



Deuteronomy 5:11 Don't Take the Lord's Name in Vain

11 ' 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.

When we think of this commandment, *You Shall Not Take the Name of the Lord Your God in Vain*, we typically think of speech and in particular using the name of the Lord's name in our speech in an inappropriate way, certainly living as we do in a society that almost always uses his name in a vain manner whether it is in the oath "*Oh my God*" used in an unthinking manner, or the name of Christ used as a curse, it is inevitable that that would be our primary focus. But while the vain use of the Lord's name in everyday speech is certainly a focus of the commandment that is only a part of it.

You see, the commandment itself not only deals with how *all* people are to use God's name in their speech, but it has a particular application to God's people and every dimension of their lives. You see God's people are those who have been set apart and chosen for his service. They are His. They are so closely associated with Him that they bear his name. Back in verse one Moses had called them by their corporate name "Israel" or in Hebrew *YisRaEl* meaning *God Strives*. They were literally called by His name and God frequently brought their attention to that fact: in 2 Chronicles 7:14 for instance God addressed his people this way: ***"if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."***

To this day, we are still called by His name, you and I are Christians, Christ's followers or the people of Christ. The church today still bears the name of God, just as Israel the church in the old testament did. And the Lord in this commandment is anxious that we would not *Nasa* that is lift, carry, or bear that name before the world in a vain fashion.

As Alan Harman put it speaking of this commandment: *"To bear God's name was to bear his character by living as the people of God. The Israelites were commanded to demonstrate by their actions that they were the Lord's chosen people."* God's people therefore are called to bear his name before the world in a way that honors it and live a life that would cause his name to be Hallowed here on earth as it is in heaven.

When we rightly observe this commandment therefore, we are freed from one of the worst kinds of bondage, namely *hypocrisy*. And trust me, there are few things worse than playing the hypocrite where you are supposed to be one thing, but are in fact something else entirely. Where you are constantly fearful that your lies and deceits will be discovered, where you know in your heart that the way you live is obnoxious to God and you go about burdened by that knowledge, so much so that it can drive you into deep depression, despair, or make you gradually crazy. We will talk more about *hypocrisy* and bearing the name Christian in a hypocritical fashion in a moment, but first I want to talk briefly about some of the other ways, we must strive not to take up the name of the Lord in a worthless, light, or frivolous way.

First remember, the scope of this commandment reaches to far more than just all the names and titles of God, Lord, Jesus, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Yahweh, etc. it encompasses all of Him. That includes his **attributes**, let us not speak of mercy, his justice, love, his holiness in a mean or lowly fashion. It includes **His Word** by which his name and his work is born before all peoples, as God said of Paul's future preaching in Acts 9:15: "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." Let us therefore never speak of his word but with reverence and adoration as the means by which God reveals Himself and His will to men. It also includes **His Worship and Service**. In his worship His name is blessed and glorified, let us therefore treat it as he has commanded in Psalm 29:2 – *"Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."*

Let us therefore treat as holy not merely God's titles but everything relating to the true God, his being, his nature, his will, his works, his worship, anything related to service rendered to him, or to the doctrine concerning him. God's name is associated with God Himself and anything whereby he makes himself known.

There are many ways then beyond merely misusing his title that God's people can break this commandment, let me just give you a few, one of the primary ones had to do with oath taking: To take Yahweh's name in an oath in Judicial proceedings and then lie was to use his name for corrupt and sinful ends. When we use God's name as a means to sinful ends, as the televangelists use it to enrich and glorify themselves, when the Popes used it as means of accumulating Mammon. We take it in vain

When for instance you enter into God's worship praising Him with your lips but not your hearts, this too is blasphemy. You are taking the name of the Lord in vain. "these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me" (Is. 29:13)

- When you use His scripture to defend sin, you become a blasphemer and take His name in vain.
- When you use the name of God in Jokes you are taking his name in vain. Beware - brothers in particular - of telling or passing on any joke that involves members of the Godhead, let your PC be the last stop for any such email.
- When you murmur against his providence alleging that God does not do all things well and that somehow what has happened to you cannot possibly be to your good and cause him and his name to be dishonored you are breaking the third commandment

And of course when you use the name of the Lord in an idle fashion devoid of reverence or honor. There are far too many households out there where Christ's name is in constant use, but where the family has never once had a conversation about him or his mercy.

I could go on all night, applying these principles and showing you ways in which you can take the name of the Lord in vain, but God gave you all sanctified common sense for a reason. A simple rule to determine whether or not your words or actions honor God's name or defame it is simply to ask "Am I doing or saying or thinking something by which God is honored or dishonored?"

That's the negative, but how should we *honor* God and his name? How should we speak of him reverently? I can do no better in answering that than to give you the brief list that Wilhelmus A'Brakel compiled:

First, to speak (and want to hear others speak) of God and divine things with all humility, reverence of heart, and manifestation of respect. It must become evident how glorious and awe-inspiring God

is; and that He is worthy of being feared. Your very conduct must therefore cause others to have such an impression of God. How father Abraham humbled himself when he spoke to God! “'Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord:” (Gen. 18:27). The apostle exhorts us to speak reverently about God and divine things. in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,” (Titus 2:7);

Secondly, to confess the Lord holily and boldly; that is, you must confess that He is such a God as He is, that you are loyal to Him, honor and fear Him, put your trust in Him, and that you are loyal to His truth, cause, and children. You must furthermore confess that you are not ashamed of this, but deem it to be the greatest honor to be known for this. “' Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32); “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16).

Thirdly, to glorify God in all that you say or do. 1 Cor. 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Yes it is possible to glorify and adorn the name of God in whatever profession you have been called to.

Fourthly, to be zealous for His Name and cause.

Fifthly, to call upon the name of the Lord; that is, to bow reverently before Him, worship Him due to His glory, and humbly request from Him all that you have need of in every given situation— privately, or publicly with the church. Keep in mind what we discussed this morning, in order to be true, this must be heart worship offered in spirit and truth. Anything less is hypocrisy and a taking of his name in vain.

Sixthly, swear by His Name in a holy manner. Do not forswear yourselves, don't enter into rash vows, and when you do swear in his name keep your promise though it be to your hurt!

But keep in mind above all things, that if we would be called by his name in order to avoid being hypocrites, somebody who pretends to be something they are not. This is not an issue of being sinlessly perfect, it is an issue of being somebody who truly loves and trusts the Lord and strives to live a life of holiness, we must truly be his people and that can only happen if we are not those fair weather Christians we spoke of yesterday. Oh brothers and sisters, avoid hypocrisy like the plague, be true to your Lord, that your profession no matter how weak might be sincere. Israel's curse was that they maintained they were the Lord's people, but did not love the Lord who saved them, and therefore had no concern for His Commandments. Their name bearing therefore was ultimately in vain.

The true Christian is different As Ryle put it:

A real Christian may be weak, but he is true. One thing, at any rate, the servant of Christ can say, when cast down by a sense of his own infirmity, or pained by the slander of a lying world. He can say, "Lord, I am a poor sinner, but I am in earnest, I am true. You know all things--you know that I love you. You know all hearts, and you know that, weak as my heart is, it is a heart that cleaves to you." The false Christian shrinks from the eye of an all-seeing Savior. The true Christian desires his Lord's eye to be on him morning, noon, and night. He has nothing to hide.