

**REPRESENTING GOD WELL:
Applying Commandment 2 in Deuteronomy 5:11**

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In our sermon series on Deuteronomy 5–11 we have given time up front to consider more deeply God’s Ten Commandments given to Israel, which the Bible calls the Decalogue. These Ten Words use positive directions and negative prohibitions to clarify what love for God and neighbor was to look like for God’s people. And because Yahweh’s character is unchanging, these laws still guide believers today when understood through Christ.

Yahweh did not give the Ten Commandments to Christians directly. The church is a new covenant reality, and the Ten Commandments provided the foundational charter for the old covenant community. When Israel’s disobedience and failure to heed God’s law led to their destruction in physical exile and their spiritual separation from God, the old covenant showed that its ultimate ministry was one of death and condemnation and that it would need to be superseded by a better covenant (2 Cor 3:7, 9; Heb 7:22). In Jesus’s death, Israel’s curse reached its climax (Gal 3:13; cf. 2 Cor 5:21), and Jesus’s resurrection marked the dawn of new creation and a new covenant (Luke 22:20; 2 Cor 5:17; Heb 8:13). Those related to Jesus stand under his law, not Moses’s (1 Cor 9:20–21), but we can still benefit from the old covenant law. Indeed, Moses’s law positively communicated for Israel the moral principles of justice, maleness and femaleness, marriage and family, and the value of human life that have been binding since creation. Through Jesus we can discern how these same principles that are formalized in the old covenant law retain lasting value for believers today.

The previous two messages considered the lasting significance of the first commandment, and today I hope to apply more specifically the second. Follow along as I read all of Moses’s account of the Ten Words in Deuteronomy 5:6–21.... Pray with me....

Faithfully Reflecting Yahweh (v. 11)

Let me read verse 11 again: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” In a previous sermon, I noted that taking God’s name in vain has less to do with casual, crass, or disrespectful use of God’s name in speech and more to do with how we represent God in our daily lives. In surrendering ourselves to the Lord, we bear his name—we embrace his team and align ourselves with his authority, his laws, and his purposes. Our actions and words should, therefore, testify that we value God above all else. Moses’s call here is that we do not bear Yahweh’s name in vain and so misrepresent him to the world. We must reflect Yahweh faithfully.

A Sign on the Hand and Forehead (Deut 6:8)

To help us apply this command, let's consider some other texts that relate to bearing Yahweh's name faithfully rather than falsely. First, consider what Jesus refers to as the first and greatest commandment in Deuteronomy 6:4–5. Moses declares, “Hear, O Israel: *The LORD* our God, *the LORD* is one. You shall love *the LORD* your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Yahweh's name is repeated multiple times, showing how his uniqueness calls for unequivocal loyalty. Our love for Yahweh-Yahweh is to be total. We then read, “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.... And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (6:6, 8). As is common in the Old Testament, “hands” and “eyes” are short for behavior and perception. For example, in 21:7, the elders of a city speak in response to an unsolved murder: “Our *hands* did not shed this blood, nor did our *eyes* see it shed.” Moses is stressing that the command to love Yahweh, Yahweh—the one God—with all needs to be implanted on our hearts and needs to impact all we do and all we perceive. Yahweh-centeredness was to be the identifying feature of one's life. To bear Yahweh's name necessitated radical, life-encompassing love that shapes our deeds and discernment.

Putting Yahweh's Name upon the People (Num 6:23–27)

Next, turn to the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:23–27 (cf. Deut 21:5). Yahweh says to Moses,

Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “Thus you shall bless the people of Israel; you shall say to them,

‘The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine up on you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his face upon you and give you peace.’

So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Whereas prayers address God, blessings usually address others, but both are equally dependent on God to fulfill. The blessing itself that the priests were to declare has three pairs, each with Yahweh's name explicit and with the second half of each pair likely expressing the result of the first half. Thus, enjoying Yahweh's blessing results in his keeping us, which implies that we are guarded or protected in every way with no assault of curse. Next, basking in the light of Yahweh's face results in us enjoying his grace or favor, which means that causer of all things is for us, not against us. Finally, Yahweh not having a downcast face but lifted face toward us results in us experiencing peace, freedom from relational tension with

God and, therefore, experiencing an inner tranquility or serenity because our greatest problem—animosity with God—has been overcome.

Notice how verses 25–26 repeat the term “face” twice and how the act of “blessing” in verse 24 summarizes everything the priests are told to declare (v. 23). These facts suggest that verses 25–26 are explaining verse 24, such that encountering Yahweh’s face shapes the content of the blessing itself and that resting in his grace and peace clarifies the experience of being kept.

Now, for our purposes what is important is that Moses says in verse 27 that by declaring Yahweh’s blessing over the people the priests were putting Yahweh’s name upon them. “May *Yahweh* bless you.... May *Yahweh* make his face to shine upon you.... May *Yahweh* lift up his face upon you.” And when he does, we bear his name faithfully and not falsely by testifying in our lives that he is keeping us, being gracious to us, and showing us peace.

Practically, then, what does it look like to bear Yahweh’s name and to represent him well? First, we bear Yahweh’s name faithfully when we show we are kept by God, not giving into temptation but resisting the devil and being guarded from his evil schemes. Second, we display Yahweh’s name when we enjoy his grace, resting in his gracious pardon and believing his gracious promises for life and godliness. Third, our lives magnify Yahweh’s name when our souls enjoy peace—when we’re not fighting God but following him, and when the world’s cares move us to hope in God rather than to stress, anxiety, and worry. We bear Yahweh’s name faithfully and display his greatness and sovereignty rightly only when we live protected, grace-empowered, peaceful lives.

Practical Examples of Bearing Yahweh’s Name Faithfully, Not Falsely

More tangibly, consider these questions. In your wanting and buying, are your motivations and purchases testifying that your greatest desire is to love God and others more than yourself? Are you content while delighting in God’s good gifts, or are you driven by unhealthy cravings that never satisfy? Do you use what God supplies for your ends or his, and when he takes away material things through loss or accident, does your life suggest to others that your hope and foundation have changed? Things of earth have their proper place only where God is our greatest treasure and hope.

Similarly, in your work, are you serving your employer faithfully and truthfully? Do you fight sloth and laziness and look to the Spirit to give you all necessary discipline and drive, care and consistency? Do you find your identity and sense of value in your labor or from your relationship with the Lord? Is your quest

in your job principally to please God or men? Our daily grind is still to be done in godliness, and we are to carry Yahweh's name as we bear all other duties.

In your leisure and play, do you pursue wholesome stewardship and pure pleasure? Do you work hard so that you can play hard, or do you rest so that you can run? Do you approach time off as a distraction or coping mechanism to help you forget life's burdens, or is your God-given rest truly a time to recoup and reform your soul so that you are ready to return to the principal tasks to which God has called you? When life's cares have drained you past any ability to strive, rest becomes his tool to recalibrate your life so that you can honor him as you ought (Ps 127:2). The grace and peace that are ours in Christ should help us relax and recharge, and when we embrace Yahweh as our keeper, we rightly bear his name.

As a student, are you being diligent and honest, stewarding the time God grants and walking in integrity with respect to assignments, quizzes, and tests? Are you above reproach in all things, and are you measuring your success semester by semester not by grades alone but also by the level at which you are balancing all the priorities in your life in a way that keeps God at the center, whether your family, friends, health, ministry, devotions, or other spheres?

In your speech and demeanor, are you crude and arrogant, or humble, kind, and affirming? Are you careless or careful, wise, and discretionary? Are you self-centered or Christ-centered in how you think, talk, and act? Do your frustrations derive from a sinful sense of entitlement and confrontations to *your* kingdom, or do they grow out of your commitment to *God's* kingdom? Are you angry and impatient, or do you walk in humility and gentleness by the power of the Spirit?

In your suffering, are you displaying that he is worthy of your fear and faith simply because of who he is and not because of what he gives or takes away? Are anxiety and grief ruling your life, or are you able to cast your cares upon the Lord, knowing that he cares for you (1 Pet 5:5)? Do you endure and wait with patience, believing that he is indeed for you and not against you, that he is greater, and that he is working through the tears and trials for your good (Ps 84:11; Rom 8:32; 1 John 4:4)? Only by such faith do we align ourselves with the great suffering saints of old who were "destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb 11:37–38). When we cry out to God from our need, we get help, and he is magnified as our Helper.

In your family relationships, do you seek to encourage and build others up in godliness? Having received divine grace, are you extending grace to others? Having enjoyed peace with God, are you fueled to do all you can to live at peace with others? For richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, are you trusting in your keeping God, hoping in the one who can restore and sustain and who can

grant you patience and endurance with joy for all your family relationships? Are you walking humbly, being quick to forgive and quick to ask forgiveness? Are you striving to see your own selfishness defeated and love and compassion reign? Such are the characteristics of our Father, whose name we bear.

Are you the same person in public as in private, or would those closest to you consider you a dirty cup with a clean outside or, even worse, a whitewashed tomb (Matt 23:26–27)? Does your profession of faith align with your lifestyle? Do unsaved onlookers, all of whom follow the god of this world, consider you to be walking the same direction as them, or do they recognize that you follow a different King who has different values, different loves, and different hates?

The Goal of Representing Yahweh Well: Living on Mission

Just before his ascension, Jesus promised his disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). True discipleship is about bearing witness to Jesus in our words and deeds. Through this, missions is accomplished. As Jesus said earlier, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16). Or as Peter says, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.... Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:9, 12).

From this framework, alluding to the priestly blessing from Numbers 6, the psalmist in Psalm 67:1–4 petitions, “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy.” When Moses charges Israel, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain” (Deut 5:11), he recognizes that God’s people must rightly display God if the nations are to marvel and magnify him. Thus, in Deuteronomy 4:6, Moses says of Yahweh’s statutes and rules: “Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’” And as Moses says later: “The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, ... *if* you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD” (28:9–10; cf. 4:6–8).

Yet Moses and the rest of the prophets also recognized that old covenant Israel would never bear Yahweh's name faithfully. As Yahweh declares later in Deuteronomy, "This people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured" (31:16–17). When Israel was cast among the nations in exile, Yahweh says through Ezekiel, "They profaned my holy name" (Ezek 36:20), but then he promises: "I am about to act ... for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name.... And the nations will know that I am the LORD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes" (36:22–23). When we pray, "Hallowed be your name ... on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:9–10), we are asking God to fulfill what he promised through Ezekiel and to realize what Moses commanded when he said, "You shall not take the name of the LORD in vain."

Bearing the Mark of a Name

Building off the Old Testament imagery of bearing Yahweh's name, the book of Revelation portrays all of humanity as having one of two identifying marks: one group has the Lamb's "name and his Father's name" written on their foreheads (Rev 14:1; cf. 3:12; 22:4), and the other has "the mark of [the beast's] name" written on the hand or forehead (14:11; cf. 13:16–17; Deut 6:8). Greg Beale has convincingly argued that "the mark of the name" in Revelation is figurative and not physical and relates to spiritual identification with either God and Christ or the Satanic beast. Listen to Beale's reflections on Revelation 13:16–17 (*Revelation*, 716):

Since the seal or name on the true believers is invisible, so also is the "mark" on the unbeliever. That the two are parallel in being spiritual in nature and are intended to be compared is evident from the immediately following mention of God and Christ's name "written on the foreheads" of the saints (14:1). Those who have believed in Jesus have been identified with him and are protected by the power of his name against ultimate deception. His name is none other than his very presence with them (as 22:4 makes explicit). Their refusal to identify with the beast will result in suffering and even death, but they will have the ultimate reward of eternal life (so 20:4). Those not trusting in Christ are identified with the beast, are under the devil's power, and are unable to avoid deception by the beast (... 2:17). While identification with the beast has given them temporary prosperity in this life, they will ultimately be punished with eternal death (... 14:9–11)....

That the mark of the name is figurative and not literal is evident from the “blasphemous names” on the head of the beast (13:1), which figuratively connote false claims to earthly divine kingship. Likewise, the point of the saying that the beast’s worshipers have his name written on their heads is to underscore the fact that they pay homage to his blasphemous claims to divine kingship. Just as the seal and the divine name on believers connote God’s ownership and spiritual protection of them, so the mark and Satanic name signify those who belong to the devil and will undergo perdition.

Beale further notes that “the mark may also connote that the followers of Christ and the beast both are stamped with the image (i.e., character) of their respective leaders” (216). He adds that “the ‘forehead’ represents ideological commitment and the ‘hand’ the practical outworking of that commitment” (217).

Conclusion

Paul charged the Colossians: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17). To Timothy he says that bondservants must honor their masters “so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled” (1 Tim 6:1). He also adds: “‘The Lord knows who are his,’ and ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity’” (2 Tim 2:19). Peter says, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Pet 4:14). He then adds, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name” (4:15–16).

May our God help us not bear his name in vain, knowing that he “will not hold him guiltless who bears his name in vain” (Deut 5:11). With this, let us greatly hope, for having been baptized into “the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” we now enjoy the presence of the reigning Christ with us even “to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18–20). And the day is surely coming when “the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15). Then, “no longer will there be anything accursed,” and the servants of God and the Lamb “will worship him. They will see his face, and *his name will be on their foreheads*,” meaning that all that we ponder and perceive will testify to the centrality of God’s name in our lives. We will bear his name, and “night will be no more. [We] will need no light or lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be [our] light, and [we] will reign forever and ever,” bearing his name faithfully and not falsely for eternity (Rev 22:3–5). Come, Lord Jesus.