

“Better Than Precious Ointment!”

Jay Graham

What is the most precious thing you “own”? I put the word “own” in quotes because this is something you have total control over. It must be something you have earned. It must be something that is only yours. It must be your most precious possession. There are very few things in this world that we have total control of. We cannot totally control our health, our children, or even our spouses. This is the one most precious thing we own. It is your “name.” What is your “name” known for? What is your reputation?

The Scriptures speak of the importance of our names a number of times. Solomon wrote of it specifically at least twice in his wisdom-inspired writings:

Ecclesiastes 7:1, *“A good name is better than precious ointment.”*

Proverbs 22:1, *“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.”*

I like his emphasis on the word “chosen.” A “good name” is one we choose!

The Bible is filled with faithful saints who were known by their “names.” So much so that when we hear these “names,” certain thoughts and images come to our minds immediately. You can probably quickly associate their “names” with their actions and deeds. What do you think of when you hear of Abel? Or Job? Or Moses? Or Dorcas? Or Cornelius?

What do the Scriptures testify of Zacharias and Elizabeth in **Luke 1:5-7**? They were both *“righteous before God.”* They walked in all the commandments of the Lord! Or how about the household of Stephanus in **1 Corinthians 16:15-16**? They were known for devoting themselves to the service of the saints! This number probably included Stephanus, his wife, children, and possibly servants. What a great reputation for an entire household to have!

Timothy is another example of a young man who earned a good reputation in **Acts 16:1-3**. He had a good reputation among the churches or at least among the congregations he lived near (and probably participated with), such as Derbe and Lystra. He probably earned his reputation by teaching among these brothers and sisters. He continued earning this reputation after joining Paul’s work. The apostle considered Timothy a *“beloved and faithful son in the Lord,”* according to **1 Corinthians 4:17**.

There are the godly and faithful Aquila and Priscilla whom Paul wrote of a number of times. He wrote of their “names” in **Romans 16:3-5** because they risked their necks for his life. At least twice, the church met in their homes. They were also known among the churches of the Gentiles.

However, this principle also applies to those who were known for wickedness. Cain, Ahab and Jezebel, or Ananias and Sapphira (see **Acts 5:1-11**), to name a few. Like those righteous saints, these also earned their reputations due to their deeds and wickedness.

Your “name” will be known for something. However, you will probably not have a truly accurate understanding of your reputation. We often tend to look at ourselves as seeing no blemishes (though there is certainly a place for self-examination, as Paul wrote about in **1 Corinthians 11:28** and **2 Corinthians 13:5**). However, those who are acquainted with us probably can more accurately and fairly tell us what our “names” are known for.

I am convinced the Lord knows His faithful saints by name. The Lord knew Moses by “name” in **Exodus 33:12-17**. He knows us even before we are born, as taught in **Psalms 139:13**. This kind of knowledge implies having an intimate relationship, as the apostle speaks of in **Philippians 3:10**. The Lord certainly knows His congregations by name as mentioned many times in the New Testament Scriptures.

This is in contrast to those mentioned in **Matthew 7:21-23**, where He said He did NOT know them! But of course, this does not imply he was not aware of them, but He did not acknowledge them, for they “practiced lawlessness,” in spite of the fact that they were religious people who called Him Lord!

How does one gain a “good name?”

- Following the many examples we have in the Scriptures.
- Having a humble and serving spirit.
- Having a love for the body (His body, not ours).
- Being willing to work in our portion of His vineyard. By prioritizing the Lord’s kingdom.

Think of those faithful saints whom you have known and still know. Think of how they have impacted your life for the better. Think of how they have helped guide and nurture you into the Christian and servant you have become. I can think of many saints who have had a positive impact on my life and spirit due to their “names.” I can easily name you probably hundreds of individuals’ “names.” They will immediately bring good thoughts of them to your mind because of their labors and love for the Lord and His people. Through their “names,” you have benefited tremendously. And if you live likewise, your “name” will benefit those you come into contact with over the years and decades.

When is a good time to start earning a “good name?” Immediately! The sooner, the better. Once you have earned a “bad name” it can be very difficult to change it. Once you have earned a “good name” it can be very easy to ruin it. It requires constant care and diligence.

The Scriptures teach us the Lord is going to give us a “new name!” **Revelation 2:17** and **3:12** teaches us the Lord will give His saints a “new name” if they remain faithful unto death.

What is your “name” known for?