

'At the Name of Jesus' - by Rev. Robert Griffith

"... God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11)

It's amazing how the world tries to stifle the Name of Jesus.

Some of you may remember the TV sitcom *Home Improvement*, starring Tim Allen. Apparently in one of the earlier seasons Tim had a major argument with the Producers because he mentioned the Name of Jesus in their Christmas show. They told him it was too controversial to mention the Name of Jesus and that they wanted to appeal to a wider audience. Tim protested strongly and said that it was nonsense to think that the person at the very centre of the whole Christmas story could no longer be named. He lost that battle and the Name of Jesus was not spoken in the Christmas special.

More recently, on the high-rating American TV show *The View*, a guest who had a very successful weight-loss program exclaimed one morning, *"Thank you, Jesus, is all I have to say!"* The network actually bleeped out the name 'Jesus' because they said it might cause offence.

Billy Graham's son, Franklin, has ignited firestorms for his use of the Name of Jesus in public prayers. It would seem that as long as preachers pray to a generic God, or to Buddha, or Mohammed, there's no problem. But if you say the Name of Jesus – brace yourself – because the politically correct police will pounce on you. Isn't it strange how those who lecture Christians on the need to be tolerant, have zero tolerance for the Name of Jesus!

Even the Church today is increasingly hesitant to speak the Name of Jesus. In our own public discourse within the Uniting Church in Australia, the name of Christ is being spoken, written and preached less and less. We pride ourselves on our inter-faith dialogue and the great relationships we have formed with people of other faiths, but that has come at a huge cost. In many ways we are removing 'Christ' from Christianity, if that were even possible. Make no mistake about it, the devil is committed to silencing the Name of Jesus and all Christians who are so bold as to lift up His mighty, saving name, will come under attack. The answer is not to back off in fear, but to be even more diligent to lift up the Name of Jesus! It is a time to be bold and courageous, not timid and fearful.

Of course, the Name of Jesus has caused a stir from the very beginning of the Church. People and authorities have been trying to stop us mentioning or ministering in the Name of Jesus since the days our Lord walked this earth as a man. In Acts 3 and 4 we read where Peter and John healed the lame beggar at the gate of the Temple. He asked for money and they healed him instead, in the Name of Jesus. It caused quite a stir and Peter & John were dragged before the Sanhedrim – the very group of leaders who condemned Jesus to death only weeks before. They asked the disciples, *"By what power or in what name have you done this?"* The answer to both questions was the same: JESUS.

The authorities were less concerned about the miraculous healing which took place and more concerned about the Name of Jesus! So they had Peter and John flogged and ordered them not to speak in the Name of Jesus again. They certainly ignored that directive, as the Name and the power of Jesus spread like a fire throughout the world - a Name which would eventually cause the death of all the Apostles except one!

The Name of Jesus was at the centre of everything which the Church stood for and everything which happened in the Church, because Jesus was at the centre of everything. Every time a miracle took place in the New Testament, it was because Jesus did it or because a disciple did it in the Name of Jesus. Jesus prayed, *"While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that Name you gave Me."* (John 17:12)

We are saved through the Name of Jesus: *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12). We become sons and daughters of God by believing in His Name (John. 1:12). We are forgiven through the Name of Jesus. (Acts 2:38)

Jesus is present among us when we gather in His Name (Matthew 18:20). We are called to do good works in the Name of Jesus (Mark 9:41). Persecution will happen to us because of the Name of Jesus (Luke 21:12; John 15:21). We are to preach in His Name to all nations (Luke 24:47). Healings are performed by the Name of Jesus. (Mark. 16:17-18)

The Name of Jesus has power over the physical realm. Every kind of sickness yielded to His Name: leprosy, fevers and even death itself yielded to the Name of Jesus. Of the lame man healed in Acts 3, Peter said, *"By faith in the Name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see."*

The Name of Jesus embodies all the authority, character, rank, majesty, power and excellence of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness and baptism are received in the Name of Jesus because His Name embraces His work. *"All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His Name."* (Acts 10:43). We can speak the Name of Jesus with power and authority because Jesus is actually in us and with us; we are not acting alone. *"Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up.* (Acts 9:34).

When you pray or lay hands on someone, you lay your hands upon them, but unseen to anyone are the hands of Jesus upon you, and His authority, power and healing are flowing into and through you. Because we are not acting alone, or trying to accomplish His will in our own name, we can have the same authority as the believers of the early Church. Nowhere in the New Testament does it ever say the gifts of the Holy Spirit will cease before Jesus comes again. You don't have to be an Apostle to minister in the power of the Name of Jesus. *"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your Name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in My Name can in the next moment say anything bad about Me."* (Mark 9:38-39).

All that Jesus did when He was upon this earth can be done today in the Name of Jesus. In fact, before leaving the earth, Jesus said that we would do even greater things than He did, in His name! We have the power to break strongholds, the power to release captives, the power to heal and deliver. The Name of Jesus made the demons tremble. When they heard His name, they began to cry out, saying, *"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!"* At the very mention of Jesus' Name, they began to quiver. Luke 10:17 records, *"The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your Name!"* They were shocked by the power of the Name of Jesus. The demons wouldn't have obeyed if commanded in the name of Peter, James, or John. But the mention of the Name of Jesus made them release their captives immediately. They became cowards whenever the Name of Jesus was spoken because with that name, came the very presence and power of Christ Himself.

In Jesus' Name we can boldly approach the throne of God! The Name of Jesus is a key to heaven in the hands of the man or woman who knows how to use His Name correctly. Jesus said, "And I will do whatever you ask in My Name...You may ask Me for anything in My Name, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14). Jesus has given us His Name to use in prayer. When we pray in the Name of Jesus, it's as if Jesus Himself is doing the praying. There are many storms in life - some we must rebuke in the Name of Jesus, others we must flee from and others we must simply stand strong and persevere. There is no part of the universe where the Name of Jesus is without influence. The authority from His throne may be executed among angels, among devils and throughout all of humanity.

As disciples, we represent Jesus; we go in His place. The Name of Jesus was, in the hands of Paul, what the Rod was in the hand of Moses. If the Egyptians could have stolen the Rod of Moses, they would have stripped Moses of his power. If the Jewish leaders could have stopped the Apostles from using or teaching in the Name of Jesus, they could have robbed the early Church of all its power.

Peter said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Paul said the same thing a different way when he said, "if you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Romans 10:9-10)

Early in 2017, as we were recovering from a massive flood here in Lismore, a couple of Christian songwriters in Sydney, Ben Fielding and Brook Ligertwood were writing an amazing modern hymn. Both of them were captured again by the beauty, the wonder and the power of the Name of Jesus. Like us all, they both live in an era where the Name of Jesus is spoken less and less and the power of the Name of Jesus is witnessed less and less across the Church and the world. So they wrote a song which struck a nerve in the Body of Christ and millions of people were singing it within months. This song actually won the prestigious 'song of the year' award at the Gospel Music Association Dove Awards in America in 2017.

Even before you get to sing this song, the words alone are worth meditating upon as we are reminded once again that it's all about Jesus. When the New Testament talks about living and ministering 'in the Name of Jesus' it really means that everything we do which impacts eternity, which unleashes the reality of heaven on earth, is all done in Christ, through Christ and for Christ.

I want you to reflect on these words and let the gospel – the good news of Jesus Christ – capture your heart once more and boggle your mind. There is a rising crescendo in this song. It feels like there is a progressive revelation of the magnitude and wonder and glory and power of the Name of Jesus. It feels like a curtain is being opened to reveal the fullness of Christ and what He has done as each verse and chorus unfolds.

'What A Beautiful Name It Is'

You were the Word at the beginning - One With God the Lord Most High
Your hidden glory in creation - now revealed in You our Christ

*What a beautiful Name it is, what a beautiful Name it is
the Name of Jesus Christ my King
What a beautiful Name it is - nothing compares to this
What a beautiful Name it is, the Name of Jesus*

You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, You brought heaven down
My sin was great, Your love was greater - what could separate us now

*What a wonderful Name it is, what a wonderful Name it is
the Name of Jesus Christ my King
What a wonderful Name it is - nothing compares to this
What a wonderful Name it is, the Name of Jesus*

Death could not hold You, the veil tore before You
You silenced the boast of sin and grave
the heavens are roaring, the praise of Your glory
for You are raised to life again
You have no rival, You have no equal
now and forever, Our God reigns
Yours is the Kingdom, Yours is the glory
Yours is the Name, above all names

*What a powerful Name it is, what a powerful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King
What a powerful Name it is - nothing can stand against
What a powerful Name it is, the Name of Jesus*

Brooke Ligertwood / Ben Fielding

Each verse proclaims a truth about Jesus and each chorus is our worship response. In an age when the Name of Jesus is being censored and removed from our vocabulary and the Church seems embarrassed or intimidated into silence over this Name which is above all names – this could well be one of the most important new hymns to be written in our age. In fact, I found myself awake during the night last week wondering what would happen if this song was sung in every Christian Church across the world on the same day. I dreamed about what would happen as the beautiful, wonderful, powerful Name of Jesus was proclaimed worldwide to billions of people. I get a shot of adrenalin through my body whenever I think about that possibility.

When the 'Song of the Year' Dove Award was being presented to Ben and Brooke for this song, they had arranged for Ben to do the speaking when they received the award. Brooke had never been to this award ceremony, much less receive one. So she was a little overwhelmed. However, the Spirit of God spoke to her when she was sitting in the audience and I want you to listen to what Brooke said when she broke protocol and spoke. When you listen to her words, but even more so her heart, you will know why this song was written and it might explain why the Hillsong music team are impacting the Church and the world today like Charles Wesley and his songs did hundreds of years ago. Please copy and paste the following link into your web browser. (It may take a while to load)

<http://www.lrm.org.au/SERMONS/Brooke.mp4>

Now use the link below and sing this amazing song over and over again this coming week and see what God does in you and through you. Pray also that this song and all songs which bring Jesus back into the centre of the Church and the world will be sung more and more across the world as the beauty, the wonder and the power of the Name of Jesus once again captures the hearts and minds of everyone. Note: the song leader in the following video is none other than Taya Smith, who grew up in Lismore and received her wonderful spiritual pedigree from her Grandmother, Olive Smith - a much-loved stalwart in our Church.

<https://youtu.be/r5L6QIAH3L4>