

Morning Musings of my Mind

For some time, I have been thinking about a practice amongst Christians that is done without any thought to its meaning. I've also been involved in that same practice practically all of my Christian life – I became a Christian at the age of 8 during a Youth For Christ rally in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. That was in 1955. 70 years ago! Wow!

We are encouraged by scripture to be justified when we speak ~Romans 3:4. We are also admonished via the Ten Commandments to not take the name of the Lord our God in vain for God will not hold us guiltless* who take His name in vain ~Exodus 20:7. *Several translations use the word unpunished i.e. will not leave him unpunished. That's serious! Simply put, when His name is used in vain punishment is guaranteed.

What does taking the name of God "in vain" actually mean? Biblical commentators are pretty much of the same mind, stating that it's using His name in a casual manner – e.g. as a curse, or invoking His name without thought. It's a sad commentary on our society when the curse "Jesus Christ" is used with impunity in movies and over the air comments while the common word for excrement is bleeped out. Think about that!

Using His name correctly would mean that God Himself would say or do the same thing. The Apostle John recounts Jesus talking to His Disciples: "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it ~John 14:14. And again in John 16:23, "And on that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you." Simply put, His words in John 14 refer to His time with them before His death and in John 16 their direct access to the Father because of His death and resurrection. The veil has been rent, and we can now come boldly into His presence ~Hebrews 4:16.

Now we are at the crux of this exercise. Do we really believe that if we ask the Father via prayer for anything and invoke the name of Jesus the Father will grant our request? May I suggest that the stupendous lack of results in many of our prayers is due to using the name of Jesus in vain?

Ending our prayers "...in Jesus' name, amen" is doing exactly that. We are using His name like a magic formula. What we are actually saying by tacking His name to the end of our prayer is that if Jesus were physically present, He would ask the same thing! There are actually times when it is correct to do so – e.g. The Lord's prayer or asking for a measure of grace to help in our time of need (see Hebrews 4:16 again). However, methinks that the greater majority of our use of His name constitutes malpractice and puts us in line for His punishment.

I'm almost completely deaf. Many, many times over the years I have had well-meaning Christians pray for my healing. In every single case they invoked the name of Jesus at the end of their prayers. Every. Single. Time. I'm still profoundly deaf! One Pastor remarked that if I wanted to be deaf that was on me. He was convinced I was blocking my own healing – I'm sure there are cases (biblical and otherwise) where that is true. But not in my case. I would have welcomed being able to hear like the majority of people. I longed to hear my wife's words without having to turn on the light to read her lips. So, instead of questioning his own lack of

results, he put the onus on me. In my opinion, at this stage of my understanding, he used the name of Jesus in vain!

So, just a word of caution: please do not use “In Jesus’ name” as the conclusion to your prayers unless you are sure beyond doubt that Jesus would pray for the same thing!

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