

The Name of the Lord

by T. Austin-Sparks

Reading: Deut. 12:3,5,11; Acts 15:14,17-18; 9:15-16; Phil. 2:9-11.

Hezekiah, after passing through an experience in which he was shattered, broken, poured out, and in which he drew nigh unto the gates of death, in contemplating the mercy, grace and power of God in his restoration cried in these words: "*O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit ...*" (Isa. 38:16). "These things" for Hezekiah were the things of abiding, heavenly, divine reality in the midst of all the transience, changefulness, uncertainty and perplexity of human life. That declaration of his seems to present him as a man who had fallen into quicksand, found himself sinking, everything giving way under him, and crying for something to lay hold of, something sure, something that would not give way, something that would arrest this course. He found that something — or, he found those things — in God's mercy, God's grace, in God Himself, and he stayed himself thereon, and came out in the strength thereof, and cried: "*O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit*".

I think that some experience or feeling like that is common to most of God's people. At some time or another, for some reason or another, there is a moving out into a sense of everything giving way, the quicksand feeling. It is as though in an arctic region there had been a moving away from a base, and then a terrific snow storm had come to cover all the track and every indication of the way, and there was nothing whatever left to follow, there was nothing left to grip, to indicate. There are times when the people of God in their individual lives and the church of God in its corporate or collective life have some experience like that, and the cry is for something to lay hold of, some ground of assured appeal, something that will not give way, something that remains, something that will rescue.

If you have never had an experience like that, of being out in the trackless, pathless wilderness, not knowing where you are, without assurance, and everything having given way under your feet, so that you are governed by one big question mark — WHY? — then what I have to say is not for you, at present at any rate. Store it up, it may yet be of use. But I venture to say that most of us know a little about it.

Now then, we want assured ground of appeal in the storm, in the blizzard, in the wild, and God has given us such ground, and there are those things along the way which are never altogether buried, and need never disappear from our view. There are those grounds of absolute assurance and certainty. We need to know what they are. Supreme among them is the Name of the Lord. That is the word in the passages to which we have referred, the Name.

But I want to take you back further, for this is not something incidental which comes up in the course of things. This is not something which is of temporal value. We lay hold at once with firmness upon this governing statement in Acts 15:17,18: "*Saith the Lord, who doeth these things known from the beginning of the world*". We hear much about eternal purpose, the counsels of God, and here, in connection with the Name, a people for His Name, upon whom His Name is called, are these things known from the foundation of the world. The world is founded upon this, the world is subsequent to this, the world rises as it were upon this: things known of God, determined, purposed of God from the foundation of the world, and giving the world its very object and purpose. That is where the strength lies; not something in history, but something before history. It is something settled in the very foundations of the world.

Sometimes in building bridges, or other structures in the foundation there are laid documents with names, and after centuries they are found there in the foundation. Beloved, when this present world breaks up, goes to pieces, the heavens pass away, the earth is dissolved, in the very foundation of things will be found the Name of the Lord. "Things known from the beginning". All these things; but among them there is this, 'A people for His Name, upon whom His Name is called'. All the reactions of God in the course of the world's history have been upon the ground of His Name.

One of the first of His great reactions and interventions in this world's history in relation to His purpose concerning this world was with Abram in Ur of the Chaldees. You will remember that God made Himself known by name to Abram. One of the great characteristics of the story of God's personal association with Abram was the revelation of His Name, and it was as though God were building history in Abram upon the foundation of His very Name. It was as though Abram was chosen as a vessel for His Name, but it was a great historic movement, as we know.

Another movement of God in this world's history was with Moses. You will remember the words in Exodus 6. The Lord came to Moses and said that He had been known by name up till that time, but by His name Jehovah was He not known, and He brought out then with Moses that Name in its fuller significance, and immediately said to Moses; "*Now shalt thou see what I will do ...*" (verse 1); then followed all that happened in Egypt with Pharaoh and the Egyptians unto the emancipation of His people. It was on the basis of His Name.

You pass over much more, and come to the days of Samuel, and you find that the Lord's Name in the earth is disregarded and dishonoured by His own people, and through Samuel God reacts again and brings in David. And the crowning feature of David's life and reign is found in that he was given a revelation and privileged to make preparation for the building of a House for His Name. It was a great movement of God in relation to His Name.

The Name again became overclouded by apostasy unto the exile, and yet again for His Name's sake He reacted and brought back from captivity a remnant.

We go on into the New Testament, to the days of Pentecost, and how much there is in the book of the Acts on this very matter. And an appeal to the Name was never without response on God's part.

Still we go on, to the book of the Revelation, and there we have mighty reactions from heaven in relation to the state of things, and if I am not mistaken the heart of it all is the Name of the Lord. It is put in various ways, but if you really get down to what the testimony of Jesus is, which is the point there right the way through that book, it is the testimony concerning His Name, or what the Name of Jesus means.

Now we leave all the teaching of the Apostles concerning the Name, simply to recognise in this sweep of history that God always reacts on the ground of His Name, and that means that if we can get on to that ground we have got to the sure ground of God's own response, the absolute ground of certainty as a rock under our feet which cannot be moved. In days when everything else may seem in eclipse, everything seems to have broken down and given way, and we know not where we are, nor the meaning of things, here is the unshakeable ground of appeal. For Thy Name's sake! is something which goes to the heart of God, and that cannot fail. "*What wilt Thou do for Thy great name?*" That will get immediately through to God's heart. It has always proved to be so. He on his own part has many times taken the initiative for His Name's sake, and when on the part of His people there has been an appeal on that ground He has always found the ground upon which He can make His answer.

Now that is the abiding reality. You and I want to know in days like these, and in coming days, what it is that we can lay hold of with the perfect assurance, with the unwavering confidence which will get us through, which will bring us to the place where we cry, "*O Lord, by these things men live*", and come up out of the abyss; and in them is "the life of my spirit". What a phrase! For often it would seem that the spirit is being overwhelmed and submerged, and death rules triumphantly. But in them is the life of my spirit!

But then in these things known from the beginning of the world, in this sure ground of the Name of the Lord, there is this further factor. The Lord's Name is intended by Him to be a deposit in an eternally elected vessel. In the type we can see it, but in the great antitype, the Lord Jesus, it shines forth so gloriously. He is the vessel of the Name. "*God hath given Him the name which is above every name ...*", and with that alone in mind, what a thing it is to be in Christ, where the Name of the Lord resides; but it is in union with Christ that a corporate body is constituted for this Name, the Church; out from the nations a people for His Name; an elect vessel. Paul was a representative of that. "*Go thy way*", said the Lord to Ananias, "*for he is a chosen (or an elect) vessel, to bear my name ...*", in the type Israel was an elect vessel. The pre-eminent purpose of Israel's election was to hold the Name of the Lord in the midst of the nations, and what that Name meant. That Name of the Lord meant that the Lord alone was lord, there was no other lord. All other lords were not lords; Jehovah is one God, and supreme and pre-eminent in His universe. Israel was the church in type in which that Name with what it signified was deposited as a challenge throughout God's universe. The antitype is Christ and His members, the Church, that to which Acts 15:14 refers, that which is the peculiar feature of this present dispensation, God taking out of the nations a people for His Name.

Now let us give due value to that word "for"; "*... a people for His Name*". It means a people taken out, chosen out, in order that His Name might be deposited in them. You say, Bring me a vase for these flowers! You want a receptacle, something in which the flowers can be placed. The Lord says, Bring me a vessel for My Name! The church is that vessel, and this is the age in which that vessel, known and chosen from the foundation of the world, is being taken out from the nations for His Name. The Lord has a need. His need is to give an answer in this universe to a challenge. The Lord has a need to establish Himself (if we may put it that way) in His universe, not actually but morally. And the Lord's need for Himself, for His own Name, is of a people in whom the Name may be deposited, a people for His Name, upon whom His Name is called. This is not just a designation, it is a title in the full sense, God's title. It is not just a word, but an entitlement to absolute Lordship in His universe. That is His Name, the Name in isolation, standing peerless in His universe. For that Name, for that purpose, to that end, for the display of the reality of God's absolute supremacy, He must have a people for His Name, a vessel.

The third step is to recognise what that vessel must be. Coming back to Deut 12 in which we have the foreshadowing of this, you will notice that the Lord is speaking about the place for His Name when the people are the other side of Jordan in the land. Moses says it is not going to be then as it is now, every man doing that which is right in his own eyes; things are going to change then. You have not yet come into the rest, but when you do get over there, then the Lord will choose Him a place in which He will put His Name, and that will govern everything, the Name will govern everything, and the place of the Name.

My point is this, that the place of the Name, the vessel, the instrument of the Name must be on the heavenly side of things. We know well the meaning of Jordan, the divide between the earthly and the heavenly, the great course which brings an end to man in his earthly position, the carnal life, through death, by resurrection, into the heavenlies in Christ; for that is the land. And it is there that the place of the Name is chosen, and must be, and there is no power of appeal to the Name unless we are there, and the Name is deprived of its functioning power if we are not there. We must know, first of all, the

slaying work of the cross in the realm of all that is natural; we must know the risen life with Christ to all that is spiritual, because that is just what is implied in the Name. Why is it that the Lord is able to respond to the appeal to His Name? Well, listen to the appeals that might be made. O Lord, have mercy upon us; we are in a bad state; we are having a terribly hard time! Lord, help us out of our present trouble and difficulty! Lord, rescue us! Lord, make things easier for us! What is the direction of interest and concern? It is ourselves. We must come to the place where it is: Lord, for Thy Name's sake! If I perish, that is not the thing that matters; if I suffer, that is not the thing that concerns me! It does not matter whether it is by life or by death, where I am concerned! All things here on this earth are of secondary importance, but, Lord, Your Name! That is the work of the cross. All personal, selfish interests are at an end. We have come to the place where we can say: As always so now, that Christ may be magnified, whether by life or by death. Personal matters do not come into consideration; they stand back: Lord, Your Name! That is a heavenly position, when everything on our own has passed out in our concern for the Lord's interests, the Lord's Name. Lord, if my dying can be to Your glory, and the honour of Your Name, let me die; it does not matter! If I suffer, and my suffering can only enhance Your Name, all right; but, Lord, what Thou wilt! What wilt Thou do for Thy Name? That is a heavenly appeal. God can respond, because everything is put away, cut off, detached, removed.

The cross has got to come in between the Lord's Name and our own interests, feelings, and likes and dislikes. When we have got to a place of utterness for the Name, we have the ground of appeal. God cannot deny His Name. His Name is Himself, He cannot deny Himself. God's Name going down is God going down. That can never be. Over Jordan, then, in what is meant by heavenly union with Christ, where the cross has cut off our interests and concerns, and this world's affairs, so far as our heart relationship with them is concerned, then we have got the place of the Name. It is Christ in heaven who is the vessel of the Name. It is our union with Him as there. *"If ye died with Christ ... "*; *"If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is ... "*. It is the ground of the Name and its appeal.

I do feel that the Lord wants us really to be on sure ground, to have in our hands a sure weapon. He does want us to be with Him in the place where He can assuredly come out. Oh, if God's Name is wrapped up with something, and there are no compromising elements of this world, and of the self-life, then hell cannot swamp that, all the power opposed to that in God's universe is impotent for its destruction. God's Name is bound up with it. Oh, to involve the name of God by such an utterness of the cross as to our own selves, and the counting of our own lives as dear unto us. If we are in that strong position hell cannot prevail.

You notice that the Name is always connected with the power and place of the Name. It is always a challenge, there are always challenging forces which are met and presented with the Name, and that is why suffering comes in. *"He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name ... I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name"*. Why suffer? Simply because that very Name is that which provokes the challenge.

You see that if you and I are coming by way of the cross, its real, deep, inward work, into the place to serve God as that vessel which He needs for His own vindication and moral establishment in His universe, we are coming into the place which will provoke the Name to the very depths, and we are coming, therefore, into the place of suffering. How are we going to stand in the suffering, in the conflict, and win through? Just in so far as the Name is pre-eminent with us, and I mean just in so far as that Name takes precedence in our lives over all other interests.

In Luke 14 the Lord Jesus challenges concerning discipleship. You remember He said, Except a man take his cross and deny himself — renounces all that he hath — he cannot be My disciple. If you look at that chapter and the context you will see that it says a

great multitude followed Him, and He turned and said: *"Except a man take his cross, and deny himself, and renounce all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple! There is a difference between following the Lord and being His disciple"* There are multitudes of followers, camp followers; there are few disciples. What is a disciple? A disciple is a learner! What does a disciple of Christ learn? He learns Christ. The greatest disciple, I think, in the New Testament was Paul. He said, *"... that I may know Him ... "*. How was he coming to that knowledge as that master disciple? *"I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge ... I have suffered the loss of all things ... "*. What a disciple! He renounced all that he had.

Now the Lord went on in that very connection and said: *"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it?"* (verse 28). *"Or what king, as he goes to encounter another king in war, does not look at his army of ten thousand, and look at his enemy who cometh against him with twenty thousand, and weighs up, and asks whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh with twenty thousand; and if he cannot, he sends an embassy"* (verse 31,32).

The point is quite clear, that this business of discipleship is going to cost you everything. If you are going to hold back something, and not renounce all that you have; that is, if you are not going to put everything into it, but want something kept in reserve, something for yourself, something you do not want to put into the business, something that is your little private interest, then you had better not launch out because it is going to be a fiasco, it is going to be a mighty reverse. This thing is going to cost you everything, and unless you are prepared do not start; but if you are prepared, well, *"one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight"*. A man with ten thousand is more than a match for twenty thousand when he is completely on God's side.

The Lord Jesus comes back to us and says, What about it? Are you going to try and make the best of both worlds? Are you going to try and be a disciple, and have a good time here? *"... he cannot be my disciple"*. It is going to cost you everything, but if you put everything in you will come to the place where God is everything for you, you come on to this ground of certainty in the one great, eternal, established reality; the Name of the Lord is called upon you, the Name of the Lord is a deposit with you. That means everything; not loss, but gain.

Let me appeal to my younger friends. These are the words of the Lord Jesus, not my own. Sit down and count the cost; the cost is everything. The Lord says: *"So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounces not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple"* (verse 33). But there is another point of view, and that is the one that the apostle Paul speaks of when he says, *"I gladly suffer the loss of all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"* — that excelling knowledge. Do you want to know the Lord? Do you want to have the Lord? Do you want the fulness of the Lord? Do you want to be in the place of power? Do you want to know triumph over all the power of the enemy? The excellency of that knowledge is when you stand where all your own personal and worldly interests are set aside for the Name of the Lord. You shall bring everything to the place where the Name is. That is what is said in Deuteronomy 12: *"shall come to the place of the Name"*. It means that everything must be for the Lord's Name.

May I ask you to make this a governing law in everything in your life, the honour of the Name. Put it always on the positive side; not, May I do this? Can I do this? but, Does this glorify the Lord? How does this affect the Name of the Lord? Does this in any way dishonour His Name? If it does, well, it has got to go! That is the pathway of power and victory. Then the Lord will come out for you.

I notice in that chapter in Deuteronomy that it says that when the people had done this, when the place of the Name was fixed and they were bringing everything to the place of

the Name, then the Lord said: "*Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh within all thy gates, after all the desire of thy soul*" (verse 15). You may, in your own home, within your own gates, eat whatsoever your soul loves. It is as though the Lord says, When you have sought first My Name, My glory, My honour; when you have put Me first, then I will see to it that you do not want, that you are looked after, that you do not go without a good time.

Do not think that if you are going to be utter for God, you are going to lose everything and be miserable, that there is never going to be any ringing laughter in your life, any real pleasure. Not at all. Do not believe that. It is not wrong to laugh, to have a good laugh in the Lord. The Lord is not going to deprive us of all our enjoyments because we are going to be out-and-out for Him. I am afraid there is a false piety which thinks that if you are going to be out-and-out for the Lord you must never laugh. Do not get wrong ideas about devotion to the Lord. The Lord will give you much when you have sought first His glory, and always do seek first His glory; He will not leave you out of His account.

I want to re-emphasise the heart of things. We need a sure ground of appeal. When Satan assails, and all the forces of hell rage, and we are tasting something of death, and all seems to be in eclipse, and everything seems to be going from under our feet, and we do not know where we are, it seems that the universe is crumbling about us, then we want something to hold on to, something that will not let us go, we need to be in a position where we have sure confidence that we are coming up, like Hezekiah, from the very gates of death and are going to say, "*O Lord, by these things men live, and in these things is the life of my spirit ...*". One of these divine provisions is the Name of the Lord. For His Name's sake He will respond, and you and I have got to be utterly with that Name. That means that His glory, His honour, His interests have to be paramount, supreme and absolute where we are concerned, and although we may go down under the cloud and the waves many times, for His Name's sake we shall come up. The Lord will not let His Name go down in dishonour. Hold on to that ground.

The Lord teach us individually and corporately what it means to be in the position of the sure appeal of the Name, so that whatsoever we ask in His Name He will do. The Lord teach us the much more that lies in that.

(Some Bible quotations are from the Authorised Version.)