

The Gift of God's Name Put On You

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER [a]

April 23, 2017

1 PETER 1:3-9

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

When the Lord puts his Name on a people, he will not let his Name be brought into doubt.

Back when Moses was taking the people of Israel out of Egypt, and as they were on the doorstep of entering the promised land, the people of Israel got scared, they doubted they could walk into the new land without being killed, and, in fear, they rebelled against the Lord. It would be better to refuse to go into the promised land and yet live, than to walk into the promised land and be killed. So they refused.

So in anger the Lord said to Moses,

“How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? ¹² I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them.”

[Numbers 14:12]

It's been a long slog to bring this people to the promised land. The Lord has not given up on them. It has included the imprisonment of Joseph by the Pharaoh, then later the enslavement of the Israelites by the Egyptians, then, to free the Israelites, the Lord bringing the plagues upon Pharaoh and Egypt, then the Lord bringing his people Israel across the Red Sea, then the Lord supplying his people with water and food, including manna, out in the wilderness—it's been a long, hard slog, the Lord has been with his people every step of the way. But now, in his anger, he's ready to wipe them out: ***How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?*** ¹² ***I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them.***

[Numbers 14]

So what will Moses do to protect this people? The Lord has placed the prophet there for just that, to take care of Israel, to bring her into the promised land, to keep them in the Lord's Name. The Lord has placed the prophet there even to intercede for Israel, to plead their case to the Lord. So what will Moses do to protect the Lord's people from the Lord and *his* anger?

Moses goes to the Lord and he makes an argument about why the Lord should not destroy this people, but should keep them safe. What is Moses' argument for why the Lord should not destroy his people?

We might first think that Moses would argue to the Lord, *Don't wipe out this people because, once they realize how they have despised you, and they remember how you have been kind and patient and faithful and merciful toward them—once they remember all this, they will do better, and you will be proud to have them as your people.*

Or Moses might have argued, *Don't wipe this people out because, though their rebellion is not good, it's also not totally bad, not bad enough, anyway, to warrant total destruction, maybe you could just knock them around a little to let them pay a price for their sin.*

But if Moses had made an argument such as that, the argument would have been based on Israel, that is, on the worthiness of the people of Israel, or on the potential the people had to be more pleasing to God if only they cleaned up their lives.

Moses could've made an argument based on the people of Israel. But he did not. Here's the prophet's argument to God, Numbers 14:13:

¹³ **And Moses said to the LORD: “Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them,** ¹⁴ **“and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, *are* among these people; that You, LORD, *are* seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud**

by day and in a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ “Now *if* You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, ¹⁶ “Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.’ ¹⁷ “And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, ¹⁸ “The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation*.’ ¹⁹ “Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”

Moses' argument to the Lord about why the Lord should not destroy Israel is essentially this: *You cannot destroy your people, O Lord, because you have put your Name on them and made them the people of your promise. You cannot destroy them, because if you do destroy them, your promise of grace and mercy and forgiveness is empty, and you make your Name worthless. You cannot destroy them, because if you do, Egypt and the other nations who know that these Israelites are your people will consider your salvation a joke. In short, you must not destroy your people, you must care for them and save them because, your Name, O Lord, is at stake. Please forgive the sin of your people, O Lord, just as you have faithfully forgiven them before.*

To this argument, what will be the response of the Lord to the prophet? Numbers 14:20:

²⁰ **Then the LORD said: “I have forgiven, according to your word.”**

So Israel lived. The Lord brought the people into the promised land, and many generations later, from this people Israel, there was a young virgin named Mary, and to Mary was given a child, he was named Jesus, which means, *The salvation of the Lord*, and Jesus, having given the sacrifice on the cross to forgive all sins, then sent his Apostles out to put his Name on sinners, so that by baptism, these sinners bear the Name of the Lord; they belong to him.

Right up to us. We bear the Name of the Lord. We are the people of Christ, the Israel of the Lord. 1 Peter 1:3:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

Your salvation depends upon God. Your eternal life is the work of God. Your life in the faith, even your being kept in the faith, is the work of God. That is his promise; that is the gift of his Name put on you. If you are not kept in salvation, if you are destroyed in eternity, his Name is at stake. So the Apostle Peter says, You have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, kept in Heaven for you ... You are being guarded through faith for a salvation which is already ready and will be revealed on the last day.

It is all the work and mercy of God. It is the gift of his Name put on you. He kept Israel not because of any worthiness or potential on Israel's part, but only because of the promise of his Name. And he will not depart his Name, so he forgives their sin, keeping them as his people.

He keeps you, he keeps his church, not because of any worthiness or potential improvement on your part or on the part of the church, but only because of the promise of his Name. And he will not depart his Name.

So when Jesus walked into that locked room where the disciples were hiding in fear, his Name was at stake. These disciples belonged to him; he had given them his Name; he had sent them out to proclaim his Name to others. When eight days later he walks up to Thomas, this is Thomas to whom he has given his Name. His Name is at stake. So the first words Jesus says are, "Peace to you."

Against your fear of death, against your doubt of my word, against the shame in your conscience, I speak to you, Peace. The peace of all sins-forgiven, of a cleansed conscience before God, of the relief and rescue of knowing that the power of God's Word—not your own strength, not your own efforts—but the power of God's Word that guards you through faith for a salvation that you may rejoice in, even in the midst of doubts, fears, and various trials.

"Peace to you," Jesus says to us and our families. *I forgive you your sins, I keep you in faith through my word of forgiveness, I gather you to my Name to give you my Body and Blood, for I have given you my Name in Baptism, and I will never depart my Name.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.