

In His Name

by: Ronald L. Dart

Over the years, I have been unclear in my mind about the meaning of one phrase in the Lord's Prayer. You know how it begins, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." It is those last four words that I want to talk about, "Hallowed be thy name."

I came to wonder if it was somehow connected to the third commandment, "Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." When I think about it, why wouldn't it be connected to that.

When I was writing my book, "Law and Covenant," it occurred to me, that my wife has, by covenant, taken my name. Therefore everything she does, she does in my name. She signs a check, it's in my name. She opens a new account, it's in my name. She opens a credit card and it's in my name.

That's what covenant does. Now as I worked my way around this circle, I came to see the importance of care and respect for what I do or ask in His name. That is to say, in God's name, in Jesus' name. This has to be a lot more than a matter of how we pronounce His name or even knowing what His name is.

"Our Father"

Jesus did not tell us to pray to Jehovah or Yahweh. He gave us permission to address God as Father (Matthew 6:9). In the vernacular, Abba (Mark 14:36).

Now from this, I began to wonder, if the reason for saying, "Hallowed be thy name," was simply an acknowledgment that the name was not spoken here, and the reason for it was, that that name is holy and we don't bandy it around.

This statement in the Lord's Prayer is more than a matter of pronouncing the name in Hebrew. I know this, if for no other reason, none of the New Testament writers, not one, use the Hebrew names for God anywhere in the New Testament. Why didn't they? Well by this time, everybody had gotten on to the idea that the Ten Commandments states, that you don't take the name of Yahweh your God in vain.

So the Jews, and their custom was after they came back out of Babylon, they did not utter that name, at least in public. They may have uttered it in prayer, I don't know. In fact they don't want to talk about that very much.

When Jesus was there, it was considered almost blasphemous and certainly disrespectful to utter the divine name in public, and so they didn't.

Jesus said, "When you pray, pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.'"

We Must Be In Covenant With God

And I said, I almost thought it might be a reason why we have not spoken it. Then there is this, just as in marriage, we can only carry God's name, if we are in covenant with Him. You may call yourself a Christian, and many did in those early days, but if they were not in covenant with Him, they did not carry His name.

In the same way, merely having a boyfriend does not place you in covenant with Him. You don't carry his name. You can't sign His name to the checks. It is not your name.

You Shall Not Take The Name Of The Lord Your God In Vain

What is interesting about this is, the third commandment is about this very thing. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

Now I looked up the word "take" in the Hebrew, and a better rendering of this passage is, "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses His name."

I grew up, I know, thinking that "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain," meant simply, you didn't say it as a matter of profanity, to use it as a curse word, but actually it's considerably more than that. Now that certainly would be wrong, because He will not acquit anyone who misuses His name.

Now this a little tighter with the idea that you can't call yourself by His name if you aren't in covenant with Him. Now since the New Testament acknowledges that the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26), perhaps we can call ourselves Christians, even if we are not truly committed to Him, because a 'disciple' is after all, merely a student. But there is a difference folks, between reading Jesus' words, studying what He said, treating Him as a philosopher, a man with a good set of values on the one hand, and actually being in covenant with Him, which is what the new covenant is all about.

The New Covenant

The New Covenant is what we will call the Lord's Supper or the Christian Passover, the partaking of the wine and the bread, as symbols of his blood and body. This is entering into covenant with Him. We would become as blood relatives as it were.

Now one misunderstanding must be sidestepped here. The covenant of God with Israel, the covenant of Christ with the church, is not truly a marriage covenant. People call it that, but

it's not. There are passages which seem to say that, but these passages are metaphors and the metaphor works, simply because, marriage is a covenant, the relationship we have with God is a covenant. They are both covenants, contracted relationships, formalized relationships and therefore they are comparable, but it is a little bit confusing, I think, to some people when you try to say it was marriage, not in our sense of the word.

God's Name Was Profaned By The Priests In Malachi's Day

Now it is, I fear, all too easy for God's people to make assumptions about their relationship with Him. This was the situation that prevailed when the prophet Malachi came on the scene. He begins his prophecy by saying, "The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. {2} I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'wherein have You loved us?'"

This is really something with this dialogue here. God says to Israel, "I have loved you." Israel says, "I don't see that anywhere, what do you mean you love me?" I don't see that love."

God replies, "Wasn't Esau Jacob's brother?" said the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob, {3} and I hated Esau and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."

The LORD called on Israel to consider the difference in their relationship with God. The difference in the way they had been treated by God from what the twin brother had been treated by God.

Whereas Edom says, God continues, "We have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places," Thus says the LORD of hosts: "They will build, I will throw down. They shall call them the border of wickedness, the people against whom the Lord has indignation forever. {5} Your eye shall see, and you shall say, "The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.""

Then there is an appeal to the relationship which had been created by covenant.

Verse 6 of Malachi 1, "A son honors his father, a servant honors his master. If I am a Father, where is My honor? If I be a Master, where is my fear?" says the LORD of hosts, "To you O priests, that despise my name."

Now the connection here with the expression, "hallowed be thy name," ought to be obvious. The priests did not think that they had done this, because they said, "Well, wherein have we despised your name?" It had nothing to do with the language that they spoke. It had nothing to do with how they pronounced the name.

What did it have to do with? Well, He answers in verse seven, "You offer polluted bread upon My altar, and you have the gall to say, "How have we polluted you?" In that you say,

"The table of the LORD is contemptible." Now, later in verse 11 He says, "From the rising of the sun, to the going down thereof, shall my name be great among the Gentiles."

It hasn't been great among you people, but it will be among them.

"In every place incense shall be offered in My name, and a pure offering for My name shall be great among the heathen," says the LORD of hosts. {12} "But you, My own priests have profaned my name."

Now how exactly they wanted to know, "Have we done this?" Well, it is not by pronouncing His name in Hebrew, that is not what gets it right. Now it is something else altogether. How do they do it? It is that they said, "The table of the LORD is polluted." Now they never uttered those words. How did they say that? It was clear in the way they treated it.

Verse 13, "Shall I accept this of your hand?" Asked God, {14} "Cursed be the deceiver, who has in this flock, a male and takes vows, but sacrifices to the Lord a corrupt thing. "For I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "And My name is dreadful among the heathen."

Give Your Best To The Master

You know, it seems we profane God's name, not by pronouncing it in English or in Greek, but by giving Him less than our best. It is that simple.

Returning to the theme of what it means to pollute God's name, by carrying His name, by calling ourselves by His name and giving Him less than our best.

Ezekiel addresses this from a totally different angle, well not totally different, but somewhat.

In Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 22, he says, "Say to the house of Israel. This is what God says, "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy namesake which you have profaned among the heathen, wherever you went.""

This comes at the end of the section where he is talking about the house of Israel having gone into captivity for their pollution they did in their own land. Then He talks about what He's doing and He says "I am doing this for My namesake. You have gone among the heathen, and profaned it wherever you went." How did they do that? By their conduct. As a people who were in covenant with God, who carried God's name, who said, "We are God's people," and then they lived like they weren't.

Throw Another Log On The Fire

It goes on in verse 23 of Ezekiel 36 to say, "I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen will know that I am Jehovah," says the Lord GOD, "when I will be sanctified in you before their eyes, {24} because I am going to take you from among the heathen. I'm going to gather

you out of all the countries and bring you into your own land. {25} Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness and all your idols. I will cleanse you."

There is an interesting irony here. The Hebrew word for 'idols' here, is the word for 'log,' as in, I threw another log on the fire. Since idols were, for the most part, wood, they were in God's eyes, just another log for the fire.

I will clean you from all your logs, I will cleanse you.

The New Covenant

Ezekiel 36 and verse 26, "I will give you a new heart and I will put a new spirit in you, I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. {27} I will put My Spirit within you. I will cause you to walk in my statutes, you will keep my judgments and do them."

Do you realize what we are reading here? It is a new covenant idea, that I will write my laws and my statutes in their heart and they will be My people. Fascinating when you hear it, because what He is talking about here is a new covenant, which means, we enter into a new relationship. We are now married to him, if you want to use that metaphor, but the covenant is a blood covenant, creating a new relationship between us and God. We carry His name. How we live in the days after we take His name is crucial.

This theme arises again in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews in particular. In chapter 8, the author of Hebrews begins, "Now on the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have such a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

Now we are not dealing with those priests that Malachi was talking about. We're dealing with Jesus Christ our High Priest.

Hebrews 8 verse six, "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by which also He is the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises. {7} For if that first covenant had been faultless, we would not be looking for a second covenant, {8} For finding fault, (not with the covenant) but with them. He says " Behold, the days come," says the Lord, "when I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, {9} Not according to the covenant I made with their fathers when I brought them to lead them out of the land of Egypt, they didn't continue in it. I didn't regard them.""

They broke covenant with God, and that put an end to the relationship. They went into captivity. They were gone. What God will do with them in the future remains to be seen beyond this.

Verse 10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

Now we are back in a new relationship with God, called a new covenant.

"They will not teach every man his neighbor, every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. {12} And I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and their iniquities I will never remember again. {13} And then He says, "a new covenant, He made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away."

Don't make the mistake of assuming that the standards of conduct under that old covenant has somehow been changed. Just because that old covenant has passed away, and you are in a new relationship with God. This doesn't give you the freedom to go out and worship logs, idols or anything of the sort. That law remains unchanged, in its core and in his principles.

Dedication Of The Temple

When you come down in time, and I've been harkening back in time, to I guess, to second Chronicles chapter 7, the dedication of the Temple when it was built. "The LORD appeared to Solomon by night," this is second Chronicles 7 verse 12. He said "I heard your prayer, I've chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. {13} If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locus to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people."

Now you have heard this following Scripture before, {14} "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin, I will heal their land."

My people called by my name. You know, when I pray the Lord's prayer these days and I say, "Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," I know it includes profanity, we should never do that, that is a terrible thing to do, but I know it goes way beyond that now. It has to do with the fact I want your name to be holy as I carry it forth in the world and as I exemplify it by my life. I must not call myself by your name and then live like any stranger would be to you.

There's another statement about this and it is in First Kings eight, verse 41, "Now concerning a stranger, who is not of your people Israel, who comes out of a far country for your name's sake."

In other words, somebody has come to Israel because he's heard of their God, believes in their God, has heard of the word and he wants to be a follower of Israel's God.

{42} "(For they will hear of Your great name and of Your strong hand and Your stretched out arm), when he shall come and pray before this house."

This seems to be Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple.

Verse 43, "Hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do all the stranger asks you for, that all the people of the earth may know your name to fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house, which I have built," says Solomon, "is called by Your name."

Now what sort of obligation does that impose upon the people who worship in that house, who come to that house, who served in that house? Well it is huge!

He goes on to say in verse 44, "When Your people who go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You shall send them, and they prayed unto the Lord toward the city which You have chosen and toward the house which I have built in Your name, {45} Then hear from heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause."

This is so strong and I can't help but recall some of the things that happened in later years, when you think of, hallowed be Your name, and this house called by Your name. Did you realize that prior to King Josiah's ascension to the throne that they had actually moved Temple prostitutes on to the Temple Mount. They had actually erected idols right there on the Temple Mount, inside the temple enclosure, not in the holy of holies itself, but around it and a part of it. They had polluted His name in His house.

Now here's where we say, "Hallowed be Your name. You have called this house by Your name," that means we can't do certain things here that we might otherwise be tempted to do. These are the lessons one is supposed to take away from this.

Letters To The Seven Churches

There is some interesting remarks that are made in the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation.

In chapter 2, those letters begin, and verse 13 is kind of interesting. The apostle John writes to the church in Pergamos with the words of Jesus and says, "I know your works. I know you live where Satan's seat is."

I'm not sure what that means, but I think I would not want to be there.

He says, "You hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days where Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells."

You know, this is really something. Here are people living right near the heart of the beast itself and they've held fast to God's name and because they held fast, one of them was killed for it. Now that is being true to the name you carry, and I really think that is the sense of the Third Commandment, You shall not carry the name of the Lord your God in vain to no purpose. You must not misuse it.

Then in verse eight of Revelation 3, He says to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, "I know your works. I have set before you an open door and no man can shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name."

Of course I have not denied His name. I mean, I know who God is. I believe in Him. Wait a minute, wait a minute, I think the sense He's talking about here has to do with denying His name in the way you live your life. You can't stand before the world and say "I am a Christian. I am in covenant with Christ. I am a member of Christ. I'm a part of Him and His work." And then do things that no Christian should do! Right? It would not be good for you to carry the name of Christ to be seen coming out of one of these adult movie theaters, with Xs all over the marquee outside. Would it? NO it wouldn't!

We Must Hallow God's Name And Be Faithful To It

So part of your job is to hallow God's name as you carry it into the world. When you pray, "Hallowed be thy name," you're talking an obligation you have. You are not just asking God to hallow His name. He did that a long time ago. The issue is, will we who belong to Him uphold His name?

Later in the same chapter of Revelation 3, verse 12, it says, "To him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God and he will no more go out and I will write upon him, the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God and I will write upon him My new name."

You know, the only comparison to why they keep coming back to marriage as an illustration of the covenant, is what we are talking about here, it is like you standing before the minister with your wife to be, and making your vows to one another and entering formally into a covenant with one another. This is what we do with Jesus Christ.

Later in Revelation, chapter 14, John says, "I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion, and with him a 144,000, having His Father's name written in their foreheads."

They are in a relationship with God. They have actually carried His name forth into the world and been faithful with it.

Continuing in verse 2, "And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of a thundering waterfall, a voice of great thunder and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps, {3} And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, before the four beasts, and the elders and no man could learn that song, but the 144,000, who were redeemed from the earth. {4} These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins."

This is speaking spiritually here. I think metaphorically, they might be married.

"These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men being the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, {5} And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God."

How important is it, if we carry His name, that we be people in whose mouth is found no guile, and who are without fault before the throne of God.

Later in Revelation 19 verse 11, "I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse and He that was upon him was called Faithful and True, in righteousness He does judge and make war, {12} His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns, and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. {13} He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God."

These things all come together, to help us understand, what it is in the importance of the name and the importance of 'Hallowed be Your name,' and the responsibility that comes upon us. When we pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." What does it mean?

I don't think it just means we are expecting God to do something to keep His name holy. I think it means we will make Your Name Holy. I think it means that we who bear His name, to be a Christian, disciples of Jesus, followers of Yeshua, whatever it is that we want to call ourselves, that we carry ourselves as those who represent Him in the world, that we act as though we are wearing a shirt that says "Christian!" It means we do not profane His name by our example.

In Exodus 20 verse seven, of the 10 Commandments, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain."

The Hebrew is literally, 'to lift,' and I think it includes the idea of carrying it.

So when we come to the Lord's prayer and we say, "Hallowed be your name," these are not just spiritual words, not just words. "Hallowed be your name, in my life, and by my life. I accept the responsibility of carrying His name and in doing honor to the family."

We have a covenant to honor, with the one whose name we bear, and to respect all those who bear that name for they are family.

Until next time.

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