

October 16, 2011

IN THE NAME OF JESUS

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Wouldn't it be really something if you could put your name on a check from Warren Buffet's account and make it legal? "Pay to the order of Internal Revenue Service one billion and 00/100 Dollars, signed Jeffery D. Woodhams." He did say he wanted to pay more taxes, right? I don't know if Bill Gates has said any such thing about taxes. Let's get one of his checks and make it payable to Waverly Hall Baptist Church. What do you think? He's the richest man in the world, and I'm sure he'd be very generous to us, especially if one of us is writing the check!

You know and I know that there are people who sign Bill Gates's checks and Warren Buffet's checks, but they can't just write those checks out however they please, can they? They have to write them in accordance with the account holder's interests. As long as these people act in accordance with the wishes of the account holder, they have the authority to use the account holder's name.

Did you know that is how it is between us and Jesus? Did you ever stop to wonder why we pray "in Jesus' name"? As a child of God, you are commissioned with the authority to act on behalf of Jesus. That's a great privilege and a great responsibility, isn't it? You have the authority to sign checks from God's account of blessings, so to speak, so long as you are acting in accordance with His desires.

The key, of course, is that we act within His desires, and not our own. There are those who abuse passages like the one we're going to read today to mean that God is at our beck and call to do whatever we want Him to do—but that's exactly the opposite of what Scripture teaches! There are those who state that we can command any sickness to leave a body, that we can command any amount of money we think we need, that we can command anything in the name of Jesus, and it will happen. No, no, no! We have the authority to use His name in order to accomplish His desires, not our own. God is not our servant or a Jinn ("genie") in a bottle.

Let's look today at one instance of Jesus giving His disciples power to use His name. We'll read Mark 6:7–13.

⁷ *And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;*

⁸ *And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:*

⁹ *But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.*

¹⁰ *And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.*

¹¹ *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

¹² *And they went out, and preached that men should repent.*

¹³ *And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

Jesus decides to give His disciples a little “on-the-job” training. At this point in His ministry, people are beginning to wonder exactly who Jesus is. We saw last week that the people of His hometown asked that very question, even though they had known Him since childhood. In the passage after this, we’ll see Herod and his cohorts begin to ask who Jesus is. Jesus wants His disciples to know exactly who He is, and the best way to instruct them is to have them start talking about them. One wise educator said, “If you would thoroughly know anything thoroughly, teach it to others.”¹

Here is Jesus, then, the Master Teacher, giving his disciples an assignment so that they can take what they already know about Him and construct new knowledge in their own minds based on their own experiences. He gives them explicit instruction and the resources they need to experience success. That is the goal of any good teacher, isn’t it? We want our students to learn more than just bare facts; we want their learning to be meaningful. We want them to experience success so that they’ll develop confidence to learn even more.

What are the lessons He wants them to learn? He wants them to learn two important things: first, He wants them to learn who He really is, and second, He wants them to learn to trust in God completely. That is why He sent them as He did—without making their own preparations. They were not to go home and grab things for the journey. All of their needs would be supplied.

Keep in mind, though, that this was an explicit call from Jesus to do a very specific job for this one occasion! This was a temporary provision, specifically for these men. He did not tell them, “Never make any preparations.” No! This one for this one particular mission. We are not to be foolish and put God to the test! We are not to say, “Well, there are kids in another part of the world that need the Gospel, so I’m going to go down to the harbor and see if I can stow away aboard a ship and just trust God to take care of me.” Jesus said, “Thou shalt not tempt [test] the Lord thy God” in Matthew 4:7.

So Jesus sends them out on this specific mission, telling them not to make any advance preparations. He had a reason to set up the lesson that way. While there may be times that we have a strong conviction from God to do something for Him on the spur of the moment, we must realize that generally speaking God expects us to consider and plan what we can, and to rely upon Him for the rest!

Notice next how He tells them their needs will be supplied: “*And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.*” In those days, there were very few inns. Most towns didn’t have one. When a traveler arrived in town, it was the town’s duty to take him in and provide for him. Now, do you think that would be a safe practice in twenty-first century America? Not really! But it was the rule of the day back then. You will recall that the city of Sodom broke that ancient custom when the angels visited Lot. In most places, though, it was customary to welcome travelers.

The people of the towns were to take care of Jesus’ disciples; but if you read the account in Matthew, you will see that the disciples were to heal and to bless the residents who took them in. In other words, their ministry gave more than it got. They were not going out as beggars, expecting people just to take them in; no, they were going out as ministers, helping people and bringing them the good news that God’s own Son had come to live among them.

¹ Tryon Edwards (1809-1894).

But what of those who rejected the message? They will miss the blessings that God had intended for them. Look with me if you will at verse 11: *“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.”* This act of shaking the dust of their sandals is not an act of vindictiveness; it is an act of heaviness, of sorrow.

In the Old Testament, you sometimes read the phrase, “It repented God...” or “God repented....” The root word or idea in Hebrew that we cannot see in our English translation is that God breathed. It is the long breath of disappointment. In the Hebrew mindset, the nose was the seat of emotion, not the heart.

I think we need to illustrate this. Let’s say that you’ve got a child young enough to be in school. Now let’s say that one day you dropped into school, intending to check the child out early as a surprise and take him or her somewhere special for the afternoon—maybe to get ice cream or go to the fair or something along those lines. But when you arrive at the office, you find out your child has already been in the principal’s office that day. The child has been in trouble. You know that you can’t go through with the special blessing that you had intended to give. You take a deep breath and walk away, and you might never even tell the child what blessing he or she missed that day. You breathe a long breath of disappointment.

That’s the way it is here. The people who rejected the message of Jesus as the Son of God will miss God’s blessing. God loves everyone and has made a way for us to know Him and love Him as well through His Son, Jesus Christ. But God cannot bless those who refuse the message about His Son. He wants to bless them, but He will not do so against their will.

That leads us to the last half of verse 11: *“Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.”* The people of Israel, to whom these disciples were preaching, thought that they were superior to all other people, but most especially superior to the people of Sodom and Gomorrha. However, from God’s perspective, the people of Israel had more knowledge of God and therefore greater responsibility to accept the message of Jesus. The people of Sodom and Gomorrha had access to the knowledge of God through the testimony of Lot and Abraham; but the people of Israel had access to the entire Old Testament as well as weekly study in the synagogue. They had much more knowledge of God than the people of Sodom and Gomorrha, and that is why Jesus makes this statement: in the day of judgment, the people who had greater access to the truth will be held more responsible for rejecting it.

If that be true, then what about us? We have access to the whole Word of God. We have access to Bible teaching and preaching every day through television, radio, and Internet. When we stand before God at the end of the ages, what excuse could we possibly make for rejecting Him?

No, my friends, God earnestly desires all men everywhere to repent. II Peter 3:9 tells us, *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* My friends, I urge you today not to reject His gift of love. Jesus died to save you so that you can be blessed eternally, free of sin and sickness and death and all of the other things that plague us in this broken world. Will you accept Him today?

For those of you here who have accepted Jesus as Savior, do you live according to His name? Do people see you as a child of God? Are you responsible with the authority He has given you to work in Jesus’ name? If not, then I urge you today to come to this altar and pray.