

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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“IN JESUS NAME, AMEN.”

By Andrew Dow

Among the Christians with whom I have associated there is a surefire way to know if one is about to wrap up a prayer. Almost without fail Christians will conclude their prayers with this formula—or some similar variation—“in Jesus name, amen.” Perhaps you have used this phrase in your own prayers whether public or private. Must a prayer include this phrase before it is acceptable to God?

First, let me point out there is nothing wrong with the use of this phrase. In fact, if understood correctly, this phrase reflects biblical teaching about prayer. Some of Jesus’s final words to His apostles involved the expectation that they would make requests of God **“in My name”** (John 14:13; 15:16, 23–24, 26). **“If you ask anything in My name,”** Jesus said, **“I will do it”** (John 14:14).

Furthermore, this statement reflects an understanding of Christ’s role as the high priest who intercedes between us and God (cf. Heb 4:14–16; 7:25). It is because of Jesus’s intercession that we can confidently approach God’s throne in prayer. Therefore, it is certainly a worthwhile practice to acknowledge this in our prayers—both public and private.

It is simply not true, however, to conclude that our prayers must include this formula in order to be heard by or accepted by God. A simple survey of the prayers in the Bible will reveal this. When Jesus taught his disciples to

pray in Matthew 6 and Luke 11 He is strikingly silent regarding their need to include “in Jesus name, amen.” Prayers in the New Testament far more often end with praise to God (e.g., Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20).

So, if Jesus did not intend for us to verbally acknowledge that we are praying “in Jesus name,” what exactly did He mean in John 14:14 and elsewhere? Why did Jesus teach His apostles to pray “**in My name**”?

It will prove helpful to understand what this idea—doing something in someone’s name—really means. Doing something in Jesus’s name is not only related to prayer. The same language is used in connection to baptism: “**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,**” Jesus said, “**baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**” (Matt 28:19). Of course, some have taken this passage to mean that before a baptism can be valid the baptizer must speak this (or a similar) formula. However, Paul used this kind of language in Colossians 3:17 concerning literally *everything*—“**Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.**” Is this a formula that must be verbally spoken in order to validate our every word and deed?

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? It means the same thing as to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit or do everything in the name of the Lord. It’s not a matter of reciting a formula, but about understanding according to whose authority you act.

When you pray—whether publicly or privately—know that it is by Jesus’s authority (in His name) that we can pray to God. Say it or don’t say it—but always pray like it!

BUILDING AND TEARING DOWN WALLS

By Andrew Dow

It seems that the current news cycle is filled with talk about immigration policies and boarder walls. People across the political spectrum have misused Scripture to support their position. We need to be careful when listening to and engaging in political discussions that we do not neglect the far more important spiritual truths that we learn in God's Word. Whereas many today are concerned about national boarder walls, we would do well to spend a few moments thinking about the walls that Jesus built and tore down.

First, Jesus deconstructed two impassable walls.

The foremost of these was the wall that stood between God and man. Matthew records that when Jesus died **“the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom”** (27:51). This is the veil which acted as a barrier between the holy place where the priests worked and the holy of holies where God's mercy seat resided. Jesus's death, therefore, acted as an atonement for man. It is because of His sacrifice that you and I can approach God and be forgiven.

The second wall Jesus tore down was the wall that separated people—specifically Jews and Gentiles. Paul wrote to Gentile Christians saying, **“He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to**

death the enmity” (Eph 2:14–16). Jesus’s sacrifice makes it possible for mankind to be united in ways never before experienced.

Second, however, Jesus constructed walls as well.

Peter wrote, **“you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices”** (1 Pet 2:5). Paul frequently described Christ’s church as God’s temple which is being built up (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21–22; 1 Tim 3:15). Jesus is constructing walls out of His people that will be a fortress for God’s glory and against sin.

We can have opinions about boarder policies. However, we should not get so wrapped up in physical walls that we neglect to think about Jesus’s walls—both the ones he tore down and built up. The blessings of Christ abound to those who are His. Live for Christ.

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Saved Through
Water

PM LESSON:
The Disciples’ Royal Reception
(Mark 6:7–32)

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)