

# St. Paul: Weekly Devotions

*Devotions on week's readings  
for 09.27.15 Unity Sunday*

*This week's devotions are written in preparation for our All-One-Family Sunday, the weekend that we worship together in one service.*

## **Day One: Isaiah 43:1**

*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."*

It may seem weird, but I love to diagram sentences.

I know. You hated it when you had to do that in school. And I'm not that much of a grammar nut either. But I love to see the structure of the thoughts in God's word. Take a look at our verse from Isaiah. It's our theme verse for this year, and although it has seven separate clauses, it has only one main thought.

The first 3 phrases are introduction. This is who's speaking, and this is who he is talking to.

The last 3 phrases are consequences. These are the results of the main statement.

In all of this complicated construction here is the main message, the thing that God really wants you to know... "Fear not."

Don't be afraid. Even though bad stuff happens – even though life is unpredictable – even if you can't see what's coming – you don't need to be afraid.

Why not? That answer is simple, but it's so important that God puts it in three different ways:

1. I have redeemed you. I paid a heavy price for you.
2. I have called you by name. You're carrying my family name now.
3. You are mine. You belong to me. You belong with me.

This amazing verse is in the middle of a large section that details the many failures of God's people. And if we would look at ourselves, we would have to say we're at least as bad. But in the middle of our mess God says, it's OK. You belong to me.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, I'm a mess. Your people, the Church, are a mess. We have failed in so many ways, and look at the result around us. But I am not afraid. You gave Jesus for me. I belong to you. Amen.*

## Day Two: Philippians 2:1-11

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

In our Old Testament lesson, the prophet Isaiah said that God tells us, “I have called you by name, you are mine.” And that’s the reason we don’t need to be afraid.

There are other results that come from being called by name. You see, it’s not just any name that God has called us. God, our Father, calls us to be part of the Body of Christ. The believers began to be called “Christians” in the city of Antioch, a name which meant “belonging to Christ.”

It was intended as an insult, as if they were slaves of Jesus. But they accepted it as a wonderful compliment. They knew they really did belong to Jesus, and they carried his name.

And what name is that? It is the name at which every knee will bow.

Years ago there was a series of TV commercials in which a room full of people were talking, but as soon as someone said, “My broker is E. F. Hutton, and E. F. Hutton says...” the entire room fell silent as everyone was listening.

The name of Jesus is even more arresting. It stops heaven and earth. Even those who reject Jesus react to his name because he makes the ultimate claim to our honor. And that is the name we carry. We belong to him.

Instead of making us proud, it makes us humble and loving, like Jesus. It makes us love one another, like Jesus. It makes us reach out to the lost, like Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, let me carry your name joyfully, excitedly, freely, and lovingly. Put your name on me again today. Amen.*

### Day Three: John 17:6-18

*“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world... <sup>9</sup>I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours... I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

God said through Isaiah that God has called us by name, we belong to him, and therefore we don't need to be afraid. God said through Paul that “Jesus” is the name that is above every other name, the only name by which we can be saved. Now Jesus is praying for his disciples and for us on the very same night that he would be arrested and put on trial, just hours before his crucifixion. And he asks God the Father to “keep them in your name, which you have given to me, that we may be one.”

Just think of what that means. Jesus says that he has kept his disciples “in your name.” He has made them God's children, his family. And it is by the name of God that we see we belong in his home.

There is a little farmhouse in Illinois, out in the middle of nowhere. It's at the end of a long, long driveway. I've never been there, but if you go past you'll see a mailbox with the name “Rowe” on it. That's the house where my mother was born. My name isn't Rowe, but I know I would be welcome there. Because of my mother, that's home for me.

Jesus prays that you will be kept in his name, a part of his family, no matter what. By faith in Jesus, by trusting in him, we become one with him. And then, just as Isaiah said, we have no reason to fear. We will be at home.

*Prayer: Dear Jesus, you prayed for me and for all of those believers who came after the disciples. You cared more about making me a part of your family than I have cared about making you a part of my life. Lord, help me to rejoice that I carry your name. Amen.*

## Day Four: John 17:1318

<sup>13</sup> *But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*

We've had three devotions about being in God's name. And each time the main thrust has been that we don't need to be afraid. That's wonderful stuff, but is that all there is to carrying the name of Jesus?

Jesus asked the Father to NOT take us out of the world. I don't know about you, but I have pretty often prayed that God would keep my children out of bad places. No storms, no danger, no drugs, I pray that God would put them in good schools and nice neighborhoods.

But Jesus says, "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

We're not supposed to resemble the world. In fact, that's a big part of what it means that we are in his name, and that he keeps us in his name. We go out as special, unique, different people. We go out in the name of Jesus... but we go OUT.

We are to be sanctified in the truth. That means we're different from the world, set apart because of the truth. But we aren't set apart by staying away from others. We're set apart by having a wonderful message of truth to share. And because we are safe in Jesus' name we are not afraid to go out with the good news.

Is that you? Is that what our church looks like? If not, maybe we need to check our nametags and remember who we are!

**Prayer:** *Father in heaven, I'm your child. I carry your name. Lead me to carry it into the world with joy, knowing I am safe in you. Amen.*

These devotions help us to think ahead about the Bible verses we will read in worship next week. They are written weekly by Pastor Don Neuendorf. You can learn more about our worship or our church at [stpaulannarbor.org](http://stpaulannarbor.org)