



Bearing the Name of God

What is your last name? We all have a last name, a family name. In almost all cases we get our last names from our fathers. Before you were born, your parents talked about what your first and second names would be. Perhaps they had some trouble deciding. Finally they concluded that your name should be the name you now bear - Christopher or Susan, Emily or Henry. However, they did not discuss what your last name should be. They did not need to. What your last name would be was inevitable. You just took it over from your father. If your father's name is Mr. Vandersmith, then your last name is Vandersmith.

You have a responsibility to guard that name. You must stick up for your family name, for the name you got from your father. If someone starts hauling your father's name through the mud, you will say: "Hold on a moment; you can't say that about my dad!" Further, it is your job to live in such a way that you will not give people opportunity to insult your father's name. It would be an awful thing if people started to scoff at your family name because of your behaviour.

What holds true about the names we get from our earthly fathers also holds true, and so much more, concerning the Name we get from our heavenly Father. Not only do you bear the name of your earthly dad; you also bear the Name of your Father in heaven.

When you were baptized, you were baptized into the Name of God. God the Father promised that He would be your Father. He adopted you. You became His child. Your Catechism says in Lord's Day 13 that we ". . . are children of God by adoption, through grace, for Christ's sake."

When you were baptized, you were placed in the Name of God. The Name of God enfolds you, surrounds you and keeps you safe. As it says in Proverbs 18:10,

"The Name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."

We, by grace righteous in Christ, are safe in the Name of the LORD. Not only were you baptized into the Name of God; His Name is also placed upon you every Sunday. Every Sunday you hear the familiar words of Numbers 6:24-26:

The LORD bless you and keep you:

The LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Originally, these were the words with which the Old Testament high priest was to bless the people of Israel. In this way they put the Name of God upon the people. Immediately after the LORD prescribed these words to Aaron the high priest, God said in Numbers 6:27: *"So shall they put my Name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."*

The Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect and final High Priest, fulfilled this blessing as He ascended into heaven. He led His disciples to Bethany, lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He blessed them, He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven (Luke 24:50-51).

Today your minister, as an ambassador for Jesus Christ, blesses you at the end of the worship service. When he blesses you, he places the Name of God upon you. You leave bearing the Name of God. You leave the official assembly of God's people wearing God's Name. It's on your forehead.

That has grave implications. If you have been baptized into the Name of God and if the Name of God is placed upon you every Sunday, then you must live in a special way. You must live as one who is conscious of this. In your catechism you say that the third commandment, You shall not take the Name of the LORD your God in vain, means

" . . . we must use the holy Name of God only with fear and reverence, so that we may rightly confess Him, call upon Him, and praise Him in all our words and works."

(Lord's Day 36)

Further, you say that in the first petition of the Lord's prayer, *Hallowed be Thy Name*, you are asking God to direct your whole life, thoughts, words and actions, in such a way that the Name of God will not be blasphemed because of you but always honoured and praised (Lord's Day 47).

Sometimes people wear clothing - hats, T-shirts or sweaters - which are inconsistent with the truth that they also bear the Name of God and which do not match their confession. They wear clothes with crude words printed on them. Think about it. If you have the Name of God on your forehead, does it make sense to block that Name with a hat that has some coarse words printed on it? If the Holy Spirit has written the Word of God upon your heart, does it make sense to cover that with a sweater which has an unchristian slogan plastered across it? If you belong to Jesus Christ, body and soul, why walk around as a billboard for antichristian rock groups or foulmouthed cartoon characters? Does it make sense? I challenge all of you who sport T-shirts promoting your favourite beer or other alcoholic beverage to get a shirt printed which proclaims: "I'm a Christian" or, "Proud member of the Church of Jesus Christ." I dare you to wear *that* to work or school.

In Isaiah 44 the LORD promised that He would pour His Spirit upon the young members of God's people. These young people would be completely unembarrassed about who they were. One would say: "I belong to the LORD." Another would write on his hand: "The LORD'S." They would gladly identify themselves with belonging to Israel, i.e., the church of God.

Think about it. You bear the Name of God. It's printed, branded into your forehead. Don't block it. Don't obliterate it. Be proud of it. Boast that you belong to the LORD.

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