

IN JESUS' NAME

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I remember when I was growing up in Chennai, my pastor, Dr. Kamalesan once talking about teachers from one of their schools. The teachers had invited the wrath of one of the people in that community who didn't like them, what they were doing. One day he chased them with the intent of harming them quite badly. He had an implement in his hand, running after them. They ran as fast as they could. Finally, when they could run no further, they stopped and turned to face him. And then one of them said to him, "In the name of Jesus, stop!" And the man froze. He couldn't move a muscle. And it took the name of Jesus to free him. And when that happened, he ran for dear life. There's power in the name of Jesus.

One of the foundational practices that Jesus had for His own life was the time that He spent with His Father. Distanced as it were after the incarnation, He would still move away from the crowds, from His disciples, from successful ministry points, to be alone with His Father, to commune with Him, to speak with Him, and to know His heart and His will for Him while He was on the earth.

His disciples observed this, the time that He spent in prayer. and one day they asked Him: How do we pray? It's possible that it came out of just a sense of 'how does He do it? he goes up there for such long extended periods, praying.' And Jesus then said, "Use this as a model," and gave them what we've come to know as the Lord's Prayer.

But as we read further into scripture, we see that there are other scriptures that tell us how we ought to be praying. And some from His own mouth. Jesus said in John 14:13-14 "I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it

When you read a scripture like this, it's such a sweeping statement, and a sweeping invitation it seems, to be able to come and ask Him anything. But Jesus qualifies it in the middle of these two kinds of bookends, by saying, "So that the Father may be glorified in the Son." And so, praying in and through the name of Jesus, is actually a reliance on His authority – the authority that He had, a submission to His will because His will mirrors the will of the Father, and an acknowledgement of His role as a mediator.

I want us to look at this in a little depth today, because that phrase 'in the name of Jesus' gets thrown out pretty easily. I have, and I'm sure you have too, heard it used numerous times, in numerous ways as well, in terms of intensity, in terms of volume, in terms of just command and authority of people using it. And I thought it might be good for us to get a biblical understanding of what is entailed when we use the phrase, 'In Jesus' name.'

- **Jesus Himself says to pray, "Whatever you ask in My name."**

It's something that He advocated Himself.

- **Jesus is the only mediator.**

Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." No other one can mediate between God and humanity. Why is that? Because Jesus is the only one who bridged the chasm that came through sin, between God and His creation. Jesus took care of that separation by taking on the penalty that ought to have been ours. And so, He is the one who mediates. He tells the Father: This son/daughter is one of Mine.

- **His finished work on the cross.**

It's an acknowledging of His finished work on the cross. And because of that finished work, we are invited to come boldly before the throne room of grace.

Hebrews 10:19-2 describes this access is through the blood of Christ, the blood having been shed at Calvary.

- **It's an alignment with God's will.**

To pray in Jesus' name also means that we align with His character. We align with His teachings, everything that He said. We align with His mission, the reason why He came. And so, to be able to pray keeping His character in mind, keeping all His teachings in mind, and His mission, the reason why He came, we pray within those parameters. This is the confidence, John says, we have in approaching God, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears it.

- **We glorify God.**

When we end prayers in Jesus' name, we seek to glorify God, as Jesus' life and ministry always pointed to the Father.

So, that's about the scope in a very limited way of what it means to unpack that phrase 'In Jesus' Name'.

1. **We must come before Him in the right posture.** The name of Jesus is profound. It's filled with power. It's filled with meaning. So there must be a note of caution that we come in the right posture when we come before Him, that we don't treat it like some kind of a magical formula that I can say all these things, and then add 'In Jesus' name', and the prayer becomes kind of kosher. We need to be careful as we pray and use His name. It isn't a magical phrase.
2. **Do not pray with selfish motives.** We need to make sure, remembering that we pray according to His will, that we are not praying according to selfish motives, tacking on His name for that kind of prayer. We need to be careful that the prayer is not for personal gain, worldly success, or desires that don't honor God. We evaluate our requests and ensure that they align with God's kingdom and glorify Him, not ourselves.
3. **We avoid hypocrisy.** When we pray in His name, we must avoid hypocrisy. We make sure that we are not living a different kind of lifestyle that doesn't point us as God's children when we pray. That we really don't have Him as mediator, but we tack on this phrase to try and get God to do things that we want. And therefore, we try to control God by asking Him to do things for us.

We sign letters by saying, "Yours faithfully, or sincerely yours, or yours truthfully." The idea behind that is that I faithfully submit this letter, or I truthfully submit this letter, or with sincerity I give you this letter. But we know that that rarely happens today. It's a tack on at the end of a letter to just throw in sincerely, faithfully; it really doesn't have anything to do with the content of the letter.

Misuse of the phrase 'In Jesus' name'.

In the same way, we need to be careful that it doesn't happen that we use the name of Jesus in a light or casual way. When we look at current day situations and scenarios, we see that there are many times where this phrase in Jesus' name has been misused.

- It's been used in promoting the prosperity gospel.

- It's been used as if dropping that phrase makes us act as if we're part of God's kingdom. Remember, Jesus talking about wheat and tares.
- It's used often in manipulating people. God told me this in the name of Jesus, and so I speak it to you.
- In exaggerated displays of power.
- To condemn others. In Jesus' name, you will be punished.

So, we need to watch out for how we use this phrase, because **it is filled with power**. As I mentioned, "in the name of Jesus, stop!" and the person had to stop. There is incredible power in the name of Jesus. And you and I have seen that power at work. I remember some years ago, faced with a person who was demonically possessed. He was carrying a dog chain with him. And he came towards me saying, "I'll kill you." And I told him, "In the name of Jesus, that chain is too heavy for you." And he just fell back. When you see the power in the name of Jesus manifested, you realize that you need to be so careful about every being trite with it.

We need to be so very careful of how we use the name of Jesus. Not only is it filled with power, **it is filled with authority**. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me, in heaven and on earth." That authority is what we call into play when we call upon His name.

As we pray in the name of Jesus, we need to be so aware that we are living a life that is in His will, that we constantly make sure that we are **in alignment with His holy will**.

I felt a deep sense of needing to preach this. These past few weeks, this whole idea of apostasy has been coming front and center. In fact, I worked on a full sermon about apostasy. But at the heart of it was this: that the road to apostasy is a slippery slope. You don't wake up one morning and say that I'm an apostate. It comes by slowly ignoring the important principles that are found in the Bible. One leads to another. 99% leads to 95% because you already have a precedent. You've already done it; it's okay. 95% becomes 80%, 80% becomes 75%. And then the compromises start. It's a slippery slope, the point where we are just Christian by name. Or even that isn't there. but we just go through the motions where there's no power. And one of the things that can lead us to that is to allow our prayers to get to a point where they are just meaningless things that are thrown up to God. We use the name of Jesus lightly. Forgetting that it's a profound name, a powerful name, and that we need to use it very carefully. Every prayer we pray and end in the name of Jesus, we need to make sure that it's perfectly aligned with God's will, that we come in humility.

I remember someone talking about the name of Jesus and the power in the name. and he would always talk so quietly. He would talk to people who were under demonic influence. He would say, "In the name of Jesus, I ask you to come out." There were no theatrics, no yelling, no shouting. He recognized that it was just Jesus whose power was going to be evidenced. And there was no need to shout and ask Him to come. he hears. This person would gently say, "In the name of Jesus, I command you." And there was an instant obedience.

Beloved, God has given us such a wonderful gift in prayer. Prayer that is anchored in His Son, anchored in the finished work of the cross, anchored in His being the mediator between us and God. And God says, "I'm available" Jesus says: Ask in My name, knowing My will, knowing My character, knowing My mission. All of that, beloved, is ours. The same Jesus' work on earth was meant for us to emulate. Not the cross, but everything else. His teachings, the way He walked, the way He lived His life.

Maybe today, you find that prayers really don't mean anything to you. You pray and just throw in that last phrase hoping that it would make it authentic. Maybe today we need to go back and check on

the content of our prayers, and ask ourselves: Can I invite and invoke the name of Jesus for what I'm praying? Somebody said it's like an ambassador who's representing his country in a foreign nation. And when he speaks, he speaks in the name of his country. His words carry weight and authority not because of who he is personally, but because of the authority that backs him.

Praying in Jesus' name is like saying: I'm coming not in my own strength, but with the authority of Jesus. Coming to Him. A child may be stopped at a gate by security who says, "No, you can't go in. this is a gated community." The child cries out, "Dad! Dad! It's me!" The dad hears him and tells the security: Let him in. For through Him, the Bible says, through Jesus, we both have access to the Father by one spirit. So beloved, take a look at your prayers.

Peter said to the lame man: Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. That's the power. And like anything that is powerful, we need to handle it with care. So, as we use the name of Jesus and pray in the name of Jesus, let's make sure that we use it as it ought to be used.

Let us pray!

Amen.