

## In Jesus Name

Have you ever noticed that many prayers end with the phrase “in Jesus’ name?” Is this some kind of magic formula that validates the prayer? I must confess that I find myself feeling that a prayer is incomplete if I fail to include and invoke the name of Jesus. Where do we get this idea? Again, I confess, for me, it stems from the early patterns of prayer that I heard from my earliest days in worship and continued up to present day.

Perhaps it has become the appropriate ending for prayer due to this verse in Paul’s letter to the Colossians.

Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:17 NASB)

While praying and calling out the name of Jesus is appropriate, the term has a meaning beyond injecting Jesus into our prayers. This term is an umbrella that extends to every area of our life. The sad fact is that many of us only want Jesus in our life during certain times and we are in control of when those times occur. This seems to me to be an arrangement that is like the one between Nike and Michael Jordan. Nike produces shoes that bear the name of Michael Jordan as a result of a mutually beneficial arrangement. Nike made shoes for the famous basketball player and in return they were allowed to use his name on their product. Once Michael Jordan becomes less famous, Nike will find another name to brand their shoes.

Many Christians want to brand the Jesus name. When it is no longer aligned with our current life style or friends, then we will simply slip out of the Jesus name and into something that is more appropriate to their current needs. For those Christians, wearing the name or being “in Jesus’ name” is a matter of comfort. When we are not comfortable in Jesus, we slip out and into something more comfortable.

Our idea of being comfortable in Jesus does not fit very well with the examples we find in the Bible. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Acts, we find the beginning of a lesson that we need to learn. In this chapter, we find two of the apostles reaching out to assist someone.

**Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth *hour* (approximately 3:00 PM), the hour of prayer. And a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he *began* asking to receive alms. But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, “Look at us!” And he *began* to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and *began* to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. (Acts 3:1-8 NASB)**

Peter and John did not heal this man by or through their power or name but through the power and authority of Jesus. The man realized how this miracle had occurred. He gave his praise to God. This occurred in a public and people started to talk about this miracle. We are told **they were filled with wonder and amazement (Acts 3:10 NASB).**

We could pause here and build a sermon on this miracle done in the name of Jesus. However, the events that started with the miracle help us see that that comfort zone we were talking about earlier is not always found in Jesus.

We continue to read into the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**As they (Peter and John) were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. (Acts 4:1-3 NASB)**

The priests and Sadducees were **greatly disturbed** about two matters. First, the apostles were **teaching the people**, an activity that those of the Sadducean ranks saw as a threat to their status. Here we have two of the apostles, Peter and John, rallying popular support. Neither they nor their message had been given the proper vetting by the established religious leaders. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection or any form afterlife. When thousands of people believe Peter and John, it threatened their status. Thus, the authority the Sadducees was in danger (their perception) of losing their power. Second, Peter and John were annoying the Sadducees because they were **proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead**. This probably means they were attempting to prove from the fact of Jesus' resurrection the doctrine of the resurrection, which the Sadducees denied. So, Peter and John were taken into custody by the temple guard and, since it was evening, put into prison until the Sanhedrin could be called together the next morning to judge their case.

So, on the next day, Peter and John are brought for their trial before the religious tribunal. They are questioned about their authority to be preaching Jesus and we see their defense.

**On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead— by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:5-12 NASB)**

We can picture the scene. Peter and John are placed in the center of a semi-circle of approximately 70 elders, rabbis, priest and leaders. Most of the group are Pharisees. The Sadducees, while in the minority, had political clout. The man that had been healed is placed in the center also. There is no indication that he had been in jail overnight. He may have been called as a witness before the tribunal.

As they are before this group, the first question addressed to Peter and John is: **"By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"** Before Peter answered, Luke tells us that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Here, we may remember that Jesus told His disciples that their answers would be supplied when they would be on trial.

**"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So, make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. (Luke 21:12-15 NASB)**

Peter, led by the Holy Spirit, answers. In today's terminology, Peter flipped the question back to them **“Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene.”** Peter immediately showed the entire council that the point in question is they were being tried for healing the man. The veiled question laced in Peter's answer is: “Are we on trial for helping this man?” Peter presses on with the fact that their actions were through the name of Jesus. Peter's defense focuses on the healing of the crippled man as being (1) "an act of kindness," which (2) was effected "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth". His message is specifically addressed to the "rulers and elders of the people," though it extends to "everyone else in Israel."

Peter uses this moment to remind this council of their complicity in the death of Jesus when he adds these words to his defense: **whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.** These words strike out at the Sadducees for their failure to believe in a resurrection and the entire council for their insistence on having Jesus crucified.

Peter ties the healing and the resurrection of Jesus together when he completes his answer by saying: **by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene.** Without missing a beat, Peter moves on to use the words of the Old Testament to show what the council had done with Jesus by rejecting Him only to find that God had raised Him up to be the chief cornerstone. Through Jesus we not only have healing we have our only path to salvation.

When we say, “In Jesus' name,” we are calling out the name through whom the world was made, the one through whom Peter and John could heal the lame man, we are calling out the name of the man God raised from the dead. In Jesus' name, is the only path to salvation; **for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.**

In Jesus' name is far more than an ending for a prayer. It is (or should be) the foundation for all we do. Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:17 NASB)