is not of this world his kingdom is of a different sort and it was of a sort that in many cases would not really conflict with the interest of the earthly country that people were in but when it did the early Christians knew exactly whose side they had to be on if the supreme court of Israel said don't preach anymore in the name of Jesus Peter would say well we have to obey God rather than men when the early Christians were told to burn incense to Nero and say Caesar is Lord or whatever well they just wouldn't do it they said well no we have another king Jesus is our Lord and the word Lord to them stood in the place of Caesar because the people of their time were expected to say Caesar is Lord the disciples were doing something very radical saying Jesus is Lord and to us again the word Lord it's a shame after 2,000 years of all this our culture has tended to incorporate these ideas into a strictly religious context the word Lord to us almost most people think of the word Lord as sort of a synonym for God well that's because God is our Lord but the word Lord when the disciples said Jesus is Lord they weren't saying Jesus is God although that may very well be what they believed that wasn't what they were saying in that statement the word Lord means the ruler and that was the term that was used for the emperor they were saying Caesar may be your Lord but Jesus is our Lord and that means that our loyalty is to him that's the kingdom of God that's the message of the kingdom and so when Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God the gospel of the kingdom of God is the good tidings that God has established his kingdom under the Messiah Jesus Christ and of course that he calls all men everywhere to submit to him and to acknowledge him as their Lord that was the message now if that was made clear to people they would either

not respond positively or if they did they would come in expecting to come in on the terms of obedience and surrender to him that they are as obedient to him or expected to be and they expected themselves to be as to their emperor only more so now because he's a king of kings and a Lord of Lords he's not equal with Caesar he's Caesar's Lord too Caesar just doesn't know it but he is because he's been given all authority in heaven and earth so he's the ruler over all the kings of the earth and so he is called in scripture king of kings and Lord of Lords and also the ruler of the kings of the earth in Revelation 1 so Jesus Jesus' announcement of the gospel was that the kingdom of God is at hand now it was at hand when he preached it it has come since then it was just he was just announcing its immediate arrival he was the king he was beginning to announce his intentions and to gather subjects to his kingdom the kingdom was coming and very very soon in his announcement therefore he said repent and believe in the gospel again the gospel is that announcement the kingdom of God is at hand only since that time we can say the kingdom of God exists and some of us have been translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his own dear son says in Colossians 1.13 and so our presentation of the gospel is not very different than that of Jesus it's just that he was giving it before the kingdom had really been established but then the apostles taught the kingdom of God as something that was at their time in the book of Acts already established and so what must we do? We must repent and believe now we'll talk more about those terms before we're done tonight but let's talk about now how Peter preached the gospel because we've seen how Jesus preached the gospel one might think well Jesus you know he's unique obviously the apostles aren't him Jesus might have a different kind of message after all Jesus preached before the cross and maybe Jesus' form of preaching the gospel applied to a different dispensation before the cross so how after the cross in the book of Acts was the gospel preached was it different well in Acts 2 we have Peter's first recorded sermon on the day of Pentecost there's a couple others given later they don't differ substantially in content than this one this is his prototype of his preaching and in Acts 2 verses 36-38 this is after he's gone over and described why these people are speaking in tongues which was confusing people and given some Old Testament prophecies about David that were fulfilled and he comes to he's built the case now he can proclaim the message and he says this is his proclamation let the house of Israel know this assuredly that God has made Jesus whom you both Lord and Christ and the word Christ means Messiah and to the Jewish mind the Messiah was the King that God was going to send to Israel to deliver them so he's saying Jesus is the Lord Jesus is the King this is what you need to know now notice he didn't even give an altar call he didn't even tell them to do anything he didn't invite them to do anything he just made a proclamation there's another King there's a Messiah the Lord God has made Jesus Lord that's the same one that you killed now just saying that made them realize they're on the wrong side of this issue they killed him God raised him and made him King so what can we do how can we get right in this matter how can we align ourselves with this truth what shall we do repent just like Jesus first word of the gospel first word was repent so it was Peter's first thing you have to repent let everyone of you be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit we're going to talk about those three things separately later but I just want to survey right now how Paul preached the gospel Peter and Paul now they were both after Pentecost there are some people who believe that Peter's gospel really was a gospel to the Jews and that only Paul preached the gospel that's applicable to Gentiles however I don't think they have anything to base that on scripturally because Paul's gospel was the same as Peter's which was the same as Jesus's in other words everyone who preached the gospel in the Bible preached the same gospel and Paul's first recorded sermon is in Acts 13 and he too goes through some Old Testament prophecies and shows how Jesus fulfilled them but then when he gets around to proclaiming the good tidings he says and we declare to you glad tidings okay this is preaching the gospel gospel is glad tidings and preaching is declaring and this is Acts 13 32 and 33 says we declare to you glad tidings that is we preach to you the gospel that promise which was made to the fathers God has fulfilled this for us their children and that he has raised up Jesus and as it is also written in the second Psalm you are my son today I have begotten you now what does that mean when we think of Psalm 27 which is you are my son today I have begotten you we might think of it as a proof text for the eternal sonship of Jesus or something like that or the pre-existent sonship of Jesus and that's not the point even that the Psalm is making you are my son today I have begotten you is in a context it's a short Psalm I'd like you to look at with me here real quickly the first half of it verses 1-6 addresses the matter of people's rebellion against God and what God has done in response to that and the Psalm begins why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing what vain thing did they plot well the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh and against his anointed the word anointed is Messiah saying let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us let's stop being in their service let's take their shackles off of us and be free from their control from whose from God's and his Messiah's control we don't want God we don't want his Messiah ruling us let's take those chains off of us and be free from his rule and that's what the psalmist refers to as a vain thing it's a vain hope you think you can throw off God's authority good luck you're plotting a vain thing but what's it say what's God's reaction to this vain effort on their part well he who sits in the heaven shall laugh he finds it amusing the Lord shall hold them in derision then he shall speak to them in his wrath so he's not amused anymore he's angry and he will distress them in his deep displeasure and here's what he will announce to them yet have I set my king on my holy hill of Zion yet which means despite your wishes despite your efforts despite your plotting despite the fact that you are nations plotting against God God is not threatened God's purpose is not hindered he is not intimidated in spite of all that yet he says I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion now what's interesting about this and we're gonna look at the rest of the psalm too but this part of the psalm at least the first part is quoted in Acts chapter uh four or five excuse me when the apostles pray they say Lord it is you who through your servant David said why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing and they quote verse two also the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together

against the Lord and against his Christ and then the apostles having quoted that verse in their prayer they say for surely Lord against your holy servant Jesus both Pilate and Herod and the rulers of the Jews have conspired in other words the apostles saw this psalm as talking about their own day that the the kings and the nations and the people who plotted against the authority of the Messiah were those who crucified Jesus and who were persecuting the apostles this was the opposition to the Christian message to Christ himself that was coming from the Romans and the Jews that's how the apostles understood this and of course if that's how they understood the psalm then you can imagine how they understood verse 6 yet I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion in other words they're saying yet Jesus has been enthroned and is ruling despite these people despite Pontius Pilate despite Herod despite the Sanhedrin despite everything they did to overthrow and to throw off his rule yet God has managed to get Jesus enthroned after all and his kingdom has been established and in that context the next verse is I will declare the decree the Lord has said to me you are my son today I have begotten you now that's the scripture that Paul quoted and in the context this is a reference to what God said to Jesus he says God says Jesus you're my son today I have begotten you it's this day I have begotten you it's referring to a particular day in history that God is referring to and it's the day he raised Jesus from the dead he was begotten from the dead so that Paul in Colossians 1.15 and 1.18 refers to Jesus as the first born or the first begotten from the dead and Jesus himself refers to himself that way and he calls himself the first born from the dead his resurrection is a birth from death and so that is how Paul understands this Psalm Psalm 2.7 when God says to Jesus this day I begotten you Paul says that's talking about raising him from the dead and that's why Paul later refers to Jesus in that way and even the book of Revelation does now notice that this verse Psalm 2.7 comes right after Psalm 2.6 yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion in the apostolic preaching you'll find it always that whenever they spoke of the resurrection of Jesus they spoke of his resurrection and his enthronement in heaven as if it was one event they didn't ever make reference to the 40 days in between those events as the book of Acts does in telling the story but when the apostles preached they spoke of Jesus being raised up to sit at the right hand of God raised from the dead is raised to the throne and so that's how Paul understands this Psalm now in the Psalm God is still speaking to the Messiah in verse 8 and he says ask of me God says to Jesus ask of me and I'll give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession you shall break them as a rod of iron and shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel this breaking of them and dashing of them is through the preaching of the gospel as we see in Daniel chapter 2 the stone which crushes the image and grinds it into powder as it grows to become a great mountain to fill the whole earth as the kingdom growing from its small beginnings into a worldwide empire by the preaching of the gospel and the spread of the kingdom of God Jesus breaks up the nations and he certainly has done that think about it every nation where the gospel is gone has been broken into at least two pieces those who embrace Jesus and those who reject Jesus and there might even be a third category those who haven't yet heard about Jesus the

nations are certainly divided Jesus said I don't think that I came to bring peace I came not to bring peace but division and so here's the appeal that the psalm gives in verse 10 now therefore be wise oh kings you ones who are plotting to overthrow the messiah's authority you who are making these vain plots get smart here be wise oh kings be instructed you judges of the earth serve the lord with fear don't try to break his bands off of you serve him with fear rejoice with trembling kiss the sun lest he be angry and you perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little blessed are those who put their trust in him now this psalm was very much obviously on Paul's mind when he was preaching in Acts chapter 13 so we saw in Acts 13 33 Paul says he has raised up Jesus as it is also written in the second psalm you are my son today I have begotten you ok so that's obviously psalm 2 7 and what is to the Jewish mind now Paul is preaching in a synagogue to Jewish people if they know that psalm they know that this statement is in relation to God having enthroned his king and there is a kingdom even this statement you are my son today I have begotten you is an announcement that Jesus has been raised from the dead as Paul puts it and he has been raised to be the king on the holy hill he has proclaimed there is a king and that is Jesus and he has done so using scriptures that the Jews would understand and then his next words are in Acts 13 34 Paul says and that he raised him from the dead no more to return to corruption he has spoken thus I give you the sure mercies of David now that is a reference to Isaiah and Paul actually I think Isaiah also indicates that this is spoken to the Messiah and God says I will give you the sure mercies of David what are the sure mercies of David the Jews all knew what that meant the sure mercies of David were the promises God made to David and what were the promises he made to David well every Jew could tell you what it was God told David that he would raise up one of David's seed to sit on his throne and would establish his kingdom forever that is what the sure mercies of David were and Paul is saying God has raised Jesus from the dead as the second Psalm said and enthroned him on his holy hill and even as Isaiah said God would give him the sure mercies of David he has done that the Davidic promises have been fulfilled in Christ there is a king of David's line seated on the throne just as God promised to David that is what the announcement here that Paul is making and so he says in verses 38-39 therefore let it be known to you brethren that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins and by him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses now notice he says by him everyone who believes is justified Psalm 2 ended with that statement blessed everyone who believes in him or who trusts in him the Psalm announces that there is a king on the holy hill and there is a blessing on those who trust in him who put their faith in him that's the gospel in Psalm 2 that's the gospel structure of Paul's preaching now consider the good tidings as Peter preached them in the passage we already saw the first proclamation is that Jesus is Lord we saw that when he said therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ the second announcement is that Jesus is Savior Peter said repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that's salvation

so first he announces that Jesus is Lord and then he speaks in terms of how he can become one's Savior how about Paul's version of the good tidings his first announcement is Jesus is Lord where he says he has raised up Jesus as it is also written in the second psalm you are my son today I have begotten you this is in the context of psalm two a declaration of Jesus being King or Lord what's his next message Jesus is Savior we see this where he says therefore let it be known to you brethren that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins these are the two prongs of the good tidings Jesus is Lord and Jesus is Savior therefore we often say Jesus is Lord and Savior although it seems like I more often hear people say Jesus is Savior and Lord and you might say well so what both are true well both are true if you say Jesus is Savior and Lord you made a true statement if you say Lord and Savior you made a true statement but the emphasis lies somewhere else in one statement than in the other in fact it's often said to sinners you need to accept Jesus as your Savior and if someone wants to be a little more verbose and Lord your Savior and Lord I've been raised in evangelical churches all my life I've heard the gospel preached hundreds of times this way you need to accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord or sometimes abbreviated as your Savior or maybe with this modifier as your personal Savior you need to accept Jesus as your personal Savior but what does that place the emphasis upon on the interests of the sinner you are in danger you need to be saved Jesus will save you it's appealing to the interest of the sinner now here's the problem the sinner's problem is that he is already committed to his own interests not to God's and conversion the change of heart that needs to take place in a person to become a disciple to be saved even is they have to become committed to God's interests that's why Jesus said if anyone will come after me let him deny himself why because self is who you've been obeying and who you've been serving and who you've been coddling all your life by nature by nature you look out for yourself and the transition from death to life is a transition from self to Christ and when we preach the gospel simply accept Jesus as your Savior and the message is this you're in trouble but Jesus will get you out of trouble look out for yourself right we're making an appeal that does not challenge them the way the apostles did to make that transition to make that shift from self concern to putting God's concerns first you see in the bible in 2 Peter 1 11 Peter says for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the emphasis first on Lord in 2 Peter 2 20 says for if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Lord first Savior second 2 Peter 3 2 says that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior or 2 Peter 3 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ you will never find those two words put together in in the opposite order you will never find in the bible Jesus called Savior and Lord but always Lord and Savior now you might say that is just a technicality I am not so sure in Titus 1 4 not just Peter but Paul says grace mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior the lordship of Christ is the first emphasis of the gospel the salvation that comes from surrendering to his lordship is the second

emphasis but in our preaching in the west we have tended to emphasize the second mostly and sometimes to the total omission of the first and so we get different results than the apostles did when they preached what did Paul say about salvation this is from the new american standard bible because it is a little clearer than the version I have been using which is the new king James in Romans 10 9 Paul says if you confess with your mouth Jesus as lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved you will be saved by whom by Jesus then he will be your savior right on what terms well if you confess with your mouth that he is lord that is your focus you confess that Jesus is lord and you get salvation in the deal where as many people are just looking for salvation and the lordship they think they can negotiate some other time haven't you ever heard people talk like that I accepted Jesus as my savior when I was so and so years old but later did I made him the lord of my life or there is many times preachers will say Jesus may be your savior but have you made him the lord of your life wait a minute he is not your savior until he is your lord and by the way you don't make him the lord God did that God has declared him to be lord and Christ God is one who gave authority over all things you don't make him your lord he is your lord whether you accept him or not if you don't you are in rebellion against his lordship being saved is simply surrendering to that reality the declaration of the gospel is Jesus is king Jesus is lord now you can surrender to that or not and half the time the apostles don't even talk about what good will come to you or what bad will come to you based on your decision they just say this is where it is at why because they want people to respond out of concern for God's interest if God is the one who said Jesus is lord well then that is all I need to know well what will happen after I die well we can talk about that another time you need to make your decision if you know that God has declared that Jesus is lord and you know that you have not surrendered to that lordship that is all you need to know for now because you need to get that straightened up that was how the gospel was preached in the new testament Jesus is lord and also savior by receiving his lordship over your life you will be saved if you confess with your mouth Jesus is lord you will be saved because that is what will save you having him as your lord and so many times we have gotten the impression that it is all about getting saved because the gospel is presented to self-concerned carnal people and we know that we are going to get a lot more people responding if we appeal to that self-interest in them yeah we will get more people responding but to what to a further development of their self-interest they have not been converted they have not changed over they are still just interested in themselves and that was their problem from birth that is what alienates them from God is that they only care about themselves a person's conversion takes place when they get a new heart which is concerned about God's interests I will tell you the truth and I am not trying to just be sanctimonious here I have given this much thought over the years I tell you very honestly if I did not believe there was any such thing as heaven or hell but I do but if I did not but I knew that Jesus was the Lord I would serve him the same as I do now I would not do anything different now it is wonderful that there is salvation that once I die there is even more that I get out of the deal than he would have to promise me that

is where his grace is so evident because he does not have to throw in any goodies he can just say listen I am the king deal with it that is all he has to do I am the king you deal with it I am the king he does not have to say and I will reward you in this way or I will punish you if you do not all he has to do is say this is all you need to know I am the king what does that make you and what are you going to do about it that is the message Jesus is king Jesus is Lord but the grace of God is such that he says and if you do not continue resisting my kingship if you surrender to me there are some real goodies in this deal that you do not in any way have any claim on in your own merits you can have all the glory of everything I have you can be joint heirs with me Jesus Christ over all things you can reign with me forever you can have eternal life those are the goodies but you see we realize that most people do not want to surrender especially Americans Americans are fiercely independent people that is how our country got started we rebel against kings we rebel against authority we do not want anyone telling us what to do and so we do not want to preach that message to Americans they will just say I do not want to I do not want anything to do with God who is going to change my life and force me to give up my sovereignty over myself so he said ok I will tell you what I will bet you could really recognize a good deal all you have to do is accept Jesus as your Savior and then you get heaven and you get to reign with Christ and all of that that is presenting the gospel differently than the apostles did the apostles and Jesus had one announcement there is a king another king a lord and he said he is also Savior the saving part is what you get out of the deal but the lord part is what you owe him you see people need to be preached the gospel genuinely which will place emphasis on what do you owe Jesus you owe him your life you owe him your submission you owe him your surrender you need to lay down your arms instead of warring against his ruling life you need to break off all claim on the rule of your own life and say I have been bought with a price I am not my own there is one who owns me by right because he created me and bought me and now God has told me he is the king ok my duty is clear you see the preaching of the gospel of the bible appeals to people not their self interest but their sense of duty to God so that only those who are willing to care about God's interest really respond those who don't care about God's interest don't respond and they shouldn't they don't belong in the church they don't belong in the so called kingdom because they won't be in the kingdom if they don't care about God's interest and so we get people we are harvesting great amounts of people into the visible church but most of them have never heard the real claims of the gospel they don't see it as a call to become disciples of the king as we have talked about previously but Paul did when you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord then and only then you will be saved you don't get Jesus as Savior now and Lord later he is Savior and Lord from the get go when Jesus was born the angels announced to the shepherds unto us is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord he is both Savior and Lord at the same time you accept him you get a Savior and you get a Lord or a Lord and a Savior as it was preached to the people so what does that mean it means you don't accept Jesus as your Savior now and Lord later if you accept him as your Savior now but not Lord you haven't accepted Jesus you got a Savior and you don't

have a Lord then you don't have Jesus because he is a Lord and I have often made the illustration which I borrowed from Juan Carlos Sotis maybe I stole it and didn't borrow it but he points out that when a couple is getting married they are both called upon to make certain commitments and what the man says to the woman and what the woman says to the man does not reflect on what my privileges are going to be but what I commit myself to do will you sir take this woman to be your lawful wedding to have and to hold from this day forward as long as you both shall live for richer or for poorer for better or for worse for sickness and health and forsaking all others clinging only to her as long as you both shall live if the man says yes he has made a whole bunch of promises he hasn't been promised anything himself when the wife makes her promises then he knows what he's getting out of the deal but he has to make his promises just because that's the commitment he's making and what if the man says well I'll tell you what I don't really want to forsake all others and cleave only to her but I do like the idea of having someone to cook my meals I do like having a warm body in bed next to me I do like having someone cleaning my house I do not like being lonely at home so I would like to take this woman home and employ her in all these things but this forsaking all others and cleaving only to her in sickness and health I'm not ready for that well the bride's going to say well then you're not ready for me if you're not ready for me in all the ways that I come as a wife then you're not ready to get married and that's what people need to know about Jesus if they say well I'm ready to have a savior to save me from hell but I'm not ready to have a lord well you're not ready yet you're not ready for Jesus yet because he's not just a savior he doesn't come in two installments one's a savior and one's a lord he's one being who's savior and lord you receive Jesus you receive a lord you receive a savior at the same time and not separately so said Paul when you confess that Jesus is your lord then you'll be saved not sooner so we need to understand that the call to discipleship is not just a call I said it's the call of the gospel but there's also this inward call of the Holy Spirit that a person must hear if they're going to respond if they're going to answer the call to discipleship genuinely they have to sense something more than the outward call of the preacher but there's the inward call they sense of the Holy Spirit's calling in their life Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room in John 15 26 and 27 but when the helper comes and he knows the Holy Spirit is who he's talking about there whom I shall send you from the father the spirit of truth who proceeds from the father says he will testify of me and you also will bear witness the preachers will bear witness but so will the Holy Spirit you can't have only the outward call without an accompanying inward call an outward call can impose guilt pressure make rosy promises and get people to make some kind of a response but it's not going to be a response to discipleship unless that person who's heard it hears the spirit's call as well it will be probable they'll hear the spirit's call in the outward call when the preacher preaches the gospel it's accompanied by the Holy Spirit's call calling or conviction testimony in John 16 8 Jesus said when he has come the Holy Spirit he will convict the world the world comes to Christ only after they've been convicted by the Holy Spirit if you hear the gospel and you don't feel any response within someone's pressuring you in some way you know

your wife wants you to get saved or you go forward but if there's no inward call of the spirit that you're sensing then you're not going to really be responding as a disciple probably Jesus said in John 10 27 my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me they follow him because they've heard his voice remember when the woman at the well went back to her friends in Samaria and she said come see a man that's told me everything I ever did and they all came out to hear him and after he'd been there for two days they said to her you know now we believe in him not because you told us that he's a man who told you everything that you ever did we know we believe now because we have heard him ourselves and that's what has to happen if you're going to be a true disciple not just someone told you but you have to hear him yourself my sheep hear my voice and follow me that's the voice of Christ in the Holy Spirit's appeal in the Holy Spirit's testimony in the Holy Spirit's conviction that's because becoming a disciple requires supernatural change in your life being born again and you can't do that yourself that's the work of the Holy Spirit and you have to be sensing the call of the Holy Spirit in order to really respond to this call and Paul said that to the Thessalonians who had just recently become Christians under his preaching he said in 1 Thessalonians 1.5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only that is the words of the apostles preaching but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance that is when they heard Paul preach his preaching was accompanied by another appeal that was in the Spirit it was the power of the Holy Spirit giving them assurance that his word was true and this he says we know you're really born again because you didn't just hear the word that we preached but that word came to you also in power and in the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit called you resulting in great assurance and some people don't have assurance of salvation I remember when I was a counselor at age 15 at a Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles we went through counselor training and we were told when people come forward you need to give them the Romans road or some other similar kind of evangelistic thing like that and then after you pray with them the sinners prayer they said you need to take them to 1 John 5 13 which says these things I've written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you might know that you have eternal life and you need to make sure that they know that they have assurance that they are saved and so you read that verse and say now do you know that you're saved and they say if they say well I hope so that's not good enough you say no it says right here that you might know do you know and if they keep saying hope so you've got to keep driving this scripture home to them so that they'll know and I say wait a minute if they don't know that they have eternal life then maybe they don't can it be that the Holy Spirit the God who created the universe has invaded someone's life and they never noticed his arrival shouldn't he be self-announcing isn't there something about a God whose presence fills the whole universe that when he fills your life you know it certainly Paul said in Romans 8 the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we're the children of God and you'd certainly expect that to be so these people they didn't need Paul pointing out 1 John 5 13 so that they have assurance of their salvation God gives assurance of salvation when you really are saved when you really have responded when it's the

Spirit's call that you responded to the Spirit then gives that assurance now of course there's the issue of counting the cost we don't have time to talk about this in great detail we've actually brought it up in our first lecture I just want to bring it up here because it's part of our decision to answer the call well before you answer the call you need to count the cost to see if it's a call you really want to answer and one that you'll stick with because Jesus said in Luke 14 if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father his mother wife and children brothers and sisters yes his own life also he cannot be my disciple you can't do it if you aren't willing to do what it requires to be a disciple said Jesus now I'm not making this up Jesus said this and he knew what he was talking about in that same passage he said in verse 28 through 32 for which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost whether he has enough to finish it lest after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish all who see it will begin to mock him saying this man began to build and was not able to finish or what king going to make war against another king does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000 or else while the other is still a great way off he sends a delegation and asks for conditions of peace when it comes to deciding to answer the call you have to look at what Jesus said here look at the phrase count the cost does he not first sit down and count the cost and then in a later verse he says sit down first and consider becoming a disciple is something that you really ought to be aware of what you are getting into I heard an evangelistic appeal made in Oregon when I lived up there there was a big evangelistic drama that was put on by some people and they had a New Zealand evangelist come and give a message after the drama and the guy had every head bowed and every eye closed of course just like Jesus did and he said anyone here who does not know you are going to heaven raise your hand this was his presentation of the gospel anyone here who does not know you are going to heaven raise your hand well obviously lots of people don't know if they are going to heaven so there are a lot of hands went up and then afterwards he said ok now all of you who are raising your hands I want you to come forward here why? none of them had said they want to go to heaven and they had never been considered on what terms they might be able to go there he just said if you don't know you are going so ok everyone who doesn't know they are going to heaven come forward so a lot of them did one guy in front of me had raised his hand but he didn't want to go forward but one of the trained counselors dragged him out of his seat and forced him forward I watched it happen he was resistant too but she got him down there and once they were all down there in front the evangelist said now I want to describe to you what you have committed yourself to and I was thinking what they have committed themselves to they have made no commitment whatsoever some of them resisted going forward and the ones who did go forward have not been told anything about what they are going forward for they are going forward because they don't know they are going to heaven well that is a long way from giving them any information and once they have come forward he said now I want you to know what you have committed yourself to that is the wrong order when you make the appeal to come into the kingdom of God and become a disciple of

Christ you let them know what they are committing to before you ask them to make a commitment Jesus said you first count the cost you first sit down and consider you don't jump forward and then hope that someone will tell you what you are getting into of course you don't know everything you are getting into because things will happen to you as a Christian trials will hit you that you didn't know were coming and you say I didn't sign up for this but you actually did but what you signed up for was total faithfulness to Christ under all circumstances including under trial just like when people get married and say well for better or for worse they don't know how worse can be they are making a generic comment I don't know what worse is going to look like but I am committed to stay with you no matter how worse it gets that is the promise and that is the promise you make when you become a disciple I am going to stick with you no matter what it costs me because if it costs everything it is still worth it you did sign up for it whatever happens to you you signed up for it when you became a disciple you better be aware that you are signing up for stuff including kind of writing God a blank check you are signing a blank check saying God you fill it out whatever you want from me so what do we do to respond to this call there are three things that Peter said we saw in Acts 2:37 but there after Peter preached we saw that they said to Peter and the apostles men and brethren what shall we do and Peter answered the question here is how you respond to the call that has come out through the gospel Peter said to them repent now repentance is first faith is important too though Peter didn't mention that strangely he didn't mention believe he just said repent and be baptized and receive the spirit but he didn't mention faith though later references in the scripture do mention faith but always second to repentance notice Mark 1:15 Jesus said the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent first and believe second repent and believe the gospel likewise Paul in Acts 20:20-21 says I taught you publicly and from house to house testifying to Jews and also to Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ and in that order repentance and faith how about Hebrews 6:1 let us go on to perfection not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God whenever those two words are mentioned together repentance is mentioned first why you might think we have to have faith before you repent because you wouldn't repent if you didn't already believe in God what would induce you to repent but you see faith is referred to there is putting your trust in Christ the reason repentance comes first is repent means change your mind before you are a Christian you are putting your trust in yourself you are doing everything with reference to yourself you need to change your mind about that and when you change from trusting in yourself to trusting in Christ you have repented and believed you have turned around in other words repentance is turning around changing your mind on the subject and the result of changing your mind is that you now are a believer yes you believed that God existed before that it says in Hebrews 11:6 he that comes to God must first believe that he exists and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him but lots of people believe that God exists and many of them even believe that God will reward those who seek him but that doesn't result in them seeking him it's just not their interest but faith here refers to putting your total trust in

Christ instead of in yourself that your whole orientation shifts from self to Christ to get there from here you have to repent change your mind I was serving myself I was trusting myself and my own resources I changed my mind about that I'm going to trust God and follow him from now on that's repenting unto faith in fact so repentance is the first thing Peter said in Acts 2:38 repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins now some people make that statement for the remission of sins as a reference to baptism I believe he's simply saying repent and be baptized for the remission of sins that is make this transition from self to Christ which includes repenting and being baptized and that transition is what will result these things combined results in the remission of sins it's not baptism alone see some people like Roman Catholics believe that if you baptize a baby that that baby's original sin is washed away the sins are remitted and there's people who believe in baptismal regeneration they believe that if you're baptized even as an infant you're regenerated you're born again that's not really what the Bible teaches but some people use this scripture where he says be baptized everyone in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins they say we'll see baptisms for the remission but I think Peter's saying you need to repent and be baptized and these things together are what make up conversion and you get converted for the sake of getting your sins remitted among other things and he says and you should receive the spirit now making disciples means baptizing Jesus said that in Matthew twenty eight eighteen through twenty he says Jesus came and spoke saying all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth in other words I'm the king I'm the Lord I'm the one everyone has to obey I have all authority therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them you see you make disciples and the first thing you do once you've gotten them to agree to it which is their repentance is you baptize them when Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter eight verse thirty five and thirty six it says Philip opened his mouth and from the beginning of that scripture which was Isaiah fifty three preached Jesus to him now as they went down the road they came to some water and the eunuch said see here's some water what hinders me from being baptized where did baptism get into this guy's head why when Philip preached Jesus to this man why did this man see water hey I should be baptized because preaching Jesus included preaching baptism it is commanded Christians often say well then do you have to be baptized and be saved the question is not how do I get saved that's still looking out for yourself the question is what does God command me to do he commands me to be baptized when I become a disciple I'm not thinking what must I do to be saved and how little can I get away with I'm thinking what does God want and let me know all of it because I want to do everything he wants that's what the attitude of a disciple is do I have to be baptized and be saved well listen you have to be baptized to be obedient okay that's what you need to be concerned about not how many things or how few things can I get away with and still be saved that's thinking like a pagan how do I look out for me the question has got to be what does my God and my Lord want me to do from this point of my conversion on I only care about that not my will but thine be done does he want me to be baptized put me on the list take me in the water you can't preach

the lordship of Jesus and omit baptism a baptism itself does not save you I don't understand baptism to have a magical or even a spiritual effect on you I believe baptism is like the wedding ring in a way you get married by making vows by making a commitment by having a covenant you indicate that you've made that by putting a ring on your finger a person can be married without the ring but it's expected you wear a ring to announce that you're married and there are people who've been saved without being baptized the thief on the cross died repentant but unbaptized he still went to paradise Jesus said he couldn't get baptized but if you can it's expected and that's what Jesus calls you to do repent and be baptized and Peter said after that you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit now this is what makes discipleship possible you can't follow Jesus without this you can't follow Jesus in the power of your natural resources you're a fallen human being now he gives you a new heart but with the new heart he gives you a new spirit it says in Ezekiel chapter 36 and likewise elsewhere in scripture he gives you the gift of the Holy Spirit and it's the Holy Spirit that lives the Christian life in you you've heard preachers say it's not difficult to live the Christian life it's impossible right that's true it's not difficult it's impossible for you but you know someone who knows how to do it perfectly the Holy Spirit because he did it in Jesus Jesus did what he did through the Holy Spirit Jesus said so himself the Holy Spirit knows perfectly how to live the Christian life to live like Jesus and he's done it before in Jesus he can do it in you now you're not likely to be perfect of course nonetheless as you walk in the spirit you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh as you walk in the spirit the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in you Paul said in Romans 8 so it is possible you might say well I've been a Christian a long time and I've just never been able to obey God I just seem to be totally in bondage to all my sins just like before well maybe you haven't become a disciple maybe you haven't received the spirit just like there are people who have repented and haven't been baptized there may be people who have repented and been baptized and haven't received the spirit I don't know but until you've repented and been baptized and received the spirit you haven't done what you're supposed to do yet you have not answered the call because when the people said what do we have to do to answer this call you're putting out he said do these things now I'm not saying if you die and you haven't done all these things you're going to go to hell that's not my judgment to make I'm talking about discipleship and that's the norm if you want to say well can I go to heaven if I'm not a disciple that's not for me to decide but the Bible wouldn't encourage you to think so because being a disciple is simply being a Christian and we know that there's some special privilege comes with being a Christian that non-Christians don't have and so we need to receive the Holy Spirit when Jesus rose from the dead the first order of business with his disciples in John 20 22 was he breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit and so there's other verses but we've run out of time Acts 8 14 through 15 the apostles came to Samaria people who had repented and been baptized but they had not yet received the spirit and the apostles John and Peter came down to pray for them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit that's unfinished business they had repented believed and baptized but that wasn't enough they had to receive the

spirit and apparently they had not they had simply been baptized it says Paul said in Galatians 3 14 that Jesus redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the spirit hearing the gospel correctly the gospel of Jesus being Lord hearing the inward call of the spirit in addition to hearing the outward call of the gospel counting the cost an important prerequisite and repenting and believing is where you change your mind and put your trust in Christ and you're baptized and then you receive the Holy Spirit these are the things that the Bible tells us are part of answering this call to discipleship and becoming a disciple.