

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—

Lesson 70—What does the Third Commandment Require? Qs.53-54

Whyte, “The first commandment teaches us that Jehovah is God alone. *He has no equal and no rival*. The second commandment goes on to instruct us that God is a spirit, and that we are not to set up any supposed similitude of God before our eyes. *He has no shape or similitude*. But, *He does have a Name*. That is to say, He has taken a name to Himself under which He wills that we know Him, think of Him, speak of Him, and address ourselves to Him. And accordingly, He gave us a warning in the third commandment that we not take it in vain, because He Himself will judge those who do so.”

The duties required

- I. The third commandment speaks to *our regard for the manner* by which God’s revealed Himself to us, which has been by his *names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works*.
 - A. God “dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see,” 1Tim 6.16; Jn 1.18. We don’t know anything of Him but what He’s pleased to reveal to us. And He’s under no obligation to tell us anything at all. He could justly leave us in the darkness of our fallen ignorance and give us up to the bondage of our sins so that we carry on all our days in the blindness and foolishness of those who don’t know God.
 - B. But God has both graciously and abundantly revealed Himself to us. And it’s the intent of this commandment to bind us to a holy reverence of the revelation He’s made of Himself to us.
 1. His names, Dt 28.58; Ex 3.14; 5.22-6.8.
 - a) The name of the LORD is a strong tower into which the righteous find safety, Pr 18.10. Why? Because God’s name reveals who He is and what He’ll do for the one who seeks refuge in Him.
 - b) The name of God confers comfort, peace, and joy into the hearts of all those who put their faith in Him and in the promises He’s made to them, Ps 20.7.
 - c) The name of God is all the child of light walking in darkness has and needs to assure him that, even in his midnight darkness, God is still faithful, loving, gracious, and present, Isa 50.10.
 2. His titles, Ex 3.15. God’s titles distinguish Him from all others and reflect His commitment to us and care for us.
 - a) For example: Saviour, Redeemer, Creator, Provider, Hearer of Prayer, Shield, Comforter, Sanctifier, Advocate, Shepherd, Faithful One, All-Sufficient One, Righteous One, King of Glory, Father. All these titles create comfort, confidence, peace, encouragement, and zeal in the lives of believers because they so ably and truly reveal to us our God and what we can expect of Him. Every name and title of God is an affirmation of faith, and, taken together, they form a confession of faith for the believer.
 3. His attributes, Ex 34.6-7; WSC 4.
 - a) His attributes are those perfections and properties which distinguish Him from the creatures and set Him apart in His divine glory and excellence. And they reveal to us the reasons for both His judgments and His promises, giving us all the assurance we need that His Word is true, and that He will do all that He says.
 4. His ordinances, Dt 4.2.
 - a) God’s ordinances are all those things He’s appointed to be used in our worship of Him as His people and in our communion and fellowship with Him as our God. These include all the means of grace as well as such things as church government and church discipline, and fasting, meditation, holy conversations, religious vows, and lawful oaths. All these are to be used with an eye to God’s glory and the good of ourselves and others.

5. His Word, Ps 138.2.
 - a) God's Word is the primary means of His self-revelation. By His Word, He both saves and sanctifies. By His Word, in both the law and the gospel, He reveals His mind, His heart, His covenant promises, His warnings, and His eternal purposes. His Word is to be read, preached and heard, memorized, studied, believed, obeyed, lived by.
6. His works, Ps 19.1; Ezk 25.11; 36.11; 38.23.
 - a) Whether works of creation, of providence, of salvation, of judgment, or of mercy, the works of God reveal to us the character of God which we read about in the Scriptures.
7. Boston, "Every part of God's revelation is a secret chamber, where a believer may feed, feast, and be safe in the worst of times. His names and titles are cordials to a fainting soul; His attributes are a storehouse of comfort and a fountain of fullness for all wants; His ordinances are breasts of consolation; His Word is a good heritage; and His works are full of wonder, declaring what a great and good God He is."
- C. All these means by which God reveals Himself to us are to be regarded and used with reverence.
 1. In our thoughts, we're to think and meditate on God with holy awe, adoration, humility, and love, Ps 1.1-3; Dt 6.6; Rom 11.33-36.
 2. In our speech, we're to speak the truth about God, ascribe all glory to God, sing His praises, proclaim His Word, commend Him and His revelation to others, honor and glorify Him in all His works, and never speak of Him without the reverence due to Him as God, our God, Dt 6.7-9; Ps 40.9-10; 66.16; Job 1.21; 1Sam 3.18.
 3. In our deeds, we're to obey all His commands, believe all His promises, observe His ordinances in worship, and submit to His providence, Mt 5.14-16; 1Pet 2.12; 3.16.
 4. In all our uses of God's revelation, we're to use it *in faith*—believing what He says, *in fear*—reverencing His great and terrible majesty, *and for His glory*—seeking His honor and the good of ourselves and others, Ps 107.1-9; Job 1.21.
 5. Finally, we're to have a life suitable to the great and glorious name we profess to honor and which was put upon us in our baptism, Eph 4.1-3; Phil 1.27-29; Col 3.1-17; Tit 2.11-14; 3.8.