

## 149 For My Name's Sake

"Oh my God!" - uttered time after time by a woman sitting within earshot of me on a recent train journey, as she and her friend had a good old "chin-wag". Without a moment's thought, she was constantly breaking the third commandment by taking the Lord's name in vain in this way. But people do this all the time! - so does it really matter?

The answer to that little question is Yes, it does matter, a great deal - for the Lord God is very protective of His own name.

For a start, His name is the very reason for many of His actions. "For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake ....(I Samuel 12.22); "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off" (Isaiah 48.9). We see here that His faithfulness to His people Israel is not driven primarily by His love for them, but by His desire to uphold the integrity of His own holy name.

This is emphasised again in Ezekiel. "But I wrought for my name's sake that it should not be polluted before the heathen (Ezekiel 20.9, 14, 22, 44); and - "Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went" (Ezekiel 36.22).

Under the New Covenant we see this same principle of the Lord acting for His own name's sake, for example in I John 2.12 - "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake".

In these examples concerning His dealings with His people - be they Israel or His Church today - the Lord shows us that He both acts in mercy, and refrains from acting in judgement, for His own name's sake. The message is clear and timely: WE are not "the Big Deal" round here, with the Lord's task to do as we want. No. HE is the "Big Deal", and our task is to do what HE wants.

And this principle is vital in our prayers. Think for a moment of your church prayer meeting, and indeed of your own prayers, and ask yourself WHY we are asking God to do this, that and the other. Why should He? On what grounds should He do as we ask? Is it because of our keenness, or our devotion, or our niceness, or our pestering, or because our request is so obviously such a good idea? None of

those reasons tops the list! He will grant our requests as He sees fit - "for His name's sake". In the granting, His name will be upheld, honoured, revered, protected, glorified, hallowed. In the granting, God will receive the glory that is His due.

The Psalmists are well aware of this fact! As a brief exercise, you might take a look in the Psalms - 23.3 / 25.11 / 31.3 / 79.9 / 106.8 / 109.21 / and 143.11 - which in summary come down to, "Please Lord ... for thy name's sake".

Much human conduct in this New Covenant, Christian era is also shaped by "for the sake of the Lord's name". There will be times when Christ's followers will be hated and persecuted for His name's sake (Matthew 10.22 / John 15.21-22); those who give up all that is dear to them in this life "for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19.22). The Lord showed Saul of Tarsus "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9.16). It was "for His name's sake that they (the faithful brethren) went forth" (III John 7). The same truth is shining through - the Lord's name is central.

Next time God willing, we shall hope to reflect on the Lord's name itself, including the many names found within His one great Name!

This time, we are reminded of this important truth: Yes, Almighty God loves us utterly in His Son Jesus Christ, and has proved that love at horrendous cost. But we do well to keep in mind, in our worship, prayers and discipleship, that all His blessings are ultimately bestowed, not for our names' sake, but under the far more wonderful banner of "For My name's sake".

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