

To "... strengthen the things which remain..." Revelation 3:2

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What is His Name?

Joel Portman

The title of this article is a question that God's people expressed in various forms when faced with a revelation of God or His purposes. In Gen. 32:29, it implied Jacob's desire to know Who it was who wrestled with him in the night and changed his name from being a fleshly man, now weakened physically, to one made strong spiritually, i.e., from Jacob to Israel. In Moses' case in Ex. 3:13, it shows that he realized the importance of having divine authority when he came to the people under Egyptian bondage and delivered God's message of deliverance. In the case of Manoah and his wife in Judges 13:5, 17, knowing God's name would verify His promise to them regarding the birth of a long-awaited son who would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." These passages, along with others such as Ex. 15:3, Prov. 30:4, Isa. 9:6, Jer. 23:6 emphasize that the name of God is an important and essential part of His means of self-revelation to mankind, culminating in the message of the angel in Matt. 1:21, "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins," and ". . . God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," (Phil. 2:9-10). It seems clear from the beginning of man's creation that God is always desiring to manifest Himself to mankind and He employs a variety of means to do so. "All the names by which the Bible designates God are significant; and thus each of them stands as the symbol of some truth concerning Him which He would have us to receive. All this renders it of importance to us that we should rightly apprehend the import of the Divine Names in Scripture," (W. L. Alexander, *System of Biblical Theology, Vol 1*).

Importance of Names

Names given to people in the Bible were often a means of expressing something of the character of the person to which they were attached. They were more than simply a "handle" or a means of identifying a person. Since this is so, how much

more is that true when God reveals Himself? "The disclosure of character through a name is true of Deity to an absolute degree. God has not only inspired the pages whereon His names appear, but He has announced or revealed His names specifically to men and with special reference to the meaning of these names," (L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*). He has chosen to make Himself known as the self-revealing God, and one of these means of revelation is the names that He employs. "The Old Testament contains a number of names and compound names for God which reveal Him in some aspect of His character and dealings with mankind," (N. Stone, *Names of God*). "We may learn . . . specially from the varied names under which it has pleased God to reveal Himself to man from the beginning, things concerning His nature and fullness," (A. Jukes *The Names of God*). Therefore anyone who desires to know God must include a study of God's names within that purpose. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Those who knew God in Scripture were also those who knew His names and used them intelligently, within the context of their approach to Him. For example, in Psalm 91, a psalm usually ascribed to Moses, we find four names or titles of God in the first two verses: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High (El Elyon) shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (El Shaddai). I will say of the LORD (Jehovah), He is my refuge and my fortress: my God (Elohim); in him will I trust." The use of these names gives credence to the certainty that Moses was a man who knew God (Ex. 33:11, Num. 12:8, Ps. 103:7). Again in Joshua 7:6-8, Joshua uses the three basic names of God, namely, Elohim, Adonai, and Jehovah as he speaks to God about the sin of the people.

Our Lord emphasizes the importance of knowing God's name and all that is revealed in those names when He prayed,

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"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. . ." (John 17:6). Obviously, this means more than saying or explaining God's name to the disciples; He had made known God's character, person, attributes and nature in His humanity so that the significance of the name of God became known to them. The names of God became personified and their significance was manifested in His coming to reveal the Father (John 14:9). So that a study of the names of God should instill in inquiring minds a clearer knowledge of His person and cause a deeper attitude of worship and reverence for who He is in Himself and as manifested in His Son.

Meanings of Names

Some of the names linked with God are actually titles that reveal something about Him. They define characteristics that pertain to Himself and are expressions of His actions. Some of these, in various forms, are also applied to other gods or persons who are not truly God, such as false gods or judges in Israel. Other names, such as Jehovah, are those of a more personal character that are never used for any other. A noted Jewish commentator of the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides, said, with regard to the name Jehovah, "All the names of God which occur in Scripture are derived from His works except one, and that is Jehovah; and this is called the plain name, because it teaches plainly and unequivocally of the substance of God," (Girdlestone, *Old Testament Synonyms*). Again, Girdlestone says that Jehovah is the only name that expresses the personal, or proper name of God; all the rest are derived from His works. It seems evident that in the infinitude of God, a multiplicity of names are required to reveal who He is and what He does. A study of these names will help us appreciate the greatness of His person and the magnitude of His power.

Results of Studying God's Names

Such a study will have effects in our hearts and lives also. To meditate on God and learn of Him will

1. Produce Deeper Reverence for His Person

Moses prophesied God's judgment on Israel if they refused to obey by saying, *"If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD"* (Deut. 28:58). Again in Psalm 99:3 we read, *"Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy."* Repeatedly in references to their God, Israel was reminded of the reverence that was due to His name and, of course, His person. In reminding of them of the Lord's work to redeem and preserve them, we read in Ps. 111:9, *"holy and reverend is his name."* His names emphasize His incomparability, immensity, 'unknowableness,' and solitary greatness as well as the unlimited power and wisdom that He possesses. One cannot help but respond with awe and won-

der when the importance and meaning of the names of God becomes understood. Those who truly know God are never careless in speaking about or to Him. They recognize the supremacy of His person and stand in wonder that they are capable of knowing Him to any degree or coming near to His presence. They invariably draw their shoes from off their feet when conscious of the Divine and move with care in relation to that which is sacred. When Paul closes the section of Romans dealing with God's amazing fulfillment of His unchanging purpose to Israel, he bursts forth in a doxology of praise that expresses his apprehension of the greatness of God, both in wisdom and power (Rom. 11:33-36). Such expressions are also fitting for all His people who know and appreciate His infinite greatness and holiness.

2. Instill Greater Confidence and Trust in His Power

Many of God's names express His great power and wisdom expressed in His actions. The first name, that we encounter in our Bibles, Elohim, is indicative of creatorial power and majesty. We learn that He is "the Almighty God" and has infinite capacity to accomplish whatever is according to His will. Moses said (speaking for the LORD) to Pharaoh, *" . . . for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."* His power may be expressed in judgment or in blessing. Asa cried unto the LORD (Jehovah) in his desperation when faced with an overwhelming enemy, *"And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee"* (2 Chron. 14:11). His confidence was reinforced by the knowledge of God's power as revealed in His Name which was above all other expected sources of strength. Daniel 11:32 says, *" . . . the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."*

Abraham received promises from "El Shaddai" or The Almighty God regarding the fulfillment of God's purpose regarding the birth of an Isaac, even though he and Sarah had no ability in themselves (Gen. 17:1). Other patriarchs employed that title of God when they were expecting God's manifest power on their behalf or others, such as in Gen. 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3, 49:25. We have the same, unfailing God to depend on today, and He is yet able to do far more than we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). This should cause every believer to confidently depend on Him to accomplish all that is for His glory and for their ultimate blessing. *"He is faithful. . ."* (Heb. 10:23).

3. Yield More Ability to Praise and Worship

The psalms reveal the spiritual depth of knowledge that the

writers possessed, and in those paeans of praise to God they employed every possible name by which God has revealed himself. Their apprehension of His greatness, unlimited ability, and infinite person seems to produce those expressions of praise that honored Him above all others. They were surrounded by those who worshiped their “gods” but which had no power to help or deliver; those who knew their God realized that He was the only One who was worthy of praise or worship. In Ps. 34:3, the psalmist magnifies the Lord, saying *“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.”* His occupation is entirely with the greatness of the LORD and all that He has done. God says in Mal. 1:11, *“from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; . . . my name shall be great among the heathen . . .”* Praise seems to be more with regard to His works while worship is occupied His person and His personal greatness. Thus, to know His names will enhance our ability to apprehend the greatness of all that He is and does.

4. Fulfill the Spirit’s Purpose to Reveal Him

The Holy Spirit has been sent into the world to glorify the Son (John 16:14), and it is His work to direct hearts toward greater knowledge of God and the greatness of His person. *“We worship,”* says Paul in Philippians 3:3, *“God in the spirit”* (or “worship by the Spirit of God,” JND, RV). Our Lord told the woman in Samaria that *“God is (a) Spirit: and they that worship him must worship (him) in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:24). Romans 8:15 tells us that it is the Spirit’s purpose to direct our hearts to more personal knowledge of God: *“For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”* Any increased awareness of God’s greatness and worth will be the result of the Spirit’s work in our hearts that will cause more honor and praise to be brought to our God.

5. Cause more Personal Separation unto Himself

God reveals Himself as the Holy God, thus demanding and expecting a holy people to be separated unto Him apart from all else. He demands our complete allegiance, for six times in the Old Testament, He declares that He is a “jealous God” (Ex. 20:5, for example). The grievous sin of Israel against God was their tendency to depart from giving God their exclusive worship and service and serving other gods. A knowledge of His supreme greatness and intrinsic uniqueness will produce in our hearts a desire to live lives that are separated exclusively to Him and apart from all of an ungodly world that is contrary to Him. 1 Peter 1:14-17 teaches us the importance of being holy in every manner of life because He who has called us is holy and we call Him Father. His nature must be expressed in His children. Many other scriptures could be cited to emphasize this truth as

well. Those who know their God seek to walk humbly and in fellowship with Him, recognizing the preciousness and importance of having lives that correspond to His character.

May we be stimulated to study these names with the desire that, through them, we might gain more personal knowledge of Him who we praise and serve and in whose presence we will dwell one day.

(to be continued)

**God is not narrow, though man is;
and our wisdom lies in being lifted out
of our own pettiness into the vast mind of God.
W. Kelly**

Christ, the Living Word

H. G. McEwen

The bold attacks of the Modernists upon the person of Christ should provoke us to search the Scriptures in order to be clear as to His Deity and to strengthen our grip upon this cardinal truth of the Word. We were exhorted recently in a magazine read by many in the assemblies, “Let every reader be mercilessly clear on the essential Deity of our Lord, or all is lost.” This has led me to pass on a few words for the sake of young believers, which, if they only prove to be a collection of scriptural references on the subject, will be helpful if studied. If pressed by the foe to prove the Deity of Christ from the Scriptures an easy way would be to fall back on the “three first chapters” that deal specially with it. The first of John, the first of Colossians and the first of Hebrews, these alone would be sufficient to put the enemy to flight.

It is of Christ as the WORD that I desire to write and would refer the reader to the Gospel by John, chapter one. Seven times in the Authorized Version He bears this title and each time by the same writer. Four times in this first chapter of his Gospel, twice in the Epistle and once in the Revelation. And why is He called The Word? A person stands before you, you scan his face in vain to know his thoughts; he opens his mouth and his words reveal to you the desired knowledge. So Christ came as The Word to reveal, to tell out the Father. Creation might tell out His eternal power and Godhead, it took a **Person** to tell out His heart of love and grace. Upon the Mount of Transfiguration the voice from above said concerning Christ, “Hear Him.” He is the Word.

1. The Eternity of the Word.

"In the beginning was the Word" is the first of the four statements concerning Him as the Word in this chapter, it speaks of Him as The Eternal Word. The day in which that Word appeared to men was not the beginning of the Word, He was in THE beginning. Though John the Baptist was born six months prior to the birth of Jesus, he says, *"He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me."* True, He was before John both as to **time and position**. His own claim goes even farther back, *"Before Abraham was, I AM."* He was before creation, for as Wisdom He cries, *"The Lord possessed Me in the beginnings of His way, before His works of old,"* and as the one by whom all things were created He must be before the creation. He speaks of the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. But now, with Micah the Prophet, put the telescope of faith to the eye, look back beyond all beginnings and see the babe of Bethlehem as the One whose, *"goings forth have been from of Old, from EVER-LASTING,"* (John 8:58, Prov. 8:22, Col. 1:17, John 17:5, Micah 5:2.)

2. The Personality of the Word

"The Word was with God" is the second statement concerning Him, teaching us the distinct personality of the Word, though One with the Father. The words, "with God" carry us back in thought to that happy time spoken of in Proverbs 8 and 30, *"Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."* The Son in the bosom of the Father; what intimacy! what mutual affection and delight! the Father delighting in the Son, the Son rejoicing before the Father! Truly then "He was rich." Again, the words "with Him" remind us of that period spoken of by the Son to the Father in John 17:5, He refers to *"the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* This separate personality is again shown when God is about to make man in His own image. He says, *"Let US make man."* One in Affection, One in Power, One in Glory and distinct in Person.

3. The Deity of the Word

"The Word was God," this third statement could not be clearer, it is emphatic, He was God. Where shall we turn for further references to this subject? I feel at a loss, not because of the FEW texts that come to mind but because of the MANY. Everywhere in the Old and New Testaments He is shown to be God. The child born, the Son given is called by Isaiah "the Mighty God," Isaiah 9:6. To the Virgin's Son, born at Bethlehem, Matthew applies the name "Emmanuel," which, being interpreted is, GOD with us, Matt. 1:23. In Hebrews chapter one we find Him worshipped as God, verse 6; addressed as God, by God, verse 8; eternal as God, verse 8; creating as God, verse 10; and enthroned as God, verse 13. His matchless char-

acter, His wonderful words, His works of power all proclaim His Deity. Like Thomas of old, we bow to this **ONE** and reverently say, "My Lord and My God."

4. The Incarnation of the Word.

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." John declares the fact, Matthew leads us to the place and Luke gives us the details of His Incarnation. For this truth there are "Three second chapters" which will prove of great help, the second of Luke, the second of Philipines and the second of Hebrews. *"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman,"* Gal. 4:4. *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same,"* Heb. 2:14. He did not cease to be God but took on him a human nature, two natures in one Person, perfect God and perfect Man. True, He emptied Himself, but not of His Deity nor of the attributes of Deity. So really human was He as to be tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin. I do not attempt to explain it, realizing the truth of words, that *"without controversy GREAT IS THE MYSTERY of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh."*

These few references may help us to meet and overcome the foe, but if this be all, then, they fail in their purpose. Rather let them lead us into the presence of this Divine Person to meditate and adore. When John fell at the feet of a fellow-servant in Heaven he was restrained from worshipping, his fellow-servant was but a creature, but we may bow in the presence of this wonderful Word and offer Him the adoration due to Deity alone, for He is God. To Him we sing,

"Thou art the Everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son,
God manifestly seen and heard
And Heaven's Beloved One.

In Thee, most perfectly expressed
The Father's glories shine,
Of the full Deity possessed,
Eternally Divine.

True image of the Infinite,
Whose essence is concealed,
Brightness of uncreated light,
The heart of God revealed."

**He fills a great sphere of service
who keeps a clear and steady light
for his absent Lord.**

The Preaching Of The Cross

1 Cor.1:18-31; Gal.5:11; Gal.6:12,14

Peter Simms

The cross of Christ 1 Cor.1:17

- a) displays the love of God John 3:16
- b) displays the justice of God 2 Cor. 5:17
- c) displays the wrath of God Mt. 27:46
- d) displays the grace of God Eph. 2:8-9
- e) displays man's hatred of God Acts 2:23.
- f) displays the impossibility of God saving the worst or best of man except by grace Heb. 9:22.
- g) is the ruin of man's philosophy (the Greeks).
the disdain for man's power (Rome)
the rejection of man's religion (Judaism)
- h) to the Jew is a stumbling block and a rock of offence, but to the Greek it was foolishness
- i) shuts man up to grace or judgement
- j) diagnoses the world's basic trouble at all times
- k) displays God's view on capital punishment

1 Cor. 1:17 *"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel,"* (his commission, Gal. 1:15-16) *"not with wisdom of words,"* (the way it was to be preached. Not with natural eloquence and oratory skills with a view to impressing his hearers. The Corinthians were failing here for they gloried in their gifts and ability in all utterance and knowledge,) *"lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect,"* (the danger to be avoided).

V.18 *"For the preaching (or the logos) of the cross"* (this is referring to the content of the message, the truth embedded in the cross being disclosed and revealed. (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Preaching the death of Christ is acceptable to most in Christendom. But the Word or person of the cross preached is totally rejected) *"is to them that perish foolishness"* (an adjective: it looks on God's mode of dealing with man as foolish, silliness, or stupid; to them it is a scandal (Gal. 5:11), *"but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"* (the natural antithesis of foolishness is the wisdom of God, but Paul is stressing the mighty power of the message of the cross, and not the revelation of the Divine wisdom relating to it. It is the power of God in that through it the works of Satan have been undone (1 John 3:8), Satan has been defeated (John 12:31), Death has been conquered (1 Cor. 15:54-55), and God has been propitiated (Rom. 3:25.)

V.19 *"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent"* Isa. 29:14. Man has always considered his wisdom superior to that of God's. But God has pledged to overthrow, and destroy this man-centered wisdom, so for the Corinthians to pursue their own wisdom, Paul is showing them that it will lead to their doom.

Gal. 5:11 The offence (or scandal) of the cross. The preaching of the cross sets aside all that man boasts and glories in. It leaves him totally shut up to grace, with nothing to cling to except the grace and mercy of God; this, to him, is a scandal. This is because it calls the religious to take their place with the pagan, the intellectual with the unlearned and ignorant, the self righteous with their blameless life with the harlots and drunkards, and there receive salvation from God on the basis of grace alone.

2 Cor. 2:17 *"For we are not of those who corrupt"* (hucksterism or adulterizing) *"the Word of God."* The false teachers were out to make their wares acceptable, to secure, as it were, a trade, and so they sought popularity and an apparent success by corrupting the gospel to make it attractive to their hearers.

Gal. 6:12-15 *"The many"* the gospel preached by the many in apostolic days brought no persecution, because it left man a platform on which *"to make a false show in the flesh."*

1 Cor. 1:20-21 The wisdom of God and the futility of the wisdom of man.

V.20 *"Where is the wise?"* The Greek philosopher *"where is the scribe?"* The Jewish scholar. *"where is the disputer of this world?"* The debater, the man who loves to argue. *"hath not God (through the preaching of the Logos) made foolish the wisdom of this world?"* He proved that their wisdom was silly. Professing themselves to be wise they were seen to be fools (Rom. 1:22.) Man's wisdom has no answer for the basic need of man as a sinner. He can educate him, give him a proper environment in which to live, keep him from being hungry; but he is still evil and will practice evil. And the philosophy of sociology does not teach or have an answer to his real problem.

V.21 *"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,"* God in His wisdom determined that man by his own wisdom would never come to a knowledge of God. (Job 11:7.)

"it pleased God by the foolishness" (as an adjective: a foolish way of trying to solve a problem) *"of preaching"* (or the thing, the message preached,) *"to save them that believe."* It was and still is foolishness in the eyes of men, but revealed here as the masterpiece of Divine wisdom.

"Preaching the word (of the Cross), not the act of preaching, but the substance of the testimony, all that God has made known concerning the subject." (W. E. Vine).

V.22-25 Christ is the complete and only answer to the need

of man.

V.22 *“For the Jews require a sign,”* some evidence of a conquering Messiah *“and the Greeks seek after wisdom”* wisdom to them was the sum total of life (Acts 17:16-34.)

V.23 *“But we preach Christ crucified,”* This offended the Jew because it left him with nothing to glory in, other than a crucified Christ. To him it was a stumbling block. To the Greek it was silly, a man who could not save himself was unlikely to be able to save anyone else.

V.24 *“But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God,”* The nation failed to recognize the power of God. As the power of God, He had vanquished every oppressing force of evil and effected redemption. This he accomplished through His death on the cross, which is foolishness in the sight of the world’s wisdom. *“and the wisdom of God.”* That He was the wisdom of God, the nations had failed to discern. As the wisdom of God He had solved in His death the problem that had baffled and defeated secular wisdom.

V.25 *“Because the foolishness of God”* He became flesh (John 1:14;) He became poor (2 Cor. 8:9;) He became obedient (Phil. 2:8;) He became dead (Rev. 1:18.) In man’s reckoning neither of these were the acts of wisdom. For one who is God to submit to any of these four is according to man’s wisdom, foolishness & weakness. *“is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”* This is the whole point that God wants to get across to man, that the gospel runs counter to all man’s thoughts and expectations, for all was accomplished outside of, and apart from his ingenuity and intellect. Through His Son and His work God has demonstrated His wisdom and His power. It’s for this reason man cannot think his way to God (Job.11:7, John 14:6)

V.26-31 The call of God

The call of God in the gospel is clearly seen to be rooted in a divine and not a human decision. This is ordered by God so that no flesh should glory in His presence, v.29, but that all glory would go to the Lord, v.31. This would have been an awful rebuke to those who were glorying in men, v.12. He now names three classes from which few are called, and five from which many are called.

V.26 *“For ye see your calling, brethren,”* God has indicated in His choice that He would have His grace, power and marvels lived out in the lives of the most unlikely people. By this choice we are given an idea of the cultural and social level of the church at Corinth. This would hold true of any local church, *“how that not many wise men,”* the philosophical & intellectual class *“not many mighty,”* The

political, industrial, etc; *“not many noble,”* from the ranks of high society, the aristocrats *“after the flesh are called,”*

V.27 *“But God hath chosen the foolish* (the opposite of those in v.26) *things of the world to confound* (put to shame or disgrace) *the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world* (those who wield no influence in this world) *to confound the things which are mighty”;*

V.28 *“And base* (low-born, maybe slaves) *things of the world, and things which are despised* (those looked upon as of no account), *hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not* (of such a low class that in the eyes of society they just do not exist), *to bring to nought things that are.”* By the choice of such, God sets aside those who think they are something – *“the things that are”*– in this world, and completely reduces their pride by stating that all this is so that no man may glory before God.

V.29 *“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”*

V.30 *“But of Him”* (God), origin and source. It’s because of God and Him alone we are found to be in Christ, *“are ye in Christ Jesus,”* everything we have and are in Christ, we have by grace alone, *“who of God became unto us wisdom,”* through His incarnation, death, burial and resurrection He became unto us wisdom cp v.24. This wisdom is the setting before us all the counsels and purposes of God, not only in redemption accomplished on the cross, but in relation to what follows in this verse. In v.24 stress is laid upon the fact that Christ is the expression of the Divine attribute of wisdom, here in v.30 what He is, as such, to the believers is the point in view; *“and righteousness,”* judicially 2 Cor. 5:21, *“and sanctification,”* positionally *“and redemption”* in its completeness. Eph.1:14

V.31 *“That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”*

*They are never disappointed who have learned
to wait only on God,
and to expect nothing from man.*

Spiritual Growth (4)

Jim Walmsley

Gathered in My Name

At the beginning of the Christian era, under strong persecutions, those that believed in the Lord Jesus Christ

were gathered in places identified simply with the figure of a fish. It was dangerous to gathered together openly as Christians; for this reason, the fish served to identify those places where they gathered. Ultimately, this symbol has been popularized and is seen frequently, mostly on cars and sometimes with the name of Jesus. For the majority of those persons it is nothing more than another dead symbol of modern Christianity that is satisfied with symbols, rites and ceremonies as well as ornate buildings. In the primitive era when precious truths of the gospel were extended, this symbolism included a confession of the Name of the Lord. The word “fish” in Greek has five letters. For the early Christians, these letters represented the words, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior,” and it is clearly indicated that the early Christians understood the importance of gathering “in the name of the Lord.” They didn’t confess any other name.

These phrases are encountered in the New Testament more frequently than we can believe and their usage is varied. Frequently, we hear it said, “we gather together in the Name of the Lord,” and also “in the Name of the Lord.” The Lord used the first of these expressions when He said, “*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Matt. 18:20). This expression agrees very much with what Jacob said in Gen. 49:20, “*until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*” Even in these times of much confusion, there are true believers that are gathered to the name of the Lord, conscious that they gather around Himself, since He forms the center of every such gathering. His presence in the midst of His people is their only attraction, who they are identified with, abandoning those artificial names invented by men. This enjoyable experience began for each one of them in the day when they believed in His Name (John 1:12). Later they were baptized (Acts 8:16), were gathered (Matt. 18:20), and served as saints (Heb. 6:10), identified with the character and the purposes of the person whose name they confessed, assuming all the obligations that correspond to them as disciples.

To do anything “in the name of another” implies that you do something for or unto him, doing this with his authority, authorization and in dependence on him. We should understand that to be gathered in the name of the Lord isn’t just a dead phrase and without meaning. It represents very much to the believer who is gathered to the name of the Lord and in His name, so that it implies association with Him, representation of Him, and authorization from Him, and all this is in dependence on the will of the Lord.

The norms that guide the believer in all that he would do are simple. Intelligence in the things of the Lord doesn’t depend on having a great intellectual capacity, but rather in having

a spirit of humility and obedience. The Lord testified of this when He said, “*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*” (Matt. 11:25). He also said, “*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*” (John 7:17). The important thing isn’t “to know” but “to do” the will of God.

The believer that truly wants to obey the Lord, won’t have a problem knowing His will, and his prayers will be answered. “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*” (John 14:13). He that is serving the Lord doesn’t seek great things for himself (Jer. 45:5), neither is preoccupied with making himself known. He confidently asks for those things that are needed so that the Father will be glorified. The great object that carries him forward in all activity is the glory of the Father, not his own glory.

For him that fears the name of the Lord (Mal. 3:16), and trembles before His word (Isa. 66:5), there are no teachings that are lacking importance in the Scriptures. No word, exhortation, or teaching will be classified as “little” in the Word of God. He that does this kind of thing risks the censure expressed by the same Lord. “*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven,*” (Matt. 5:19).

His name is holy (Ps. 99:3), glorious and great (Ps. 8:1, 9), excellent or very exalted (Ps. 148:13), reverend, or worthy of holy fear (Ps. 111:9), and fragrant as ointment running down (Song 1:3).

In His Name the apostles preached and taught, prayed, disciplined, suffered and died; in effect, they did everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him, (Col. 3:17). They loved others in the name of the Lord and always sang for His honor.

Rejected in the world, God has exalted Him, giving Him a name that is above every name. Even though that name has been blasphemed and dishonored in the earth, God has decreed “*that every tongue should confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil. 2:9-10).

In view of His coming, let us desire to make the most of every opportunity that is presented to us to confess and uphold the glorious name of the Lord, “. . . *He that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.*” (Eph. 4:10).

(translated from “*La Sana Doctrina*” #309, Sep-Oct 2010)

*“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done.”
Charles Wesley*

Our Calling

Wm. Rodgers

The subject of our calling, as set forth in the Scriptures, is a very large one, much larger than could be adequately dealt with in a magazine article. It would require considerable space even to enumerate the various references to it in the epistles and elsewhere; yet it would not be an unprofitable exercise, since almost all of them differ with regard to the connection and point of view in which they introduce it, and by thus putting them together one would get a full presentation of truth concerning it.

Romans and Jude, the first and last of the epistles as placed in our Bibles, are each of them addressed to the “Called” ones, while in almost all of the others the same term is frequently used of the saints. Especially noteworthy is Rom. 8:29, 30, where it is the central one of five great links which form the chain of God's purpose concerning His people, “Foreknown . . . Predestinated . . . Called . . . Justified. . . Glorified.”

Do we inquire whence came these called ones? We have the answer in 1 Cor. 1:26-29, “*Ye see your Calling, brethren, . . . not many wise . . . not many mighty, not many noble are called; but. . . foolish . . . Weak . . . base . . . despised.*” And we have it again in 1 Peter 2:9, “*Called . . . out of darkness.*” Consideration of this should surely cause us to bow our souls in humility, and in thanksgiving to the Lord, Who has had mercy on such worthless ones as we were.

Do we, on the other hand, ask to what are they called? The reply to this is many-sided. They are called to salvation, 2 Thes. 2:13, 14; to light, 1 Pet. 2:9; to liberty, Gal. 5:13; to the fellowship of God's Son, 1 Cor. 1:9; to blessing, 1 Pet. 3:9; to holiness, 1 Thes. 4:7; to peace, 1 Cor. 7:15; to suffering, 1 Pet. 2:21; to eternal glory, 1 Pet. 5:10; to an eternal inheritance, Heb. 9:15. How needful in view of all this becomes the exhortation of Eph. 3:1 (R. V.), “*Walk worthy of the Calling wherewith ye were called.*”

But there are three Scriptures to which I would more particularly turn your attention, because I think that if we can get hold of what is involved in the expressions used in

them about our calling, we shall have before our minds a solid framework, into which all the other references to it will fit.

In Heb. 3:1, we are partakers of “a HEAVENLY calling.” In 2 Tim. 1:9, we are called with “an HOLY calling.” In Phil. 3:14, we press toward the mark for the prize “of the HIGH (or “upward,” R. V. margin) calling.”

Let us place together in a simple form some truths that appear to lie in those three words, “heavenly,” “high,” “holy.” If we are partakers of a HEAVENLY calling, does it not follow that we belong, not to earth, but to heaven? If we are called with a HOLY calling, is it not implied that we, who belong to heaven, are nevertheless here on earth for God, set apart for Himself and for His purposes? Lastly, if our calling is a HIGH or upward calling, does not this suggest that we, who belong to heaven, but are here on earth for God, shall one day be taken home to where we belong? To put the matter in another way; the first epithet “Heavenly” suggests our privilege, the second one “Holy” suggests our responsibility, while the third one “High” suggests our prospect. We apprehend the first by Faith; practical realization of the second in our lives is through Love; and occupation with the third is the exercise of Hope.

If we consider in each case the setting in which the expressions are found, it will, I think, bear out the application above given to them. The qualification, “heavenly,” is used in Hebrews, the epistle which so forcibly contrasts the earthly calling and privileges of Israel with the heavenly calling and privileges possessed by saints today. This word “heavenly” occurs six times in it, which is more frequent than in any other book of the Bible. Not only have we our heavenly calling in ch. 4:1; but a “heavenly gift” in ch. 6:4; “heavenly things” in ch. 8:5 and ch. 9:23; a “heavenly country” in ch. 11:16; and the “heavenly Jerusalem” in ch. 12:22. So also we have the word “heaven” itself more frequently in Hebrews than in any other epistle. Our Great High Priest has passed into “heaven,” ch. 4:14, 9:24. Israel's earthly possessions are said to be “copies of things in the heavens,” ch. 9:23, (R. V.). We have “in heaven a better and an enduring substance,” ch. 10:34. And the members of the church of the firstborn are described as being “enrolled in heaven,” ch. 12:23.

Could we but place ourselves in the position of those Hebrews to whom this epistle was first written, we should better appreciate the importance of the oft recurring contrast between the earthly and the heavenly. By becoming Christians they had found themselves separated from the religious ritual of their nation, the grandest ritual that the world has ever seen, in comparison with which the ceremonies in great religious buildings of today are but

feeble and unworthy imitations. Need we wonder if it seemed like a tremendous climb down to some of them, that they should be cut off from the temple service, from the sacrifices, and from the ministry of the priests. "No," says the writer of our epistle, "there has been no climb down. You have turned from an earthly calling to become partakers of a heavenly one, with its heavenly temple, its great heavenly Priest, and its one great Sacrifice of permanent value. Your Jewish ritual, with all its pomp and splendor, is itself but a copy and shadow of heavenly realities that are infinitely grander."

Were I asked which of the epistles is preeminently that of our heavenly calling, I suppose I should have to name, not Hebrews, but Ephesians, since it is there we learn that we are seated in Christ in the heavenlies, Eph. 2:6; that all our spiritual blessings are there, Eph. 1:3; and our testimony, Eph. 3:10; and even our warfare, Eph. 6:12 (R. V.). But in Ephesians any contrast which is drawn is not between our heavenly calling and an earthly one: it is between our former low estate as sinners and the high place to which the grace of God has now lifted us. This is, of course, what might be expected, since the Ephesian epistle was written to converted Gentiles, and not to Jews as was Hebrews. In any case, whether we approach the matter from the Ephesian or from the Hebrews standpoint, our hearts must surely be stirred with gratitude to the One through whose mercy and grace alone we have been lifted up, and made partakers of the heavenly calling. And shall it not also beget in us a longing to manifest heavenly character which oftentimes we so sadly fail to do?

But let us see further how this line of thought is followed up in Hebrews. As partakers of the heavenly calling we are invited in ch. 3:1 to consider our great Apostle and Priest, Antitype of Moses and Aaron, and Excelsior of both. Moses (our writer appears to suggest) as a faithful servant in God's House had a measure of access himself, but no power to introduce any one else (ch. 3:2-6 compared with Num. 12:6-8). Christ, Who is Son over the House, can do this. Aaron the typical priest of old time had a strictly limited access on behalf of others, but he could not bring those others in. Christ, our great high Priest, is Son as well as Priest (ch. 4:14 and 5:5-9), and He is able to do what Aaron could not. "Therefore," says He, "let us come boldly unto the Throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Moses could not have addressed the people thus, nor could Aaron; but here it is, written for our encouragement, and to teach us that one of the privileges of our heavenly calling is access in our need to the Throne of grace. Do we avail ourselves of it as we should?

But this is not all. In ch. 10:19, we read that we have

"boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus," and these words are not said with reference to prayer, but as the context shows, to worship. Just as our place of prayer is in heaven according to ch. 4, so also our place of worship is in heaven according to this chapter. What a lift it would give to some of our meetings did we but realize this: "Inside the veil" would be to us no longer a mere phrase, but a blessed experience. One's thoughts go back to Isaiah 6, where the prophet was introduced to a scene of heavenly adoration, and we are shown the effect produced upon him by it.

Even yet there is something more, for in ch. 12:22 we have the words, "*Ye are come unto . . . the heavenly Jerusalem.*" It is here, so to speak, our actual abode. Not only is our place of prayer heavenly, and our place of worship heavenly, but our very home in which we are already dwelling is heavenly.

Let us turn now to 2 Tim. 1:9, where it is said that we are saved and called with "*an holy calling.*" We may learn what is here implied in two ways; first by considering how the Scriptures use the word "holy" itself, and second, by noting as before the character of the context. We commonly think of "holy" as meaning the opposite of sinful, but this comes far short of its full significance. Indeed it is often used, both in the Old Testament and in the New, about things with regard to which no question of sinful and non-sinful could arise. Thus we read of the "holy place," and of the "holy vessels," where evidently the idea is that they have been set apart for God's own use. This meaning is no doubt retained when it is applied, as very frequently in the epistles it is, to ourselves. For the word "saints" which so constantly occurs in our English translation is just "holy ones."

As to the context in 2 Timothy, Paul is here encouraging his young friend to zealous continuance in his work for the Lord. "*Stir up,*" says he, "*(into a flame) the gift of God which is in thee*" (v. 6). For God has given to us a spirit fitted for His service, not a spirit of timidity, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. "*Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. . . Who hath saved us, and called with an holy calling,*" setting us apart for His use. Then the apostle passes on to refer to the example of his own work for the Lord, and of his own confidence in the Lord.

Indeed the entire epistle is written in a similar strain to this, and shows how the "man of God" will be preserved of God while serving Him down here, although everything outwardly may be against him, the apathy of fellow-saints (ch. 1), heretical teachings (ch. 2), evil developments of the last days and persecutions (ch. 3), loss of good leaders by death and of other leaders through love of the world (ch. 4), and, last but not least, weakness in himself.

Let us then take courage to face our responsibilities as a heavenly people here in this earthly place for God and His service. Our position in this respect is graphically described by Christ Himself in His prayer of John 17, where He says that we are “*not of this world*” even as He Himself was “*not of this world*,” but that He has sent us “*into the world*” even as the Father had sent Him “*into the world*.” It is of interest that three times over in that very passage He uses, in connection with Himself and us, the word translated “sanctify,” which is simply a verb formed from the adjective “holy.” It is, however, easy to treat all this merely as a doctrine to be held by us. But let us examine our ways in the light of it. Am I acting and serving as one here on earth for God should do? Or am I ashamed of His testimony, and has the flame burned so low in me that it seems almost doubtful whether it be alive at all?

Passing on again to Philippians 3, we find there a man whose whole attention is concentrated on something set before him, which he calls the “*prize of the high (up) calling of God*”: and because it is so he is making constant progress. He presses on toward the mark, straining every nerve, and allowing no other consideration to hinder him, “*if by any means he might attain*.” It is the very phrase that had been used in Acts 27:12 concerning the hoped-for progress of the ship in which he was then sailing. “*If by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter*.” Here he employs it of his spiritual progress, and sees ahead of him, not merely a temporary winter shelter, but a rest that is eternal, and a prize that is well worth all his efforts to win it. In the last verses of the chapter he makes very clear what it is that was before his mind. “*Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven*,” he says, “*from whence also we look for the Savior*,” Who shall come and take us home. Nothing less than this is the goal to which our calling points us.

We may well ask ourselves how far can we go alongside of Paul in this progressive autobiography of his which is contained in Philippians 3? It begins with his religious life of unsaved days, and then takes us to the point of his conversion. Has our experience of this been such that it might be described in his words, “*What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ*”? There is a reality and a depth here, of which one would like to feel more assurance in some of the testimonies of conversion we hear from time to time.

The next stage of the autobiography describes his present attitude to those things he had turned down at conversion, and to all similar things of earth. “*Yea, doubtless*,” he declares, “*and I (even now) count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*.” Can we say that? Can we speak not only of our experience at

conversion, but of that which is present with us now? Even if we can, I fear most of us must let Paul pass us when we reach the words that follow, “*For Whom I have suffered the loss of all things*.” There is an interesting marginal rendering in the R. V. at Prov. 27:21, “A man is tried by that wherein he boasteth,” and Paul evidently had been put to the proof with regard to his claim that he counts all things but loss for Christ, and had emerged victorious. Would we who sometimes sing “All for Jesus” and “Earth’s joys no longer charm me” come through the test as well?

“But,” you may well say, “surely Paul has reached the furthest limit now; he cannot do more.” Listen to him again. “*Not as though I had already attained, . . . but I follow after; if that I may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus . . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before*.” Do we know anything of this constant progress and constant striving? Are we still reaching forth to the things that are before? Are our faces ever toward the prize of the up calling?

The words of Peter with regard to this matter confirm, as they usually do, those of Paul, and form a fitting conclusion to our subject. After his exhortation in the first chapter of his second epistle to “add . . . add . . . add,” this to progress, he says, “*Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

“Truths for our Day”

would like to publish the experience of believers who are now in local assembly fellowship, but who were saved while they were either linked with another religious group (Christian or otherwise), or with no religious group. We believe that it would be helpful for others to see how the Spirit of God led a believer, after salvation, to seek a scriptural assembly of saints, and consequently to come into the fellowship of such an assembly.

If any reader has a clear story of such an experience and if they would like to share it with others, (or if you know of others who could do so), please send it by email attachment to truthsforourday@gmail.com or to

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Thank you!