

20th December 2017.

YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS.

Merry Christmas!

As the excitement is in high gear all around us especially in the city.....

Being the last Wednesday Bible study service this year, at which times we have been studying from the gospel of Matthew. I was led to taking a break from the usual verse by verse study, and get a Christmas themed message still originating from Matthew where in Chapter 1:21 The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream...and taking the context, from vs. 20-25, we read....

It was William Shakespeare, in 'Romeo and Juliet' who said, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

And for many of us, we have names whose meanings we have no clue, except that they are associated with others in our ancestry from whom we were to have an identity, not considering the implications all that has. The trend I see these days is the giving of exotic even eccentric names to children that you really wonder where they are gotten.

I really like the names from the West of the country that often have a godly bearing upon them, indicating clear purpose with expectation, or faith in the personalities they are given, like.....(Perhaps an influence of the Christian Revival of them years that had a great concentration in those areas).

Very often the first piece of information we have about a person is their name. It's often the first thing you learn about someone and we form judgments about people very rapidly. And those judgments accumulate, so the first piece of information is especially important. It can lean you in a positive direction or a negative direction. And those first impressions can set the stage for future interactions.

I have now come to associate the name Margaret, (which is my wife's name) and simply means "Pearl", with hard working, industrious, headstrong, loving and caring women of class, because I have found that not only of my wife but with almost all the Margarets I have known for long!

Many probably think of a name simply as a means for us by which we can differentiate people, but in Judaism it is much more. In Hebrew thought a name

tells a story of a person's nature, character and or deeds. Names tell us about people, about their character, the circumstances of their birth, or the destiny God has for them. Someone has said so rightly, “Jesus wasn’t a Christian, Mary wasn’t a Catholic, and John wasn’t a Baptist: They were all Jewish!.....

It is said, I don’t know from where, that “Everything answers to its name”. And its true I’d say, because even as we remember studying recently, even demons’ names needed to be known by the Jews, for them to be exorcised, otherwise it was deemed impossible..

So in relation to Him that would be the greatest of all men born, you’d say the bearer of the greatest of all names, would be given the best and most special of all names in eternity, and we are told the name He was given was ‘JESUS’. And sure as Paul puts it in Philippians 2:9-11,.....

Surely as we are all aware He already was Lord God, “The Word”, “The Light”, “The Wisdom”, and even as Isaiah proclaimed in the famed passage Is. 9:6, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. So clearly, He was the same and equal to God Almighty – The Great I AM. Even as the text we read said “...they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

So it is important that at His incarnation (which means his embodiment as a man), the name He is given has all the meaning and purpose for which all of this we celebrate has its essence. No one is ever celebrated for just being, but for the influence and affluence by which they impacted people’s lives positively. And you see it becomes infectious, even if you do not know who or why one is celebrated, it isn’t hard to be caught up in the frenzy when they are being celebrated, the way we see campaign processions..... or better still, the Christmas season. Even those that don’t believe in Jesus Christ will celebrate by hiking prices even of taxi fares, with the simple reason of it being ‘Christmas’.

And the Lord by His angel did not leave it for guessing or debate, but clearly said “...you shall call His name JESUS: for he shall save His people from their sins.”

What is the significance of this saying? The name “Jesus” (or “Yeshua”- Hebrew) means “Yahweh is salvation”; so in calling the baby “Jesus” they were saying that God was saving His people through Him. But the angel specifically said that He would save His people “from their sins.” What does this mean, “He will save His people from their sins”? All of us have sinned, the Bible says (Romans 3:23). We have done things that were wrong, said things that were wrong, thought things that were wrong, and had attitudes that were wrong. Sin has numerous destructive effects in our lives. Sin makes us guilty before God for the wrongs we have committed. Sin enslaves us in its power. And sin would separate us from God and His holy heaven forever. But when Jesus came “to save His people from their sins”, these things were reversed! Let’s look at what it means that Jesus came “to save His people from their sins”:

I. He HAS saved His people from the PENALTY of their sins (The Doctrine of Justification).

The basic meaning of the Greek Word used here for ‘sins’ is “to miss the mark.” But it does NOT mean “miss the mark” in the way many of us would think of it:(Like I did), like an archer, who was trying to hit the right target, but just couldn’t do it.(Bull’s eye). No, this word means “to miss the mark” of the standards that God set for us regarding the way that we should live:

— God commanded us to love Him with all our hearts and souls, and we haven’t; we’ve chosen to love other things in His place.

— God commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves, but we have fallen short of that too, and have been selfish and self-centered in our decisions.

We could go down the list of all the commandments, and we have continually fallen short. Romans 3:23 summarizes it when it says: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

And because we have sinned, we must pay the penalty for our sins. One of the most clear, consistent messages of the Bible is that there are consequences for our sins.

— God told Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden, when He prohibited them from eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil, “The day you eat from it, you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)

— “the wages of sin is death” Romans 6:23 says.

— Ephesians 5:6, speaking of sins, says: “because of these things, the wrath of God rightly comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

— Revelation 20 teaches us of the lake of fire, where the devil will be cast, and all of those who have disobeyed God, and it says “there they will be tormented day and night, forever and ever.” (Rev. 20:10)

Because we have sinned — missed the mark — on all that God commanded us, we are guilty, and deserve God’s punishment for our sin.

But the Bible tells us here that Jesus came “to save His people from their sin”. That means first of all, to save us from the penalty of our sin. God loves us, and wants us to have fellowship with Him, and be with Him in heaven forever — this is what He designed us for. But as our sins caused a separation between us and God, and they make us deserving of God’s just punishment. So there was this dilemma, in that God loved us, because He is a loving God. But He is also a just and holy God, who cannot just let sin go by unpunished. (Exodus 34:7) So the Triune God solved the dilemma by sending God the Son to become a man, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as the sacrifice which paid for our sins. I Peter 2:24 says “He Himself bore our sins (our “hamartia”, that same word used in Matthew 1:21 for missing the mark) in His body on the cross” so that we could be reconciled to God. Our Judge loved us, and paid the penalty for our sins!

II. He IS saving His people from the POWER of their sins (The Doctrine of Sanctification).

We often think of the word “saved” in that past tense way I just described: that Jesus “saved” us from the sins we committed in the past, and set us free from their guilt and penalty. This is a true and blessed part of our salvation, but we also need to understand that Jesus came to do more than that. The Bible word for “save” used in this verse can mean to deliver from oppression or power of some harmful thing. So when it says He came to “save” us from our sins, it means that Jesus not only saves us from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin in our lives.

Peter helps us understand this in his sermon in Acts 3, where he told the people who were amazed at the healing of the lame man that “God sent (Jesus) to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.” He did come merely to forgive our sins, but to give us power to turn from them!

When we are saved, the Bible says the Holy Spirit of God comes into our lives and seals us as His. Galatians 5:22-23 says the fruit of Jesus’ Holy Spirit in you includes “goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” — just what we need to war against so many sins: we do not have to be evil, for the Spirit has given

us a spirit and power of goodness; we do not have to be unfaithful, for the Spirit has brought the power to be faithful; we do not have to be harsh and angry with people, for the Spirit has given us the power to be gentle; we needn't be controlled by enslaving sins, for the Holy Spirit has given us the power of self-control. His presence in our lives gives us power over sin.

Thus Jesus came not only to forgive, but also to give power over sin in the life of every person He saves. Too many Christians seem to be content being freed from the penalty of their sin, but continue dwelling in the same sins over and over. This is not God's plan for us.

You remember in John 8:11, when Jesus was confronted with the woman who was caught in adultery, He said, "Neither do I condemn thee – go and sin no more." Significantly, Jesus did NOT say "Neither do I condemn you; go and keep doing whatever you wish." This is important, because that is basically what many religionists would affirm today (Hyper-grace): "Come as you are, and stay as you are; it doesn't matter." But that is not the message of the Bible. The scripture says here that Jesus came "to save His people from their sins" — not only forgiveness for past sin, but power to change our present sin.

This is the kind of thing that God continually desires to do in our lives: deliver us from the power of sin. It is one thing to continually say, "Lord, forgive me for my sin." And thank God, there is forgiveness with Him, as Psalm 130:3-4 tell us. But there is also power in His salvation to change, that you should not take for granted. He will give you the power not only to be forgiven for your sin, but also to stop doing it. Jesus came not only to save you from the penalty of your sin, but also to set you free from the power of your sin.

This should happen in our lives continually. As you walk with the Lord every day, He will give you power to overcome sin. Thus your life should gradually become more and more holy. This is the process we call "sanctification" – "sanctified" means "holy." Sanctification is the process of growing more holy. This should be the experience of every Christian. You are not to stay the same; you are to be growing in holiness. Hebrews 12:14 says "pursue sanctification ..." . II Corinthians 7:1 says "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (sanctification) in the fear of God." These verses are describing a commitment, and a process. It is not going to happen instantaneously. It is like what God told Israel when they were going to take the Promised Land from the foreign nations: "The Lord your God will clear away these nations before

you LITTLE BY LITTLE; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly ... but the Lord your God will deliver them before you.” (Exodus 23:29,30). God told the people of Israel: I am not going to sweep away all the nations of the land in one week. It was going to be a gradual process – they would have to continue to rely on Him to help them. This is a good picture of what happens in your Christian life. God doesn’t deliver you from every sin instantly – if He did you might forget your need to rely on Him! Instead, just like with the people of Israel, He leads us through the gradual process of “sanctification” – learning to depend more and more on His saving power over sin in your daily life.

Is this the experience of your Christian life? Are you growing in sanctification? Are you experiencing the power of Jesus to save you from your sins? Are you more holy now than you were a year ago, or 5 years ago? If not, you are missing out on part of what Christ came to give you – the power over sin in your life. For many Christians, this is like an “unopened gift” that Jesus came to give us at Christmas. We have opened the “gift” of salvation from the penalty of sin, but we have neglected to open the gift of the power to conquer sin. I would encourage you today to “open this gift”: look at what you would consider to be the “biggest sin” in your life, and ask Jesus Christ today, by His power, to help you overcome that sin. He came “to save His people from their sins” – not only from the penalty, but also from the power of sin in their lives.

III. He WILL save His people from the PRESENCE of sin (The Doctrine of Glorification).

The truth is, even though you can have more and more power over sin as you grow as a believer, as long as you live, you will always struggle with the power of sin in your life. I John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” That is present tense: if anyone says that they have (present tense) no sin, they are just deceiving themselves. The battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil will last all of our lives.

This is true for every believer. The Apostle Paul, one of the greatest Christians to walk the earth, writes in Romans 7 about his ongoing battle with sin, decrying the fact that sometimes he does the very thing that he hates, and he ends that passage by saying: “Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 7:24-25) He says, one day, Christ will save him not only from the penalty and the power, but also the

very presence of sin will be eradicated from our lives. One day, that battle will be over. We will be set free from not only the guilt, and the power, but also the very presence of sin itself! When the angel said, “He will save His people from their sins” means that He will one day deliver us from the presence of sin entirely.

This is the promise of heaven – there will be no sin there. I John 3:2 says “we will be like Him, for we will see Him just as He is.” Revelation 21:27 says: “and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Everyone in heaven will be absolutely set free, not only from the penalty, and the power, but also from the presence of sin. Nothing sinful or unclean will be in that place. It is a place of perfection beyond our imagination.

This is what Christmas is all about. This is what Jesus came to do: He came “to save His people from their sins.” That means that Jesus saves us from the penalty, power, and the presence of sin; salvation past, present, and future: we WERE saved from the penalty of sin; we ARE BEING saved from the power of sin, and one day we WILL be totally saved from the very presence of sin. This is what it means to be “Justified, sanctified, glorified” – saved from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. The angel said, “You shall call His name ‘JESUS’, for He will save His people from their sins”!

And I can best summarize today’s message with Colossians 1:12-23 as the Apostle Paul, whose name I’m so inspired to be ascribed by exhortations, that we like during this season.....