

The Name, Jesus 10-12-03

Matthew 1:18-21

Last week I shared with you about working our way through the book of Matthew, and how God can sovereignly apply it to our situation, even when we just take it in order. Then I thought I'd skip the next few verses and save them for Christmas. I was going to go right to the story of the wise men. But then I started thinking about verse 21, the name of Jesus. Next an e-mail came from Sermon Central with some great material on the theme Jesus our Savior. All the songs that came to mind for this Sunday were about the name of Jesus. Then I remembered that I had already declared that we could trust God to apply the successive passages to our lives when we happened upon them. I wasn't trusting what I had declared to you. So – we called the newspaper and asked if it was too late to switch our article, changed the title on the marquee, and began all over again with the sermon for today. I share that just to encourage you that God is always speaking. He is always directing. If we don't get the first sign He'll send another if we really desire His direction.

The text is Matthew 1:18-21 (NIV) *¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

I want to share specifically on verse 21. On Christmas we will go back and elaborate on the other verses, but today I think the Lord wants us to focus on what the name of Jesus means. *²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

Joseph was unsure as to how to respond to his betrothed wife Mary's pregnancy. An angel appeared to him in a dream and told him the same thing he had already told Mary. This baby was conceived through the Holy Spirit and was to be named Jesus. Jesus is the English transliteration for the Hebrew name Joshua. It literally means God's salvation or God's deliverance. It had a militant ring to it. It was Joshua who led the Israelites to conquer the land of Canaan. He was a great military commander. So that we didn't misunderstand the kind of salvation that was meant, the angel added, *"he will save his people from their sins."* He was going to lead mankind to a victory over spiritual territory, not physical land. He was going to lead where no other general could lead, victory over sin and its curse.

The Jewish people in Jesus' day were under the occupying power of Rome. They thought their greatest need was to be free of the Roman taxation and government. That is often the perspective of man. How would you define salvation in your life today? Some might say financial freedom. "If I just had a little more money I could get out of debt and be free of worry." Some might think it would be freedom from their marriage, or work obligations, or some difficult relationship or a physical handicap? Maybe instantly becoming 20 years younger would mean salvation to you. We are not so different from the Jewish people. When we think of freedom our first thoughts are usually of a physical nature. It is part of the human condition to have our thoughts dominated by our natural senses. We are in desperate need of someone who can show us what our real need is, what freedom truly is.

God sent His Son into the world and named Him Jesus, not to save us from the needs we perceive to be most urgent, but spiritual ones He knows are truly the most urgent. As God lovingly looks down upon mankind, His biggest concern is their heart condition that affects not only their day-to-day existence, but also their eternity. We are so wrapped up in the immediate desires of our lives that eternal issues are put way off on the back burner or even out of sight altogether. But God looks at our condition from outside of time and sees what really matters. Man's need is for a Savior from the sin that affects his every day world and eternity. God will deal with the secondary issues of world government another day. The most pressing of all needs is to be saved from the tyranny of sin.

OUR GREATEST NEED

"If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent us an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist.
If our greatest need had been pleasure,
God would have sent us an entertainer.
But our greatest need was forgiveness,
So God sent us a Savior!
SOURCE: Chuck Swindoll in "The Grace Awakening."

We find God's perspective of our predicament in Romans 6:19-21 (NIV). ¹⁹*I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.* ²⁰*When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.* ²¹*What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!*

The Apostle Paul is describing what life is like in our fallen nature. The natural man is a slave to sin. That fallen condition just goes from bad to worse, from

damaging to outright destruction. Once you know what God's standard is, His own holiness and righteousness, His glory (all His divine perfect attributes of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and gentleness with perfect justice) you realize there is no way you can measure up. No wonder he says that all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Perfect love expressed in perfect righteousness is the standard. No man has ever come close.

Commented [notes1]: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 (NIV)

Everyday we find ourselves doing things we know are wrong, thinking thoughts that are not holy, and saying things that are impure. Paul calls that slavery to sin. He describes it as being controlled by a power that is greater than our will power. But what makes it all the more frightening is that he says those things end in death. In our carnal minds we think they are going to benefit us, and they never do. We think we will get some kind of gain only to find it loss. The more we try, the worse it gets. We are out of control, that is, out of our control and controlled by another.

The only way we could be liberated is for a hero to obtain a victory over the enemy that won dominion over man in the Garden. It had to be a man winning the victory, reclaiming the territory lost and rights that came with it, but all mankind was fallen. So, God sent His Son to be that Savior. That Hero, General Jesus, God's salvation, is a man and yet one without a nature dominated by the enemy. Why would He bother? We certainly don't deserve being liberated. He did it because He is love, He is unselfish, and He is merciful.

Only one act of pure love, unsullied by any taint of ulterior motive, has ever been performed in the history of the world, namely the self-giving of God in Christ on the cross for undeserving sinners. That is why, if we are looking for a definition of love, we should look not in a dictionary, but at Calvary. SOURCE: John Stott.
That is Jesus our Savior.

Robert Tatum relates the account of an accident ten years ago. "Near Mobile, Alabama there was a railroad bridge that spanned a big bayou. The date was September 22, 1993. It was a foggy morning just before daybreak when a tugboat accidentally pushed a barge into the bayou. The drifting barge slammed into the bridge. In the darkness no one could see the extent of the damage, but someone on the tugboat radioed the Coast Guard. Moments later, an Amtrak train, the Sunset Limited, reached the bridge as it traveled from Los Angeles to Miami. Unaware of the damage, the train crossed the bridge at 70 mph. There were 210 passengers on board. As the weight of the train crossed the damaged support, the bridge gave away. Three locomotive units and the first four of train's eight passenger cars fell into the alligator infested bayou. The darkness and fog was thickened by fire and smoke. Six miles from land; the victims lay as food for the aroused alligators. Helicopters were called in to help rescue the victims. They

were able to save 163 persons.

One rescue stands out. Gery and Mary Chancey were waiting in the railcar with their 11-year-old daughter. When the car shifted and began to rapidly fill with water, there was only one thing they could do. They pushed their young daughter through the window into the hands of a rescuer, then succumbed to their watery grave. What a picture of our salvation, especially when you know that their daughter was imperfect by the world's standards. She was born with cerebral palsy and needed help with even the most routine things. But she was so precious to her parents.

And we too are imperfect--lives filled with mistakes and misjudgments, sin and helplessness. But we are still precious to Jesus--so precious that he sacrificed his life to save us.

...A perfect God sent his perfect Son to save an imperfect world. "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." (Hebrews 5:9) SOURCE: Robert Tatum, Charlotte, North Carolina.

It is important for us to understand that this act of sacrificial love isn't just to save us from the wrath of God off in the future judgment, but to save us from sin's destructiveness today. He didn't endure the cross so that one day when you die you would be saved, but so that right now you could be free from the control of sin and instead be controlled by life. Unlike the girl with cerebral palsy, God knows we can be liberated from the control of our disease.

Many Christians have this unscriptural impression that they must live with compromise to sin. That is not what Romans 8 declares. That misinterpretation justifies continual compromise by declaring that we just can't help it. Jesus the Savior won the victory for you to begin walking in it today! In Him you are victorious, saved, not just in eternity but also right now. The Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21) means that the Lord Jesus, our Savior, is reigning in your life today. You don't have to compromise. It isn't that you have become perfect, but there is a new controlling power at work in you. Paul declared that the Spirit of the One that raised Jesus is at work in us giving our mortal bodies life, today! Jesus is our Savior today!

Romans 8:9-11 (NIV) ⁹*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.* ¹⁰*But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.* ¹¹*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Commented [notes2]: ²¹ nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
Luke 17:21 (NIV)

The Apostle saw things in black and white, one way or the other. He declared that every man and woman is controlled by the sinful nature or by the Spirit. The Spirit of God cannot live in someone without controlling him or her. Most Christians seem to think that the Spirit lives in them, but more often than not, they are controlled by their sinful nature. That isn't the teaching we find here.

Paul is telling us that if the Spirit of God lives in us, that old nature is dead to us, and our spirit is alive because of the righteousness of Christ. In (Romans 6:11) he encourages us to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God. Yet, most Christians consider themselves alive to sin and barely alive to God. We have compromised the Word and the power of the resurrection. It is not that we must insist that we have become sinless, but that we must recognize the power of Jesus' death and resurrection to break the control of sin and replace it with the control of the Spirit. That is being saved from sin today. It is experiencing salvation in the present.

Commented [notes3]: ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11 (NIV)

Because of this common misconception, we tend to read verse 11 of chapter 8 as something that will happen when we are physically resurrected one day off in the future.

¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Romans 8:11 (NIV)

He is speaking of this very moment. The power of the Spirit that raised Jesus is at work in you, this very moment, to give life. Throughout the New Testament, 'death' is referred to as walking in sin, and life is being in the Spirit of God. This physical house of our bodies can be made alive to obey the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of Christ, who indwells us. If Christ lives in you, consider yourself awakened to life, empowered to walk in holiness, and controlled by the Spirit of God. Know that you are enabled by the power that raised Jesus to walk in newness of life.

In Matthew 1:21 the angel told Joseph, *"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."* That is what His love brought Him here to do; to meet the great need of mankind, to save us from the control of our sin. Are you letting General Jesus lead you victorious today? Have you gone from the control of sin to the control of the Spirit? We can pretend we are in the middle, but we are only fooling ourselves. You can say, "Yes" to His leading because of the victory He won for you. His name is Jesus, our Savior. He paid such a high price out of love for you; let Him be your Savior both now and for eternity. Let the truth of His name and the power of His resurrection break the control of sin in your life today.