

Thought For The Week

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For His Name's Sake

There is a phrase that runs like a golden thread through Scripture, a phrase that opens the heart of God and touches something sacred in His character. It is the simple yet profound expression “for His name’s sake.” When we learn to think, pray, and live with that motive in view, we position ourselves to please God and to advance His reputation among those who watch our lives.

Psalm 23 brings the phrase into clear focus. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” The New International Version renders the critical clause, “He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.” God does not shepherd His people merely out of abstract kindness. He guides, restores, and protects so that His people will glorify Him, think well of Him, and credit to Him whatever is righteous and upright. His divine intervention, providence, and preservation are performed with the deliberate intention that we form a positive and grateful estimate of His character.

This concern for His own name did not begin with the writing of the Twenty-third Psalm. When God created the heavens and the earth, He assumed lasting responsibilities for everything He made. He did not fashion the world and then abdicate interest in its welfare. He continues to regard the well-being of His creation highly. He desires that none should perish but that all should come to repentance. He wants every human being to hold a favorable opinion of Him.

Psalm 104 expands this truth with sweeping beauty. The psalmist begins by calling his own soul to praise the Lord who is clothed with splendor and majesty, who wraps Himself in light as with a garment, who stretches out the heavens like a tent and rides on the wings of the wind. Then the psalm turns to the concrete ways God still sustains the world He made. He set the earth on its foundations so that it can never be moved. He covered it with the deep as with a garment, then commanded the waters to flee to the place He assigned them, establishing boundaries they can never again cross.

Even now He makes springs pour water into the ravines; the waters flow between the mountains and give drink to every beast of the field. The wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the sky nest by the waters and sing among the branches. He waters the mountains from His upper chambers. The land is satisfied by the fruit of His work. He causes grass to grow for the cattle and plants for people to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth—wine that gladdens human hearts, oil that makes faces shine, and bread that sustains the heart.

The trees of the Lord are well watered—the cedars of Lebanon that He planted. There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the hyrax. He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows when to go down. When He brings darkness it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. When the sun rises they steal away and lie down in their dens; then people go out to their work and to their labor until evening.

How many are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You made them all. The earth is full of Your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number, living things both large and small. There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which You formed to frolic there. All creatures look to You to give them their food at the proper time. When You give it to them, they gather it up; when You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When You hide Your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When You send Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the ground.

The psalm ends with the prayer that the glory of the Lord endure forever and that the Lord Himself rejoice in His works. The entire created order exists and is sustained for His name's sake. The bread on our tables, the meat we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink are all supplied by the continuing providence of God. If He ceased His involvement, we would quickly wither and die. He keeps looking after His creation so that we will think good things of Him and ascribe glory to His name.

The same concern for the divine reputation appears in the history of Israel. After God had brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and they had praised Him on the banks of the Red Sea, they soon turned against Him in the wilderness. Facing hunger and thirst, they accused Moses of having led them out only so they could die in the desert. God responded by telling Moses to step aside so that He might destroy the people and raise up a new nation from Moses' own descendants.

Moses, however, appealed directly to the honor of God's name. He argued that if the Lord destroyed the Israelites, the surrounding nations who had heard of the exodus would conclude that the God of Israel was unable to bring His people into the promised land. They would ridicule His name. God relented and forgave the people. The intercession of Moses was effective because it was grounded in a jealous concern for the reputation of the Lord among the watching nations.

This Old Testament pattern carries a direct lesson for believers today. When we face problems and crises, we ought to approach God with the conscious desire that His name be glorified in the outcome. If He solves the difficulty, He shows Himself strong. The watching world—family, friends, and acquaintances—sees His benevolence, mercy, and grace, and is given reason to praise Him. Paul made the same point when he wrote to the Corinthians about the collection for the famine-stricken saints in Jerusalem. The recipients of that generosity would glorify God's name because of the faithfulness of the Gentile churches.

The supreme illustration of living for the Father's name appears in the life of Jesus Himself. In John 12, shortly after the triumphal entry and His confrontations with the religious leaders, Jesus declared that the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified. He spoke of the necessity of a grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying in order to produce much fruit. Then He confessed the trouble of His own soul: "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name."

A voice came from heaven: "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Some in the crowd thought it had thundered; others supposed an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus' willingness to go to the cross was for the Father's name's sake. Through the cross God would demonstrate His love by giving His only begotten Son so that sinners might be saved. The writer of Hebrews later observed that Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him, knowing that His sacrifice would secure the justification believers need. In going to the cross Jesus was deliberately glorifying the Father's name in a willing and obedient act.

Paul lived by the same principle. Writing to the Philippians, he thanked them for their repeated financial support, support that had begun in the earliest days of their acquaintance with the gospel. He affirmed that he had learned the secret of being content in every circumstance—whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. The well-known declaration “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” is not a blank check for personal ambition. It is a confession that God enables the believer to endure every situation.

The reason God strengthens His people is so that He may show Himself strong and so that His name may be glorified. When good things happen, those who know us take notice. God desires that the credit be given to Him. Every difficult situation a believer faces may be a test to determine whether that person will abandon trust in God or will turn to Him for help. God has not forgotten His people. He continues to do good for them for His name’s sake, because He wants them to become His children and to look forward to being with Him in heaven.

Paul told the Colossians that one of the chief reasons people turn to Christ, are baptized for the remission of sins, and rise to walk in newness of life is the promise God holds out to them—the promise of heaven. The only hope any individual has of reaching heaven is found in Christ. That hope is the expression of God’s mercy, grace, and gospel.

If you have not yet responded to the offer God is holding out, the invitation remains open. Name Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Be baptized for the remission of your sins. Rise to walk in newness of life, looking forward to the promise of heaven. Everything God does for His people—His daily providence, His patient forgiveness, the gift of His Son, the strength He supplies in trial—is done for His name’s sake. May we learn to live, to pray, and to endure with that same motive filling our hearts, so that His name is glorified in us and through us.

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For His Name's Sake:

There is a phrase that opens the heart of God and touches something sacred in His character: “for His name’s sake.” When we learn to think and live with that motive, we please God and advance His reputation.

Psalm 23 declares, “He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” God shepherds His people so that we will glorify Him, think well of Him, and credit to Him what is righteous. His providence and protection are deliberate acts designed to form a grateful estimate of His character in us.

This concern did not begin with the psalm. When God created the world, He assumed lasting responsibility for it. Psalm 104 shows that He still sustains everything He made. He waters the earth, causes grass to grow for cattle and plants for people, and supplies bread, water, and air. All creatures look to Him for food at the proper time. If He withdrew His hand, we would perish. He continues this care for His name’s sake, so that we will ascribe glory to Him.

The same motive appears in Israel’s history. When the people rebelled in the wilderness and God threatened to destroy them, Moses appealed to the honor of God’s name. The nations watching would ridicule Him if He failed to bring His people into the land. God relented because of that appeal.

Jesus Himself lived by this principle. Facing the cross in John 12, He prayed, “Father, glorify Your name.” A voice from heaven answered, “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.” The cross was for the Father’s name’s sake—so the world would know God’s love in giving His Son.

Paul learned the same lesson. In Philippians 4 he wrote that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him, because God meets every need according to His riches in glory. God strengthens us so that He may show Himself strong and His name may be glorified.

Every trial and every provision is for His name’s sake. He has not forgotten us. He offers the promise of heaven through Christ. If you have not yet responded, name Jesus as Lord, be baptized for the remission of sins, and walk in newness of life—so that His name is glorified in you.

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