

Accessing God's Power

Part 1 – The Power of the Name of Jesus

What's in a name?

People have given their children the most ridiculous names.

ILLUS – One non-believing American couple named their daughter Atheist Evolution. Bob Geldof and his wife thought they'd be creative and named one of their daughters Peaches Honeyblossom Charlotte Angel Vanessa. She says she hates ridiculous names. Her big sister is Fifi Trixibelle, while her two younger sisters are Pixie and Heavenly Hiraani Tiger Lilly. Rock star David Bowie called his son Zowie, but Zowie didn't like that so he changed it to Duncan. Keith Richards – of the Rolling Stones – named his daughter Dandelion. She tells everyone her name is Angela. Jamie Oliver and his wife Jools have two daughters named Poppy Honey and Daisy Boo. Jerry Seinfeld named his offspring Shepherd. Or how about some other names people have called their children like Peanut, Together, or Hallelujah?¹

But just in case you're thinking this is an Anglo-American phenomenon, the Asians are getting in on it too.

ILLUS – A Vietnamese man named his son Mai Phat Sau Nghin Ruoi, which means “Fined Six Thousand Five Hundred”, which is how much it cost him for ignoring the country's two-child policy. Malaysia has even had to ban some names: Ah Gong, which means Unsound Mind; Sum Seng, which means Gangster; and Chow Tow, which means Smelly Head.

The thing is, names are important.

Names were important in the Bible; some people like Sarai, Abram, and Simon, changed their names to indicate something significant.

In 1 Sam 25, Abigail told King David, “My husband's name is fool, and that's what he is.”

But the most significant name of all is the name of Jesus.

Today, we're beginning a series called Accessing God's Power, and in particular we're looking at the power of the name of Jesus.

I believe there is immeasurable power in the name of Jesus.

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

All of that, at the name of Jesus!

I kind of imagine it like this: One day, all of heaven will be gathered together, and all the souls who have ever lived, and Satan and all his angels and demons. Then as the Lord Jesus Christ makes His entry, His name is called out, and every creature of heaven – the elders, the angels, the living creatures of Revelation – Satan and his hordes, and every human of every nation and tribe and colour and religion, shall all fall on their knees.

And who knows, maybe there'll be some humungous angels ready to smack you across the back of the head if you don't want to bow the knee.

But I think nobody will be able to help themselves because of the immense power of the name of Jesus.

Some will bow out of love for that name, and others will bow because of fear.

But the power of the name of Jesus will be evident to all of creation.

That same power is available to every true believer in Christ.

John 14:13-14 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
(14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

This is a great promise, but what does “in the name of Jesus” mean?

So often – especially in Pentecostal / Charismatic churches – we take it to mean the stamp of approval.

We’ll pray, “Lord, I want a new house, Mercedes, Rolex watch, latest computer, and … oh yeah, boom (stamp of approval), in the name of Jesus.”

And guess who decides whether something should get the stamp of approval? We do.

But is that what it means?

I believe that the name of Jesus isn’t just a magic formula.

We can’t just pray whatever **we** want, add “in the name of Jesus”, and think that that means our prayer must be answered because we used the right formula.

Or that God is up there listening and saying, “Nah, I don’t think so. Nope, nope, nope. Oh hang on, they said, ‘In the name of Jesus’. Oh, okay, since you put it that way.”

That’s not how it works.

This approach only leads to disappointment – people say, “I tried what the Bible says and it doesn’t work”; I prayed in the name of Jesus and nothing happened.

Of course nothing happened, because that’s not what it means.

So how does it work?

How can I ensure that I access the power of Jesus’ name the way God wants me to?

1. I need to understand that if I use the name of Jesus, I acknowledge that I’m a representative of Jesus Christ.

ILLUS – (Acts 3-4) Peter and John are going into the temple and they see a man who is in his 40s who’s been crippled from birth. When they heal him in the name of Jesus, it really creates a stir. People have been walking past him for years. “Hey, isn’t that what’s-his-name?” “Yeah, that’s him.” “What happened?” “I don’t know. Let’s find out.” Crowds of people gather round and the apostles take the opportunity to preach the gospel. Next thing you know, here comes the captain of the guard, and the priests, and the Sadducees, and Peter and John are arrested.

The religious authorities are faced with an undeniable miracle, so all they can do is threaten the apostles and…

Acts 4:18 it says they … commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Notice this, when the apostles preached, they did so in the name of Jesus.

What does that mean?

You can read the sermon in Acts 3.

We can see there what it doesn’t mean.

They didn’t preach the gospel and tag “in the name of Jesus” on the end.

Preaching in the name of Jesus meant they preached as His representatives.

Let’s have a look at how this works, because we have a parallel situation today.

ILLUS – I can’t just go up to X and say, “I arrest you in the name of Her Majesty the Queen.”

And the main reason I can’t is that when I say “in the name of Her Majesty the Queen”, I’m implying that I’m her representative – and I’m not.

The same principle is found in Acts 19:11-16:

ILLUS – Here's the story: Paul is doing the most amazing miracles. Sometimes people bring pieces of cloth to him, all he's got to do is touch them and the people touched by the cloth are healed, or demons leave. But Paul is being watched. A Jewish high priest named Sceva has seven sons, and they see him casting out demons, and they have this discussion: "Wow! Did you see that? That is way cool." "Yeah, how did he cast out that demon?" "Looks pretty simple to me. He used special words: In the name of Jesus." "Well, that's gotta be better than abracadabra." "Hey, I know a guy down the street who's seriously weird; he's got a demon. Let's try it out on him." "Great idea, dude." So off they go down the street, into the guy's house, gather round, and now it's time to get spiritual: "In the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches (they didn't have a clue who Jesus was), evil spirit leave this man."

The Greek tells us more than the English.

The English tells us that the evil spirit said, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul..."

But in the Greek there are two different words for "know".

It would be better if it said, "I know Jesus, and I know about² Paul. I've heard of him – he's a pain in the neck. But who ... are .. you?"

And with that, this one man, fuelled by demonic power, beat the living daylights out of all seven brothers, and they fled, naked and bleeding.

This story has important implications for us.

It means that when I use that phrase "in the name of Jesus", I better make darn sure that I'm actually representing His interests.

I can't say, "I claim that Mercedes in the name of Jesus".

If I do that, whose interests am I really representing? – Mine.

Just because I'm lustng after that car doesn't mean God wants me to have it.

This story also demonstrates that our representation of Christ is based on relationship – the sons of Sceva made the mistake of thinking that it was a formula, but they didn't have the relationship.

No relationship means no authority and no power.

2. If I ask in the name of Jesus, I will ask according to His will because I'm representing His interests.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (15) And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

I have to pray according to God's will.

But I don't necessarily need a Bible verse to support what I'm asking for.

ILLUS – Imagine God sends me to Africa to preach the Gospel, and I'm walking from village to village, and I'm preaching, and I think, "Man, I could be a lot more effective if I had a motorbike." So what should I do? Get a Bible verse, a promise? I pull out my Bible concordance, looking for a verse. But I'm not going to find a Bible verse on motorbikes.

So I can't be worried about that.

I'm representing the King.

And I'm going to expect all the help I can get in doing His will most effectively.

The key here is whose interests am I representing?

3. If I am representing the Lord Jesus Christ and His interests, the name of Jesus gives me access to all the power and authority of heaven to back me up.

ILLUS – If I go up to someone and say, "I saw you run that red light. I'm putting you under arrest." He'll say, "Yeah, right. You and whose army?" But if I'm Officer Tony Llewellyn, and I say, "I saw you run that red light. I'm putting you under arrest." That's different. He looks at my uniform which represents my legal

authority, he looks at my gun which represents the power I have to back that authority up, and he says, "Okay officer. Be gentle with the cuffs."

I can say the same words, but with different effects.

Because it's not who I am that makes the difference, it's what or who I represent.

That makes all the difference.

You can be confident that if you're representing the interests of the Kingdom of God and not just your own interests, you will have all the backing of God's power and authority.

Nothing will stand in your way – absolutely nothing.

Through faith, nothing can prevent you from achieving the will of God in your life.

Rom 8:31 ...If God is for us, who can be against us?

Once I've made certain that what I'm asking for is the will of God for me, I can ask with confidence.

John 14:13-14 And **whatever** you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
(14) If you ask **anything** in My name, I will do it.

Now let's take a look at some of the things that happened in the Bible through the name of Jesus.

1. Signs and wonders were done through the name of Jesus

Acts 4:30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.

Now remember: "in the name of Jesus" isn't a formula.

Verse 30 is the end of a sentence that began in verse 29.

Acts 4:29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

What were they doing? Representing His interests by preaching the Word of God.

And with that in mind, they could continue to represent His interests by asking for signs and wonders.

They weren't just asking for miracles so they could go home feeling all fuzzy inside – "Ooh, I heard the angels singing in the worship today."

That's nice, and I'm not knocking that – but if supernatural manifestations don't somehow work to the advantage of the Kingdom of God, it doesn't really matter if we never have them again.

The purpose of signs and wonders is to advance the Kingdom.

Let's look at what else Jesus' name can do.

2. The name of Jesus brought healing

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

As they say, this man was begging for alms, but they gave him legs.

There is healing in the name of Jesus.

3. The name of Jesus brought deliverance from demonic powers

Acts 16:18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

Both of these – the healing and the deliverance from demons – happened when the apostles were preaching the Gospel.

They were representing the interests of the Kingdom of God.

4. Answered prayer

John 14:13-14 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
(14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

Being mindful of God's interests is the key to answered prayer.

5. The name of Jesus brought salvation.

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Salvation, being reconciled with God, the receiving of eternal life, can only be obtained through Christ.

There is no other way.

¹ www.misterpoll.com

² Nicoll, W. Robertson (Ed.) *The Expositor's Greek Testament* Vol 2 p 407