RENAMED

Answering to the Name
Heaven Has Given You

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Contents

Introduction: The Power of a Name 1

Chapter 1: What Were You Called? 6

Chapter 2: Ben-oni to Benjamin: When Sorrow Names You 13

Chapter 3: Mara: The Name You Gave Yourself 20

Chapter 4: Abram to Abraham: Named for What God Sees 28

Chapter 5: Jacob to Israel: The Name behind the Struggle 35

Chapter 6: Simon to Peter: Named before You Became 42

Chapter 7: Lo-ammi to "Sons of the Living God" 49

Chapter 8: No More Forsaken: Hephzibah and Beulah 57

Chapter 9: The Name Written upon You 64

Final Declaration 71

Prayer of Salvation 73

About the Author 74

About the Ministry 76

Other Books by Pastor Dr. Emmanuel Mukisa 77

INTRODUCTION

The Power of a Name

What did they call you?

Not the name on your birth certificate. The other names. The ones spoken in the house when you did wrong. The ones shouted across the schoolyard. The one a teacher said in front of the class. The one a husband said on his way out of the door. The one your own heart has whispered to you after every failure.

Every person carries names. Some were given in love. Some were given in anger. Some were given in pain. And many of us have answered to them for so long that we no longer notice we are answering. We simply live as though the name is the truth.

This book is about the names you were given, and the name God has given you.

Whatsoever Adam Called

Go back to the beginning. One of the first works God gave to man, beside the keeping of the garden, was naming. "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Genesis 2:19).

Hear the last words: "that was the name thereof." When Adam spoke a name, it stood. The name defined the creature. To name a thing is to say what it is.

That is why names carry such power over us. A name is not only a word. It is a definition. When someone names you, they are telling you what you are. And if you receive it, you begin to live inside it.

Babylon's Names and Heaven's Name

Look at what Babylon did to four young men from Judah. When they were carried away and brought into the king's service, the officials set them on the king's food and the king's schooling, and then they went further. They changed their names. "Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego" (Daniel 1:7).

Daniel's name declared, "God is my judge." Babylon replaced it with Belteshazzar, a name from the world of its gods. Years later the king himself said of Daniel, "whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god" (Daniel 4:8). Babylon knew exactly what it was doing. If you can rename a man, you can redefine him. If he answers to your name, he will soon live by your god.

But hear the wonder. Babylon renamed Daniel, but heaven never did. Many years later, when the angel came to him, he did not say, "Belteshazzar." He said, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved" (Daniel 10:11). Babylon's name was on Daniel's papers. Heaven's name was on Daniel's life. And Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (1:8). Babylon had changed his name, but it had not changed him.

The world you grew up in may have renamed you. The system, the family, the circumstances, the people around you may have put their names on you. But heaven has not forgotten what it calls you.

Which the Mouth of the LORD Shall Name

God spoke this promise through Isaiah: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name" (Isaiah 62:2).

Look at where the new name comes from: "which the mouth of the LORD shall name." It does not come from your effort. It does not come from your achievements. It does not come from people finally changing their minds about you. It comes out of the mouth of the LORD.

The Hebrew word for "name" in that phrase is *naqav*. It means to mark out, to designate, to specify. It is not a vague label. It is God marking you out by name and saying precisely what you are.

And John tells us what God has said: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). Then, in case anyone thinks this is only a hope for the future, he adds, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (3:2). Now. Not one day. Not when you have improved. Now.

God Renames What He Takes Hold Of

Read through the Scriptures and you will find a pattern. When God takes hold of a life, He often gives it a new name.

Abram, "exalted father", a man with no son, became Abraham, "father of a multitude". Sarai became Sarah. Jacob, the heel-catcher, became Israel. A baby named "son of my sorrow" by his dying mother was renamed "son of the right hand" by his father. A fisherman named Simon was called a rock before he had ever stood firm. A nation God had called "not my people" was told, "Ye are the sons of the living God." A city called "Forsaken" was renamed "My delight is in her."

In every case, God did not wait for the old name to wear off. He spoke the new one. And from that day, the question was no longer, "What has this person been called?" It was, "Will this person answer to what God has called him?"

The Name and the Past

In an earlier book, *Freed from the Past*, I showed that in Christ the past has lost its right to rule you. This book goes one step further. It is not enough to know that the old name has lost its power. You must know your new name, and you must answer to it.

A prisoner who has been released answers to his own name instead of his prison number. A son who has been brought home answers to "son" instead of "servant". This is the work of this book.

So here is the governing truth of everything you will read in these pages: **The past gave you a name, but God has given you a new one. You were never meant to answer to what was spoken over you, only to what God calls you.**

What This Book Will Do

In the chapters that follow, we will first face the names that were spoken over you and see why they stick. We will stand at Rachel's deathbed and hear a father overrule his wife's sorrow. We will sit with Naomi as she renames herself "Bitter", and watch the women of Bethlehem call her by her pleasant name again. We will hear God call Abram by a name he had not yet seen, and wrestle with Jacob until he confesses his old name and receives a new one. We will watch Jesus look at a fisherman named Simon and call him a rock. We will hear God reverse "not my people" into "sons of the living God". We will see a forsaken city renamed "My delight is in her". And we will end with the name written upon you by God Himself.

You have answered to the old names long enough. It is time to hear what heaven calls you.

Come, let us listen.

CHAPTER

1

What Were You Called?

Children in many places learn a little rhyme: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." It is said to comfort a child who has been called a name. But it is not true, and every adult knows it is not true. Bruises fade in a week. Some names last a lifetime.

There are grown men who still hear a father's voice saying, "You will never amount to anything." There are women who still answer, deep inside, to a name they were called at twelve years old. There are ministers standing in pulpits who still carry the name a teacher or a relative gave them when they were small. The bruise has long gone. The name is still there.

Before we can hear the new name God has given, we must be honest about the old names we have been carrying.

A Name Is a Reputation

In Hebrew, the word for "name" is *shem*. It means more than a label. It means reputation, renown, what a person is known as. When the builders of Babel said, "let us make us a name" (Genesis 11:4), they were not looking for a word to be called by. They wanted to be known for something. When Solomon wrote, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Proverbs 22:1), he was not speaking of a pleasant sound. He was speaking of what people know you to be.

So a name, in the Bible, is a statement about who you are. That is why names have such power. When someone gives you a name, they are not only calling you something. They are telling you what you are.

And here is the danger. A person can become his name. When Abigail went out to David to save her household, she said of her husband, "as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him" (1 Samuel