

## A New Name!

What is in a name? In American culture your name is merely a familiar sound, such as Jerry, or Paul, or Mike, which loosely identifies you as belonging to that sound. But so do a lot of other people. To be closely identified with that sound, whoever uses that name would have to be specific as to context. So if I want everyone to understand that “Steve” is Steve Flanigan, I would have to add the last name, or say, “Pastor Steve.” Otherwise you wouldn’t know if it was Steve the hairdresser, or Steve the bartender, or Steve the homeless guy.

**Our culture Vs. that culture.** In Biblical culture, and in many cultures in the world, your name says something very specific as to who you are, what is your identity. In the culture of the Native American, one’s name often refers to the circumstances surrounding one’s birth, such as “Eagle In The Sky”, or some other event. In Israel, a similar thing existed.

In the Bible, the name of God is recorded as Yahweh, or Jehovah, in the Old Testament, and is usually translated LORD. But the name of God is not just a sound to differentiate. If we look throughout the Word of God we find that included in that name is the meaning of The I AM, The Eternal One, The Creator, One Over All, King of Kings, etc. In European culture one’s name actually spoke of your occupation in life. For instance, my name, Mercer, meant a merchant, a dealer in fabric. A Smith was a blacksmith, a worker of metal.

**The value of a name.** There are other senses of the word “name” and they refer to one’s reputation and authority. Your name is a statement of who you are, and the very mention of your name will bring to others an image of the kind of person they perceive you to be. In essence your name is your reputation, and reputation is a highly

revered concept in civilized society. Libel suits are filed when slanderous accusations affect the reputation or name of an individual.

Ecclesiastes 7:1 says, “A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of one’s death better than the day of birth.” In the mind of the writer of Ecclesiastes, when one dies, one has attained to a reputation, has developed a name for oneself, which one does not possess at birth. Proverbs 22:1 voices a similar opinion, “A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.” Businesses, great corporate empires, are built on a name. In some cases they are lost because of a bad name, a bad reputation.

**Authority in a name.** There is also the sense of authority. When Christians prays in the “name of Jesus” it is because we invoke the *authority* of Jesus Christ in whom we believe. A policeman acts “in the name of the Law” because he has that authority vested in him by the state or federal code.

**Biblical examples of a good name.** The Bible contains mention of individuals that possessed a good name, who had developed a good reputation. 3 John 12 says, “Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone--and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.” 2 Corinthians 8:17, 18 mentions a companion of Titus, a co-worker with the Apostle Paul, saying, “Titus...we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.”

It feels good when others think highly of us and demonstrate the belief that we have obtained a good reputation. On the other hand it hurts to discover that others are talking of us in a negative way, perhaps

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saying, “Don’t rely too much on him, he can’t be depended on.”

A man with a discouraging name. Now I want to introduce to you someone in the Bible who was given a name that had a really negative idea attached to it. This person is named in a story contained in 1 Chronicles 7:20-23 when Ephraim and his descendants are mentioned. In verse 21 we find Ephraim’s sons Ezer and Elead “were killed by the native born men of Gath, when they went down to seize their livestock. Their father Ephraim mourned for them many days, and his relatives came to comfort him. Then he lay with his wife again, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. He named him Beriah, because there had been misfortune in his family.” “Beriah” sounds like the Hebrew word for misfortune.

Now stop and imagine his life, how his name could have affected him throughout his years. He’s coming down the road and someone says, “Hey Misfortune! How’s it going?” Or, “Hey look, everybody it’s Trouble. Hey Sad Sack, Hey Bad News.” Having a name like that can weigh on a person, make them doubt their worth, doubt their reason for existence, can skew their thinking so they never come to realize their true potential.

The name others give us. Now as for yourself, what have you been called? What name have you been given by people along life’s way that has affected your view of yourself. Have you made a mistake and heard a family member say things like the following? “You always do that.” Or, “You never finish what you start.” “You’re not smart enough to do that.” “You’ll never amount to anything.” How about, “You can’t keep a job.” Or, “You’re a drug addict.” “You’re an alcoholic.” Here’s a great one: “You’re too old to work for them.” Maybe, “You’re too young to work for them.”

How you see yourself is the name you give yourself. When someone says there is a job opening in a computer firm, and it is entry level, and they will teach you computer technology, do you hear a voice saying, “You’re not smart enough to learn computers”? When the messenger declares, “Come to Jesus and he will lead you into a life of service to God, changing you from glory to glory”, do you hear yourself say, “I’ve tried before and I always fail?” Is that the name you give yourself: “Failure”? Well I have some good news for you!

**God is in the name-changing business.**

In Genesis 17:5 God changed Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of many).

In Genesis 17:15 God changed Sarai (bitterness) to Sarah (princess).

In Genesis 32:28 God changed Jacob (deceiver, supplanter) to Israel (he who struggles with God, and succeeds).

In Judges 6:12 God changed Gideon (tree-feller) to Mighty Warrior

In Matthew 16:18 Simon becomes Peter (Rock).

In Acts 13:9 Saul the persecutor becomes Paul the Apostle.

**God wants to give YOU a new name, a new identity.**

In Isaiah 56:5, God prophesies that he will make a great and lasting change in his people, saying, “..to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off.” He repeats himself in Isaiah 62:2 “The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.” Now this is a promise of Israel, the seed of Abraham, but in Galatians 3:29 Paul declares, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

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A few chapters later, in Isaiah 65:15,17, the promise is made again: “..to his servants he will give a new name.” “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

Your new name is a declaration of who you are, what you are, not just a sound.

In Revelation 3:12 Jesus makes this promise. “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.”

What will it mean for you to have a new name? What change will that create in your life? Since we have seen that when the Bible says you get a new name, it means a new person, a new reputation, a new identity, how is that demonstrated in reality? The truth of this experience is hinted in Ephesians 4:22-24 “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made *new in the attitude of your minds*; and to put on the new self, *created to be like God* in true righteousness and holiness.”

This same concept is spoken in Colossians 3:2,3, “Set your minds on things above, (heavenly, elevated things) not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” And in Colossians 3:9-11 “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being *renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator*. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” In an even more dramatic statement, reminding us of the promise in Isaiah 65,

Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creation*. The old has gone, the new has come!”

Your new name is Son of God! Now it would be fine enough if we were simply changed from a grumpy self to a happy self, from a failure to a success, from an absent parent to a good father or good mother, but that is too mediocre for God! He has something far greater in mind! Paul again declares in Galatians 3:26-28 “You are all *sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The Apostle John impressively agrees with Paul’s assessment in 1 John 3:1 “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” Do you grasp the impact of that statement? By attaining to faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, we too become sons and daughters of God!

God wants to give you a new name, a new identity. Have you been known as “Mr. Timid”? God will make you “Mighty Man of God.”

Were you “Child of Shame”? You will be “Son of God, Daughter of God.”

Is your reputation “Fair Weather Friend”? You will be “Mighty warrior.”

Do they now call you “Liar”? God will make you “Truth bearer.”

Are you known as a “Blatant Sinner”? You shall be a “Saint of the Living God.”

Have you been a cheat? You can be a “Good Husband...a Good Wife.”

Were you a lousy parent? You will be a “Good Father...a Good Mother.”

Were you a disappointment? You will be known as a “Good Son...a Good Daughter.”

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Have you always failed? Been poor? You will be called “Prosperous...Successful.”

Are you the “Sad Sack”? You will have the name “Happy.”

Are you weak and sick? God can make you “Healthy...Strong.”

Do your kids call you “Meany”? You will be “Kind, Loving.”

Is your name “Harvey Milquetoast”? They will call you “Solid Rock.”

Do they call you “Dumb”? God will make you a “Wise Counselor.”

You can't get a new name in your own power. This is something God does in your life when you turn your life over to Jesus and become his disciple; when you trust him and draw close to him and feed on his Word and Holy Spirit. You can't make this change in your own power. You must turn from your old ways, turn from your old name. You have to receive Jesus, accept His sacrifice to cover your sins, your failures, your inadequacies. He has done for you what you could not do for yourself, even if you have not recognized it yet. You can never live up to God's righteous standard without his forgiveness and renewal through Christ. Now, when you have done that,

**BELIEVE GOD!** Jesus ordained in Matthew 21:22 “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” It is the man who takes God at his word, and accepts his new name and continues to look to the Lord for all his successes who will attain to the glory of a New Name!

Understand you have an enemy who wants to hold you down. In Revelation 12:10, after it is declared that Satan has been cast down to the earth with his angels, this is said of him: “For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been

hurled down.” But notice what it goes on to say in verse 11: “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

When those thoughts come back saying you are a loser, you are weak, you are a failure, you'll never make anything of yourself, **GIVE YOUR TESTIMONY!** Say, “I was bought with a price. I've been washed in the blood. I'm a son of God, a child of the King of Kings. I'm a Mighty Warrior. I am robed in His righteousness. I am more than a conqueror through Him who loved me and delivered me. I can trample on scorpions and snakes and all the works of the enemy. And it is all because:

**I HAVE A NEW NAME!**

We invite your response to this message. If you have prayed to receive Christ, please let us know, and seek out a church where Jesus is the focus of attention. If you feel led to contribute to this effort, send correspondence to:

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