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## For the Sake of the Name

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*"For the sake of the Name they went forth" (3 John 7).*

*"...the world hateth you... they will also persecute you... But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" (John 15:19-21).*

That portion in the Gospel throws light on the statement in the epistle, and shows that it was ignorance as to Who it was that bore the Name that led to the persecution of the servants who sought to honour the Name.

### **The Significance of the Name**

We do not realise how little that name Jesus meant to the world, and especially to the Jews, in those days. It was a very common name, and for the people of those days there was little to discriminate between one Jesus and another. How different it is with us! What a shock we should have if today a father named his boy Jesus! We should say it was blasphemy! Why is this? Well, what a lot has come to be known as included in that name! What a lot that name now represents for so many in this world! The result is that we can hardly think of anybody else being allowed to have that name. We now reserve it for One only; but not so then. That which you and I know to be compassed by that name had to be made known, had to be established. It was entirely unknown and unrecognized, and it was the whole work of the Church to make known what lay behind a common name held by an uncommon person; for there was nothing common about One who was called by that name at that time.

Now Christianity as a whole, its full content, has been gathered up in small phrases. In New Testament times it was like that. For instance, the very name Christian was a most comprehensive thing. It came about also that they summed up the whole of Christianity in a little phrase, "the Way". Paul went on his journey to Damascus with authority from the High Priest to arrest any he found that were of "the Way" (Acts 9:2). He said, "*I persecuted this Way*" (Acts 22:4), and again, "*After the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers*" (Acts 24:14). At Ephesus "*there arose no small stir concerning the Way*" (Acts 19:23). So you see, everything of Christianity in those days was gathered up into this phrase, "the Way".

In exactly the same manner Christianity became gathered up into this phrase, "the Name". It was Christianity. "The Name" carried everything that Christianity meant for the world in those days. It became therefore the very concern of Christians to make known the fulness of the meaning of that name, the uncommonness which lay behind it. Yes, that was the great concern - not to make a name, not to seek a name, not to have a name, but to make known *the* Name. This we find they did in several ways.

### **Testimony to the Name**

Firstly, by testimony. Everywhere they testified in the name and to the name of Jesus. It was the universal and spontaneous ministry of the Church. So much had they found in Him who bore the Name, so much had it become to them, that it was to them an exclusive name, a unique name, no matter how many others might be called by that name. For them there was really only One who had that name, and so much was it so, that everywhere they were bearing testimony to Him who bore it. They were saying, "This Jesus"; "Jesus of Nazareth". How something very common and well-known became invested with something beyond all knowledge, beyond all that is ordinary! How heaven became bound up with something which amongst men was nothing in particular! - and they had seen what heaven's estimate of the Name was. Yes, truly for them they could say 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!' Everything for them in their own hearts and lives was bound up with the Name, and so it broke out in testimony everywhere.

That is a simple statement, but what I am really throwing out by way of challenge to our own hearts is this, that all real ministry is testimony, and there is no particular class set apart for that. The ministry springs out of the preciousness of the Name, the value that has been brought to our own hearts and lives in the name of Jesus. If you and I have no ministry and no testimony, then it is because He is not as precious to us as He should be. It cannot be otherwise. Oh, no, this is not a legal obligation, something put upon us that we must do - that if we are Christians we must confess Jesus, we must speak about Him, we must tell people, and have a bad time if we fail to do so. That is a wrong realm of things. With them, the very heart union with Him and the preciousness of His name resulted in testimony. It was spontaneous.

### **Suffering for the Name**

Then it expresses itself in suffering. It was said concerning Paul at his conversion, "*I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake*" (Acts 9:16). Again, of the disciples it is recorded that they rejoiced "*that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name*" (Acts 5:41). You may know something of suffering for the Name, but it is here that our heart-relationship to the Lord is really put to the test. There are numerous ways in which we may suffer, but suffer we shall if that name is upon us. Whether we accept the suffering or shirk it may be another matter. Whether or not we yield under the pressure, and compromise and lower our standard, will prove how much the

Name is to us after all. For the sake of the Name they went forth in testimony. For the sake of the Name they went forth in suffering. It came upon them; they were called to suffer for the Name.

### **Living According to the Name**

Then the Name determined their manner of life. What a strength it was to them that the Name was so much, what a safeguard, what an inspiration! This lay behind their manner of life, their character, their conduct. I think we often need to be checked up here. You see, our very character, demeanour, behaviour, everything about us, can either honour or dishonour the Name. This is not too low a level upon which to speak. We want to watch, because there are always those who, inspired by the great defamer whose sole object is to dishonour our Lord, defame Him by any possible means. Satan is always provoking people to watch those who bear the Name and to come at once upon anything that they judge to be out of keeping with it. This can touch us in countless ways and at countless points. To be slovenly, slipshod, careless, in our behaviour, our talk, our dress, our deportment before people, all of this touches the Name. There is so much that tells us that we are to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. 4:2). We are not to order our conduct merely in the light of what we think to be all right and unarmful, but in the light of what the world looking on may say about it, and of how others may interpret what we do. It is the Name that is involved.

I said this is a great strengthening and safeguarding thing. It is also an objective thing which can take us out of ourselves. We may have our bad times spiritually and go badly down under trial - it may be physical, it may be circumstantial, it may be a direct assault by the devil himself; but then how often have we taken ourselves in hand and said, 'Look here, now, do not forget the Lord's name! Other people are watching, they are taking note. It is the Lord's name that is at stake. Pull yourself together, however badly you may be feeling; anoint your face, appear before people as though it were otherwise.' We have to slay out of hand that element of self-pity, that drawing of attention to ourselves. There are times when for the sake of the Name we are to go before people with our faces anointed while our hearts are breaking. Otherwise others may lose heart, may despair, may find something in us which they are looking for to support some doubt of theirs; and we must not feed that sort of thing. God help us, it is not easy; but that is suffering inwardly for the sake of the Name. How many tragedies there are in the background of lives which no one else knows anything about except the Lord. The face is kept strong for the sake of the Name, by the grace of God. It must be like that.

### **Jealousy for the Name**

I am trying to emphasize one thing, namely that "*for the sake of the Name they went forth*"; and for them that meant that before men they were going to be a credit to their Lord. They were going to live and conduct themselves so that no one should be able to cast dishonour upon the Name because of them. They were going to suffer much persecution for His name's sake, but in their meekness, their unoffendedness, in their selflessness under suffering, yes, in the triumphant joy of their Lord even when their hearts were very heavy, they would all the time be firstly considering the Name; not, 'How bad I am feeling, how hard my lot is', but, 'I must be careful for the sake of the Name'. That is the message.

It is an attempt - as I think the Lord has laid it on my heart - to bring us in a new way to a place where the name which is called upon us is seen to be a glorious name, a triumphant name, a beautiful name. I could say very much more from the New Testament about that name. It is the name of supreme authority, and so they went forth to make known its authority. Their proclamation

was, Jesus Christ is Lord! They did not use the Name merely as a charm or a talisman with which to do things, or for their own glory. No, it was through faith in the Name that the Holy Spirit worked wonderful things for the glory of Him whose name it was. It was the name of authority; it was the name of matchless beauty; and oh, so much more!