

“What’s Your Name?”—Isaiah 43:1-3

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “What’s Your Name?”, is Isaiah 43:1-3 → *Thus says the LORD, He Who created you, O Jacob, He Who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. This is the text.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“What’s Your Name?” This question is used so frequently in our lives that it is answered without consideration of its importance to our identity. That importance is many times drawn out as people try to find ways to feel more connected to you by follow-up questions and statements like: “I knew some Schmidt’s in such-and-such town. Are you related to them?” or “I’m related to some Schmidt’s. Maybe you know them.” Your name is the first aspect of identity in relationship with others. From the revelation of your name comes everyone and everything connected to it, both good and bad. Just think how important your name is when it comes to contracts, background checks and

genealogies.

People pick names for their children on the basis of many different factors. Sometimes they just like the sound of a name. Being “named after” a family member, a famous person or close friend reflects the importance of relationship. Being given a name with a special meaning may reflect how those who named you think about you. For example, “David” means “beloved.” “Ephraim” could be appropriate for a 2nd child because it means “twice blessed”. All those names from the Bible that end in “el” (i.e. Daniel, Michael, Immanuel) reflect relationship with God since “el” is the Hebrew word for “God.” Those names from the Bible that end in “iah” (i.e. Josiah, Zechariah, Isaiah) reflect relationship with Yahweh since “iah” is an ending meaning “Yahweh.” For instance, Isaiah’s name means “Yahweh saves.”

What’s your name? Does it have special meaning to you and others? Your name is actually a gift based upon relationship. It was no different for God’s people whom He chose as *His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.* (cf. Deuteronomy 14:2) According to verse 1 of our text Yahweh *created* and *formed* Israel into His people when He *redeemed* them by their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Even Isaiah’s referring to God’s people as both *Jacob* and *Israel* shows how important their name was centuries before this event. Jacob, the father of the tribes of Israel,

had his name changed to Israel by God when God reaffirmed His covenant of grace with him. (cf. Genesis 35:10) Why? Because there is a deeper meaning to a name when it comes to God's redemption.

For God the name expresses His desire to deal with sin in the world once and for all **out of love for His children**. Isaiah may have even struggled speaking the words of our text in light of the disposition of God's people to whom he was speaking. They wanted things their own way, wandering away from the LORD's way, doing what was "right" in their own eyes, loving other gods who were incapable of love, and ignoring the one true God, Who is love. They were a rebellious people who wanted to claim Yahweh's favor while continuing in their own self-centered, sinful, idolatrous ways.

Unfortunately they were living up to their name as "Israel" means "he strives with God" or "God strives"—which is exactly what was happening in Isaiah's ministry. God was "striving" **for** His people in the proclamation of His judgment upon their sins through the prophets. Meanwhile, His people were "striving" **against** Him by refusing to follow Him in the love relationship He had established with them by His grace.

The words of our text are words of comfort and protection to Israel extending years into the future. Before they would come true God's people would experience His judgment upon their sin by the hand of the Babylonians.

(587 BC) After they would experience some 50 plus years as slaves in Babylonia a remnant of them would be restored to Jerusalem. (538 BC) Even this new restoration of their land and nation would not be a smooth journey for His people. In verse 2 of our text Isaiah reassured them of Yahweh's presence and protection. The *waters . . . rivers* and *fire* picture all those "spiritual storms" and struggles in the devil's efforts to lead God's people into idolatry. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

His purpose for preserving His people is reflected in how God describes Himself in verse 3 of our text: *I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior*. In the promise given to the father of their nation, Abram, God said all nations on earth would be blessed through One Who would come from his family line. God even changed Abram's name to Abraham, meaning "father of a multitude," to reflect the extent of God's salvation for all people through faith in Jesus! (cf. Genesis 17:5) Their existence served the purpose of your salvation by bringing forth the One Who would deal with all sin of all people for all time. His stepfather was told in Matthew 1:21-23 that Mary would *bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*" ("Jesus" is the Greek word for "Joshua" which means "the Lord

saves”) *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).*

In Jesus, Yahweh took on human flesh to deal with your sin as *the Holy One of Israel*, **your Savior, once and for all!** His name expresses His work of completely restoring you into a perfect relationship with Him for eternity! In Jesus He redeemed you by giving His own life into death as the perfect payment for your sins! When you are baptized *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (cf. Matthew 28:19) all of God’s grace, love, forgiveness and deliverance from everlasting death in hell in the Person & Work of Jesus is yours! You belong to Him . . . which, by the way, is what the name “Christian” means.

Bearing this new name in Christ will not be easy this side of heaven. The devil will use the sinful world around you as a catalyst for the sinful desires in your heart to tempt you to fall into rebellion and idolatry. The devil will use the persecution and rejection of others around to lead you, tempting you to reject the name of Jesus and sever the relationship your heavenly Father has established with you. You will encounter many struggles, catastrophes and adverse circumstances within which the devil will strive to get a foothold, tempting you to deny the name of Jesus, the confession of which expresses

your faith in Him.

Yet, the accomplished work of *Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior*, still stands for you at every turn of your journey. God promises to walk with you as you walk through the hazards of this life. He promises you, His called and chosen people, that you shall never walk alone. He promises to be with you as you endure fierce storms and fiery trials. Continue to trust in the work of your Good Shepherd, Jesus, Who laid down His life for you and *calls His own sheep by name* as He leads you. He reassures you of His forgiveness and presence. In the words of Isaiah 41:10 → *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.