

SERMON NOTES — A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME MAY **NOT** BE A ROSE

God is God. We always need a fresh look at Scripture when we read it (remember the Holy Spirit will illuminate words/phrases and interpretations every time we read the Bible. It is a living, breathing book of God's revelation to us. When we interpret a biblical passage a certain way two years ago, the Holy Spirit may want us to update that interpretation possibly based on cultural understandings, linguistics, and archeological developments. So, "a rose by any other name may not be a rose....."

I. A Living and Breathing Book

- * Most of us will interpret biblical passage(s) based on what we interpreted them to be in the past.
 - * The interpretation remains the same today as it was in the past.
 - * This can really limit the living, breathing nature of Scripture.
- * We need to always be prepared to take a fresh look at biblical texts.
 - * Allow the Holy Spirit to guide your reading.

II. The "Name of God"

- * It is not an actual name of God that is significant. It is His character we call upon 'in the name of the Lord.'
 - * When Moses asks for God's name, Moses is really looking for evidence of a trustworthy character and believable power.
 - * Moses is seeking to find something about God that he can then relate to the people so they will have faith in God.
- * When we pray in Jesus' name, for example, there is nothing magical or supernatural about the letter combination of His name.
 - * But there is power in the character of Jesus because He is God.
- * Traditionally, we thought 'name of God' meant an actual name, which we cannot say so we use the letters to spell the divine, Yahweh. It is not a real name but God's character we seek, trust in, pray to, etc.

III Exodus 20:1


- * God is actually speaking, so the text is the literal word of God.
- * He says that He is bringing the people out of slavery (ebedim) in Egypt.
 - * God uses the same word, ebedim, when, in the book of Joshua, He calls His people to serve (ebedim) Him.
 - * Literally, then, it seems the people were being called to trade one slave master for another. No wonder they grumbled and complained in the wilderness....
 - * What God is doing is actually claiming His people explicitly for His purpose.
 - * We would describe that today as our calling to follow and serve God.
 - * What this really says is that God wants to be our priority in all things.
 - * We talk about this almost every Sunday.
 - * God wants us to make Him #1. Over everything else. Period.
- * So, if we use the traditional interpretation, we are told to be slaves to the Triune God.
- * But with context, linguistic understandings, etc., we see a whole new dimension to this-slaves-to-God-thing.
 - * God does not want us to be slaves, as we know that word — slaves have no choices, are oppressed, and live under harsh conditions. That is not what God means when He calls us to be ebedim.
 - * Because we know God is love — first and always — we understand that the word, slave (ebedim), is His way of telling us to voluntarily make Him our first priority in our lives.
- * Most sermons/messages try to bring traditional interpretations relevant (have significance) to what is going on today in the world and in our lives. Remember, the Bible lives and breathes; it is always accessible, available, and current!

IV. Exodus 20:4, 5

- * NO idols, carved images, etc.
 - * But God puts engraved images on the Ark of the Covenant, has Moses carry a staff with a serpent's shape. What????
- * Then verse 5 tells us not to worship idols, engraved images, etc.
 - * It is not possession that God is concerned with, it is the worship of idols that He prohibits. Consider:
 - * It is not money that offends God — it is our love for it, our greed, our seeming need to have it to live.

- * It is not being an Alabama football fan that offends Him — it is our putting Alabama football before our friends and family, church and faith.
- * It is not having a nice home that bothers God — it is giving that building our time and resources before our service to God.
- * We need to remember that the Bible does not contradict itself. We have to read any passage within its context, using other passages in the bible to complete the interpretation.
- * We are not to take verse 4 on its own, like proof-texting, but we find the context and significance in the next verse.
- * Too often we preach the single word of God when, in fact, He has lots to say on a subject and we have to find the context every time.
- * So if you read a sentence in the Bible and you ask yourself, 'What does God mean?', you will find the answer elsewhere in Scripture (often within the same biblical book) by learning its context and applying Holy Spirit guidance.

V. Exodus 20:7

- * Don't use the Lord's name in vain.
- * Traditional interpretation: don't say "God", "Jesus," "Christ," in connection with any profanity or in general conversation — it's a sin!
- * Now, let's apply some cultural context and linguistic understanding to get a fuller, and more complete interpretation:
 - * Our traditional interpretation is based on Greco-Roman context. The context for the Ten Commandments is based in Eastern-Hebraic culture/linguistics.
 - * So, to understand how Israel would understand what God says in verse 7, we need to go back to the initial idea of what a 'name' meant to the Jewish people.
 - * Name = character; substance; significance
 - * Name  "Joe;" "Mary," "William," etc. It is not just an assignment of letters formed together for identification purposes.
 - * So, using the name, "God," "Jesus," "Christ" in a sentence unrelated to God Himself is not necessarily sinful. Tacky? Yes. Rude? Definitely. It depends on how it is used by someone.
 - * It is offensive to God (and others) when His "name" (character) is misused. So, sinful? Probably.
- * This now, hopefully, will confirm our revised interpretation of "name of God."

VI. Back to the Rose (Take-aways from the Message Today)

- * A Rose by any other name, would smell as sweet, and God, by any other name — Yahwel, Elohim, El, El Shaddai, and more — would still be God.
- * How we experience and exhibit the character of God is what really matters.
- * This is key to our call to be in a relationship with the Triune God.
 - * We follow, not a name, but the character of God.
 - * Our faith is found and experienced through this relationship.
 - * Our call to serve Him is to take first priority in all our actions.
 - * We are to allow NOTHING to come before the Lord.
 - * And the worship of anything other than our God, is TABOO!
- * It is not enough to just call God, 'Lord.'
 - * We must follow His teachings and commands.
 - * Love one another.
 - * What good is it to believe in God, if we do not do what He asks?
- * When we give God 'lip service,' we are breaking the Seventh Commandment — misusing the character of the Lord.
 - * God is love.
- * We must take on God's loving character to do His bidding; to love others, to follow Jesus, to share our joy with others, etc.

Research Notes, Exodus 20:1-20

- * Original Context:
 - * The Ten Commandments were given directly by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.
 - * They were engraved by God Himself on two stone tablets.
 - * They were given after God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
 - * The commands were a code of law vital for the stability of the forming tribal nation.
 - * God establishes His covenant relationship with Israel, wherein God demands Israel's faithfulness and loyalty, akin to a marriage bond.
 - * The commandments are viewed less as a simple list of rules ("do's and don'ts") and more as covenantal marriage vows that the people gladly entered into with God who rescued them.
 - * The first group of commandments focused on the relationship between God and people, while the second group focused on relationships between people.
 - * The Law, or Torah, was intended to instruct Israel on what it means to be God's people among other nations. Deuteronomy is presented as a repetition of the Torah for a new generation about to enter the Promised Land.
 - * Breaking a commandment had consequences, including paying a penalty, repaying the injured person, and making a sacrifice to restore peace with God.
 - * The original text was primarily in Hebrew.
 - * Ancient Israelite religion included ideas about sacred space.
 - * Exodus is considered religious literature inspired by religious experience.
- * Variations and Transmission:
 - * Variations exist between the versions of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.
 - * These differences indicate the traditions were later modified separately by priestly and Mosaic influences.
 - * The Ten Commandments are unlike either the civil and religious regulations of Exodus 21–23 or the priestly instructional literature in Exodus 25–31.
 - * They provide general statements applicable to a variety of circumstances.
 - * The variations point to a tradition later modified separately by priestly and legalistic hands.
 - * These may not postdate the Ten Commandments by much, but they may represent distillation and elaboration of earlier material, reflecting the traditional ethos of Israelite society based on family units and their inherited land.
 - * The Holy Spirit's guidance allowed Moses to introduce new elements and slight changes in the Deuteronomic version which is believed to have been written a short time after the book of Exodus.
 - * The structure of Exodus suggests it is a product of reflection on foundational events.
- * Linguistic Evolution:
 - * The Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) starting around 255 BC, due to the spread of Greek language and the necessity for Jews outside of Israel who no longer spoke Hebrew or Aramaic.
 - * Over time, the interpretation and application of the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments, continued to be relevant and discussed.
 - * Jesus later reinterpreted and applied key teachings from the Mosaic law.
 - * Later translations were made into other languages like Latin (Vulgate).
 - * Modern translations use various methods (word-for-word, thought-for-thought, balance, paraphrase) which can affect the perceived meaning.
 - * Understanding ancient languages changes over time as scholars discover more, influencing how passages are translated.
- * Interpretation and Reception:
 - * The Ten Commandments (a/k/a the Decalogue) has a long history of interpretation, especially concerning how the laws are numbered and organized on two tablets.
 - * Different traditions (Jewish, early church, John Calvin) have varying approaches to this.
 - * In Jewish tradition, the self-revelation of God (20:2) is considered the first commandment. The laws are typically divided evenly between the two tablets (20:2-12 and 20:13-17).
 - * The early church read the Decalogue differently, viewing 20:2 as a prologue and the prohibition against images (20:3-6) as the first commandment. They often divided the tablets with three commands on the

first and seven on the second tablet.

- * John Calvin offered another interpretation, separating 20:3-6 into two commands (exclusive worship and prohibition on idolatry).
- * The Decalogue was intended to help Israel, as God's redeemed people, enter a life of joyful fellowship and form a holy community.
- * The Decalogue is central to Western culture, but there is debate about whether its role is primarily religious or secular.
- * Cultural and Interpretational Evolution:
 - * The Law was often forgotten or abandoned by the Israelites over the next 1400 years, leading to suffering.
 - * God promised a New Covenant where the law would be written on hearts rather than stone tablets.
 - * The understanding of legal concepts like "righteousness" in the Old Testament was relational, describing both ethical behavior and the expected behavior in a covenant relationship with God. In the New Testament, righteousness relates to restored relationships within the kingdom of heaven.
 - * Concepts like "sin" and "guilt" continue to be understood as separating people from God and others.
 - * Interpretation today involves considering the original setting/culture/context and applying timeless principles.

Philippians 3:3-14 (NLT)

Elizabeth Daniel

³ For we, who worship by the Spirit of God, are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, ⁴ though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin — a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶ I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ ⁹ and become one with Him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through the faithfulness of Christ. For God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead. I want to suffer with Him, sharing in His death, ¹¹ so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

¹² I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.