



The Third Commandment

Exodus 20:7 " 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.

On occasion I end up watching the home makeover shows on HGTV or TLC with my wife. Now I don't really mind the part where they are recovering the sofa or putting in new furniture, but I really hate the "reveal" at the end where the show the changes to the homeowners. The reason for that is because if they like it, they inevitably say "Oh my God!" In fact I remember one show where the wife wandered from room to room saying that, and I remember thinking "What? Are you trying to systematically curse all of your new rooms?"

But all of this just goes to show exactly how ordinary taking the Lord's name in vain has become in our society. At one time, to say things like "Oh My God" or "Jesus Christ" and so on, would have brought shocked gasps, because there was still an understanding that the name of God was Holy, and that it was not to be used frivolously. Today on television at least we have gone full circle and now *only* a blasphemous or frivolous use of the name of God the Father or God the Son is deemed acceptable, when the name of Jesus is spoken reverently, it is likely to be cut as being too shocking or controversial.

This phenomenon is more wide-spread than you might think.

For instance when Franklin Graham, the Son of Billy Graham prayed at the 2000 Republican National Convention, he ended his unscripted prayer in the way all Christians were taught to by Christ to pray – In *Jesus* Name. However when the Republican national committee produced an official transcript of the prayer, "In the matchless name of Jesus we pray" was replaced with "Amen."

You may be aware that Chaplains in the US Army are increasingly be warned that they should not pray in the name of Christ. As one Chaplain commented to me, any of the men in my unit is free to use the name of Christ blasphemously on a regular basis, but if use it in a prayer I can get disciplined! Brothers and Sisters, we have gotten to the point where as a society we have stood the commandment on its head, America has declared:

"You shall only take the name of God in vain, for we will actively condemn those who use his name reverently"

Contrast that with say Pakistan, where Christians have been sentenced to death for alleged blasphemy against the name of Mohammed. This includes one man sentenced to death for blasphemy for allegedly dropping litter against the wall of a Mosque.

Well Christians, regardless of what the world does with the name of God or says you must or must not do with it, you know that what the Apostle's declared *when they were told not to teach in the name of Jesus* – “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

How should you obey God by keeping this commandment? To do that, you need to know three things:

- 1) The Scope of the Commandment
- 2) The Negative Prohibitions – i.e. how you go about not taking the name of the Lord in Vain
- 3) The Positive Requirements – i.e. how you should go about reverencing the name of the Lord

1) **The Scope of the Commandment:** taking the Lord's name in vain does not *only* mean to improperly use the proper names of God. But that is the first and most obvious application of the commandment. Do not misuse the names of any of the members of the Godhead as in Jehovah, Yahweh, the Most High, Adonai, El Shaddai, Elohim, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Lord.

But in Scripture the *name* of God also stands for:

His titles: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Eccles 12:1) The LORD is my shepherd; (Psalm 23:1)

His Attributes or Perfections: Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. (1 Tim. 6:1)

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, (Exodus 34:6)

His Word: “I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.” (Psalm 138:2)

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

His Worship and Service: 1 Kings 5:5 And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name."

To cut the list short Any thing 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.

What it is it to take these things which stand for God's name in a vain manner? Well to quote A'Brakel it “pertains to saying or doing something by which God is neither honored nor acknowledged to be the God who He is, but rather is dishonored. “Vain” has the following meaning: that which is without purpose, unsuitable, thoughtless, irreverent, careless, frivolous, and without a holy objective—thereby engendering an irreverent impression of God in others.

So the Bible teaches that there are many things that are properly blasphemous, or a taking of the name of the Lord 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 profess to be His and called by His name, but live lives that dishonor him and cause others to speak evil of the faith, ***you are taking the name of the Lord in vain***. Titus 1:16 “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Regarding the consequences of the sinful behavior of his fellow Jews, Paul said the following: Romans 2:24 For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.

- When you swear falsely using the name of the Lord, you are taking it in vain
- 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?”

So finally how do 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!

Let me take the liberty of adding my own seventh item: One of the greatest means of preventing this sin is to instruct young children not to use take the name of the Lord in vain or to use “substitutes.” If a person is trained to speak without this type of language, he need not fall into it as a habit. Once it is developed as a habit, it is exceedingly difficult to break.

Finally How can we avoid bringing the curse of this commandment down on our heads and our houses? By understanding that if you are in Christ, the curse of this commandment has already fallen on your Saviors head on your behalf.

It is not that God overlooked all of your oaths and foul professions and jokes and hypocritical actions whereby you broke this commandment, The Lord was serious when he said that He “will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

2 Cor. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Is. 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”