

**LUZON NAZARENE BIBLE COLLEGE**



**Founders' Week 2006**

**HOLINESS**  
SERMONS AND COMMENTARIES

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the man who was made whole, cleansed from his sins. It was a response the inner self to an overwhelming sense of God's sovereignty and a transforming experience of His holiness.

A **sanctified person** will realize possibilities and opportunities for service to God and man. Holiness experience results to a new capacity to hear the Lord's voice and an immediate response feels himself commissioned and empowered to serve.

God was sending Isaiah to an evil people who hate righteousness. He was to speak words of judgment to the people and it was not easy. But he did just what God told him to do with power and faith to the HOLY ONE.

God is seeking people today with a heart like that of Isaiah. He wants people who would honestly admit their unworthiness and will be waiting to open their hearts for His holy cleansing. The church needs sanctified workers in order to make a difference in the world and win the world to Christ.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

God has revealed His holiness to man. His holiness demands turning away from sin. A truly negative heart will experience cleansing and holiness.

# THE NAME OF GOD GLORIFIED IN US

By Dr. Floyd T. Cunningham

**TEXT:** Ezekiel 36:20-29

## INTRODUCTION

When God called Moses to lead his people from Egypt, Moses demanded to know the name of God. God revealed it: *Yahweh*, which can be translated as "I am," or "I am who I am," or "I am present with you." Later, when Moses needed assurance that God's presence would go with the Israelites, God agreed to allow Moses to see his presence and to hear his name: *"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord [Yahweh], in your presence"* (Exodus 33:19). The very character of God, and his redeeming presence with his people, is signified in his name.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he did so saying "our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name." Another way to put it would be "sanctify be thy name." It is part of the prayer's three-fold petition: Let your name be hallowed, let your kingdom come, let your will be done. We recite this prayer as Jesus intended, in the context of the importance of glorifying the Name of God, and in the context of the blasphemy of that Name through the sins of his people. Jesus instructed us to pray to the Father in order that his name be vindicated or redeemed. This will be accomplished only when his Kingdom comes and his will is done. Since our behavior brings either shame or honor to his name we may personalize this prayer: *"Let your name be hallowed, or sanctified, now through me; in my life today be glorified."*

This is precisely what the prophet Ezekiel longed for, the day when the Sovereign Lord would show himself holy *through us* before the eyes of the people of the world (36:23).

## I. THE NAME OF GOD

In the Near East, a name was not given out freely. A name was thought to reveal inner character. When God revealed himself, it was not as an abstract Being, but as one revealing himself in personal relationship: "I am with you" in order to save you from your suffering. God's nature, this is to say, is self-revealing. God reveals himself through his Word, through his prophets, and through his law. The giving of his name seals the covenant that was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:

*"Say to the Israelites, Yahweh . . . has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation" (Exodus 3:15).*

## II. THE NAME OF GOD PROFANED

This holy name of God was being made unholy, and contemptible, by the people, who were unfaithful and idolatrous. Their unfaithfulness began even in the wilderness while Moses was on the mountain top communing with God and receiving the law as a means of sealing the covenant. The law was a means of the people securing the promises and blessings of God. Obedience to the law was meant to keep the people holy. Through the law they would know exactly what was required. God had commanded them, *"Be holy as I am holy,"* which, in the context of Leviticus 19: 1 meant holy in faith, in love, in righteousness. But the Israelites would not and could not fulfill the law.

In spite of various prophets, the people remained disobedient. Now, in Ezekiel's time, 600 years after the people had set up idols in the wilderness. Israel was in bondage and misery, conquered by its enemies. Israel was a kind of political football batted back and forth between Egypt and Babylon. The first wave of captives was taken to Babylonia in 597 BC—the priest Ezekiel among them. While a captive, living at the banks of the Chebar River, Ezekiel began a 20-year career of prophesying to the exiles.

Their Babylonian captors and surrounding people mocked the Israelites: if Yahweh is so great, why did he allow you to become enslaved, and why did he not save you? The answer Ezekiel gives does *not* to place blame on Yahweh: God has been faithful. From the beginning, over and over, God had been patient and had acted redemptively. The blame lied upon the faithlessness of Israel. From the beginning of its history, God's chosen people had dishonored and profaned his holy name. Chapter 16 is an allegory graphically comparing Israel to a prostitute. The name of the "Holy One" of Israel has been blasphemed—shamed, just as we might bring shame to our family by criminal activities or immoral actions. For Ezekiel the sins are both corporate and personal. We cannot blame anyone else. Ezekiel tells the people (18:20): *"The soul who sins is the one who will die."* Chapter 22 lists the people's contemptible behavior. God's chosen people mistreated their parents. They oppressed aliens. They failed to take care of orphans and fatherless and widows. They despised holy things and desecrated the Sabbath. They slandered each other. They ate at mountain shrines to pagan gods—participating in idolatry, and committing lewd acts. They violated women and committed adultery.

They accepted bribes, took advantage of others in lending money, and committed extortion. In summary, they forgot God. So the report came to all of the nations, to the heathen, that the followers of the "Holy One" were no better than they were. They were just as sinful, just as wicked, and just as idolatrous—there was no difference. And so God's name was shamed and blasphemed among the nations by the unholy character of his people.

And what about us: how different are we from our neighbors?

### III. THE NAME OF GOD HALLOWED

The only way for God to redeem his name is for him to restore and redeem his people. He could not depend upon his priests to be good shepherds. The Sovereign Lord himself, Ezekiel described, will search for his sheep and look after them . . . "will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak" (34: 11, 16).

The promise through Ezekiel was that God would "show myself holy through you before their eyes" (36: 23), and, to do so, begin to gather his people back to the Promised Land (v. 24). The full redemption of his name, however, would mean much more. It required that the people called by his name stop profaning it by their wickedness.

God promises, "I will sprinkle you with clean water" (v. 25) — symbolizing God's work for us. The sprinkling with clean water was a ceremonial act done for the people by the High Priest. This removed the sin-guilt that separated them from God. The priest made atonement for sins by offering an unblemished sacrifice. This allowed God's people to enter a state of justification, establishing right status and relationship with God. But this, from centuries of experience, was not sufficient to keep the Holy Name of God from being profaned because it was not sufficient to keep the people from sin.

In order to bring honor and glory to the name of God, so that they could keep the commands of the covenant, the people also needed purification within. Only by putting a new heart and a new spirit within them (vs. 26-27) would God's people be enabled to so live. This was sanctification, God's work in us. This inner work would turn the people from love of self to love of God. Because of the people's inward waywardness from God, only if laws and decrees were written on their hearts would they be able to obey (v. 27). The Spirit of God would need to put new hearts (the seat of the affections) in his people. The old heart was made of "stone." The people's hearts were hard — cold to others,

to God and his will — and hardened by sin. God's promise is to put back within us such hearts as Adam and Eve had before their *Fall*, hearts that were sensitive to God, his voice, hearts that pulsed to his will, hearts filled with love toward him and toward each other, and hearts responsible and caring toward all that God had created. As John Wesley put it, their once tender, malleable, and moldable hearts had now grown hard, and so our prayer too may be "Jesus, on me bestow the penitent desire; with true sincerity of woe my aching breast inspire; with softening pity look and melt my hardness down; strike, with thy love's resistless stroke, and break this heart of stone! (*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7: *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, eds. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge [Nashville: Abingdon, 1983], 205.)

The new heart is one of "flesh." This is a heart as God created it and intended it to be—pliable to do his will, sensitive to others, able to be melted, molded, filled, and used. *May awit at panalangin*: "Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me: melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me." "*Buhay na Espiritu ng Dios, bumaba ka sa akin. Tunawin at hubugin mo ako; puspusin at gamitin mo ako.*" This happens only if the Spirit dwells within, and the promise of God is "I will put my Spirit in you." Then, only then, "*You will be my people and I will be your God*" (v. 28), and thereby save you from all your uncleanness" (v. 29).

*Ang pangako tungkol sa Espiritu ay natupad at ngayon, maaaring ang ating pusong bato ay maalís at mapalitan. At ang buhay na matigas sa kanyang tinig, matigas sa kanyang kalooban, matigas sa kanyang pag-ibig, at matigas sa ibang tao ay maaaring maalís sa pamamagitan ng gawa ng Banal na Espiritu. At maaaring ngayon, bibigyan tayo ng binagong puso, ang pusong puspus ng pag-ibig sa Dios, puspus ng awa at mahabagin sa ibang-tao; puspus ng pagkabahala o sensitibo sa kanyang kalooban sa buhay natin — hindi matigas, subalit natutunaw, nahuhubog at nagagamit sa kaharian ng Dios, at puspus ng kanyang Espiritu.*

Upon such inward purity God will rebuild his land and reestablish his name. "If my people, which are *called by my name* shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). That is, God offers to his people not only forgiving justifying grace, but healing sanctifying grace. It is not for the glory of ourselves (that we might brag on our holiness): "I want you

to know," God says, *"that I am not doing this for your sake," but, rather to glorify myself* (v. 32).

Ezekiel offers hope for revival among God's people. Chapter 37 provides an image of a valley of dry bones. God promises (v. 5) that He will make breath enter his people and they will come to life. "Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live." *"I will put my Spirit in you and you will live"* brings hope to a church sadly in need of such renewing life.

## CONCLUSION

What is the name we bear? "Christian." Christ reveals the nature of the "I am," and His is the likeness we are to bear. A gospel song, "O to be Like Thee," captures this likeness as full of compassion, loving, forgiving, tender and kind, helping the helpless, cheering the fainting, seeking the wandering sinner. Lowly in spirit, holy and harmless, patient and brave, meekly enduring, willing to suffer others to save. People will know Christ by seeing Christ in us: it is His name we bear. Are we glorifying, or in some small way, bringing shame to the name we bear?

The fulfillment of this outpoured Spirit that Ezekiel longed for came at Pentecost, where God bestowed his Spirit and established his church upon those believers who tarried until they were filled with the Spirit, who, in fulfillment of the promise, purified their hearts by faith (Acts 15: 9). So too may we tarry for the promised blessing of the sanctifying Spirit so that we too may in our Christlikeness bring glory to His name.

