

Taking the Name of God in Vain

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."

Let's pray. Lord, we praise You, we thank You that You have given us Your Word, that You have given us Your law, that You have called us to consider this particular commandment on this day. We ask that You would help us to see, help us to reflect on it and see how easy it is to break this commandment. Help us to see the grace that we need to keep it. We ask that You would guide us through this, that You would give Mr. Horn wisdom as he preaches on this commandment. Please teach us to fear You more, teach us to be more mindful of this commandment. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

As we consider the third commandment, it's frequently applied that it's saying and using the name of God as profanity, using God's name in a light way, using God's name as if it doesn't have weight and importance. Even good commentaries, probably the commentary I use the most, John Gill, take the position that this is about you hit your thumb with a hammer and you say, 'Jesus Christ!' and that's a violation of this commandment. Is that reasonable? Think about the severity of the punishment and it starts to have real implications. If that's the right interpretation, that has real serious implications. The context is that God will not hold you guiltless if you do this, He will not hold you guiltless if you do this. That means that if someone hits their thumb with a hammer and says, 'Jesus Christ', there is no reason to witness to them anymore because He will not hold them guiltless. That seems like really harsh punishment, it seems like unjust punishment. That's not what this is about, God's not saying that you go to hell if you use His name as a swear word. It should have a real effect on our witness because if we think that, why would we witness to someone who we hear using the name of God in vain in that sense? But that's not what God means, that's the easy way out. The history of Israel is about God saying, 'I will not hold those guiltless who take My name in vain' because God didn't hold Israel guiltless. They said they were the people of God, but yet had no evidence of being the people of God. They held His name in vain and God scattered them and made them a proverb and a watchword throughout all the earth. When you see a Jew that is not in the Promised Land, it is because God will not hold those guiltless who take His name in vain. This is important for us to think of this and to recognize this, this is what man is like, this is what our hearts are like. We want to take an incredibly serious command and make it frivolous. We want to ignore the clear teaching about taking God's name in vain and make it about saying God's name in vain and lose the meaning of the verse. Some people think that's what this commandment means; how did we get there? Because the twisting of Scripture is easy and our hearts want to accept the twisting of Scripture, I'll say this is right and what was meant because otherwise I am confronted with the reality that I don't want to face. Making a profession of faith that has no turning towards God, He will not hold you guiltless for that. We want to twist the Scripture and be like the rich young man that runs into Jesus Christ and asked what he could do to be saved

and Jesus Christ says to keep the commandments. Then he says that he has kept them all, but he hadn't kept them all, he twisted them all so he could believe in his own heart that he kept them. This is the heart of man, this is how you get from such a serious commandment that 'I will not hold him guiltless who takes My name in vain' and get it to where if you swear on the name of Jesus Christ you have taken His name in vain. You should just recognize how common it is in the church to do that very same thing that the rich young man did, where he says he did it and he's fine. That's what Christ corrects when He says, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." We want to take these commandments and make them as narrow as possible, but then Jesus Christ came and said this is what it looks like. Specifically He came and said this is what it looks like to not take the name of God in vain. That's the testimony of this life, this is what it looks like to not take the name of God in vain. The commandment that means you have to actually have to be a follower of God, you actually have to obey His commandments and walk in His ways for Him to not hold you guiltless. We switch it to, as long as you honor God with your lips you are fine. God says if you Honor Me with your lips but your heart is far from Me, I will condemn you. That is the third commandment. It's worthwhile as we look at these to see the progression of the first four commandments in particular. It goes from very broad, 'You shall have no other gods before Me' and that goes from all the idolaters in the world, the ones that make up their own gods or they worship men or they worship demons or angels or they worship their own comfort. Whatever god they put before God. Then God narrows it down and says there are people like Aaron who say, 'This golden calf? This is the golden calf that led you out of Egypt.' These are the ones that say these graven images are actually Jehovah. They do what the Roman Catholic church does where they say they are worshipping the true God, but they make it into graven images so you're not worshipping the true God, you're just giving names to false gods and calling them the true God. Then it narrows further and says if you take the name of God, if you say I am God's but yet you don't walk in righteousness, those who aren't putting other gods before Him in verbal senses at least, those who aren't making graven images and bowing down to them, those who are saying they are Christians and followers of Jehovah but yet it's vanity and it doesn't change their life, it's saying those aren't guiltless either. Then it goes to the fourth commandment which says, if you won't allow God to keep your time, if you won't allow Him to

control your life, then you're not His either. So these first four commandments are narrowing it down and saying this is a sign that you're not saved, this is a sign you're not saved. There's a real progression to the commandments to show that there is a narrow way and there are few who find it. Again, so much of the Old Testament is about how Israel took the name of God in vain to the point where Christ Himself would take on flesh and dwell among them, but instead of receiving Him receiving the One who was to be their own they kill Him. We need to remember the Old Testament was given to us as a warning to us so we don't follow the same path. We can see that same path in so many lives of so many professed Christians around us, they think that the narrow gate, which is Christ, doesn't lead to a narrow path, it just leads to now you can do whatever you want to do. We need to recognize God's judgement is greater for those who claim to be walking on the narrow path than it is on those who don't. Matthew 11:21-24, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." God will not hold those guiltless who take His name in vain. The judgement will be worse for those who take His name in vain than for Sodom and Gomorrah. God is serious about His name.

Let's parse the text. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." What does it mean to take? It doesn't mean to use, it doesn't mean you shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain, and granted that is in the scope of this commandment. Using the name of God as a swear word is wrong, but that's not the primary focus of this. What does it mean to take? It means to bear, it means to carry, it means to take. The root word is 'to lift'. Then what does it mean 'His name'? It's not just crying Jesus or Jehovah, it's not the words, it's about His reputation. It's about bearing His reputation to the world. Consider what it means to bear or to take a name. What's the most obvious example of someone taking a name? It's when they get married and they take their husband's name. Why do they take the name of their husband? The reason that they take their husband's name is they are now joining their reputation with his. When she takes his last name she is saying she is part of his household, under his head instead of her former head, she's saying the two will become one and the two reputations are joined together. If we thought of her taking his name in vain, it would mean that she yelled his name during an argument, it meant that she didn't treat him as a husband. That's what it means for a wife to take his husband's name in vain, she doesn't treat him as the head, it's that she goes out and plays the harlot and she doesn't follow his leadership. That's what it looks like for the wife to take her husband's name in vain, the two don't become one, they stay two. That's what it looks like, we all know what this looks like in human relationships and God put it in human relationships so that we could understand the spiritual relationships. He gave us things that we could see so that we could understand things that we can't see. There's another obvious picture of bearing someone's name, it's a son or a daughter. They bear the name of their father and it's pretty obvious that the behavior of a child affects the reputation of their father. They are tied

together, they bear their name, a good son is an honor to his father. Why is that true? That's true because it's a picture of a spiritual reality. We are either bringing praise, glory, and honor to the name of God or we're dishonoring it, we're bearing His name in vain. When you think of the two basic pictures of Christianity, the idea of becoming a son of God, the idea of the church becoming the bride of Christ, these are about what it means to bear a name, to take a name. When God gives the third commandment to man, this third commandment is using the language of a wife taking her husband's name, a son taking his father's name. When you join yourself to the Lord, if you are saying you are a child of God, if you're saying you are part of the bride of Christ, you are bearing His name through a profession of faith and then you get this responsibility, to not bear it in vain. Consider the words of Agur in Proverbs 30:8-9, "Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God." He's saying don't let me bear Your name in vain, protect me from it. When he says 'profane the name of my God', he's not talking about using the name of God as profanity, he's saying let me not say I am a follower of the Lord and not walk in Your ways. Let me not steal and cause the reputation of God to suffer. As I go to Nigeria and you talk to these widows who have elders of churches stealing from their lands that their husband's left them, this happens all over the place. This is what it means, this is what the church in America does all the time. Not to the same extent, you can see it more obvious there because they decide the name of God means nothing, but in America look at how much of it is about man and not God. Think about how much of the church bears His name in vain, making serious things of God vanity. Not saying now that I have made a profession of faith, what I do reflects on the character of God because what a son does reflects on his father's reputation. God will not hold you guiltless, He will not hold you as saved if you have taken His name with lightness, without any effect. If you say you are a Christian and have no repentance, even if you have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof either with words or with deeds, you deny that the power of the gospel has true power to cleanse lives, to transform lives, to cause those who died with Christ to walk in the newness of life. When you deny that power, that is taking His name in vain, that is saying that it doesn't mean anything. If we're truly saved we're not taking the name of God with deceit, we're not saying this is who God is when it's not who God is. 1 John 3:7-10, "Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother." John's writing and saying this is what it means, if you're not practicing righteousness, you are bearing God's name in vain and He will not hold you guiltless. If you do not love your brother you are bearing God's name in vain and He will not hold you guiltless. This isn't about using His name as a profanity, it's about profaning His name before the world. The good news is we practice righteousness because if you are truly saved you won't profane His name, not because of your brilliance or strength, not because of your wisdom, but because God's seed remains in you. It's His Holy Spirit that causes us not to take His name in vain. Are we harming the reputation of God or are we declaring the reputation of God with our lives?

Another way we take His name in vain is not just when we take it upon ourselves, which is the primary one, but another major way we do it is with an oath. That's what an oath is, you're saying you are adding to this covenant, to this deal that I am making with somebody, I am adding to it the name of God, I'm putting God's reputation on the line with it. That's what an oath is. Deuteronomy 6:10-15, "So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full— then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth." This is one of the most basic ways that we are to worship God because an oath is saying God is not vain, it's saying God is real and God really judges. When we allow our politicians to take oaths to the Constitution, oaths of office, we need to recognize when the church then accepts the fact that they turn and violate those oaths without hesitation, when the church thinks this is okay, the church is testifying that God's reputation is vain, it's not real. All those chapters in Isaiah where He says He is going to destroy Tyre and Sidon, destroy the Assyrians and all these people for having violated My commands, we then turn around and say He wouldn't destroy the United States because these people take false oaths. The church of America takes God's name in vain, do you? Do we as a group? Psalm 24:1-4, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness,

The world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters. Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully." Swearing deceitfully is a serious sin and how serious do we take it? We wouldn't have a 50% divorce rate if we took swearing in God's name seriously. We wouldn't have politicians that have no hesitation, probably 90-98% of what they do in Washington and in Raleigh, is to vote on things that are blatantly contrary to the Constitution that they swore to uphold. Does the church take God's name in vain? How many of these church leaders, how many come out and say you understand as a nation we are being destroyed because we take His name in vain? He won't hold us guiltless.

The second part, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." God, who controls all things, the One who was, who is and always will be, 'shall not'. It's translated 'will not', but it's the same Hebrew word, God shall not hold him guiltless. Only God always does what is right so He won't hold him guiltless. Just as we shall not take His name in vain, God will not hold him guiltless. We may sin and fail, but God doesn't sin, He will not hold him guiltless. It's a command to God that He accepts as much as it is a command to us. So what does it mean to hold one guiltless? The word 'guiltless' means 'to be clean'. God will not consider them spiritually clean who takes His name in vain. They can say they profess Christ all they want, but if they don't walk in holiness, if they don't walk in righteousness, if they don't practice righteousness, He will not hold them as clean, He will not hold them as innocent, He will judge

them. His wrath will still remain upon them. Taking His name in vain, that word 'vain' means to be washed out like a flood, it's like there is nothing there, it's like it's completely gone, a torrent of water goes through and washes everything away, that's what it means to take in vain. You take His name, but there is nothing there from it, it doesn't have any effect. They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me, that's taking His name in vain, there's nothing there, it's just words. It can also be referred to as idols because taking His name in vain, if we take Him, His reputation, and treat Him like He's an idol, what do idols do? Nothing, they're just a piece of stone, they're just a piece of wood, they can't do anything, they're just deaf and dumb and blind. If you treat God like He is deaf, and dumb, and blind, you are taking His name in vain, you're taking Him as an idol. God is not an idol, He's not this lucky charm that you use to get out of trouble. That's why people seek after idols, they think they can put their trouble on their idol and then it's not their problem anymore. That's how people use God. I made a profession of faith so He has to forgive me. No, He will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. This is such a common view in the American church, you walk an aisle, you pray a prayer and poof, God holds you guiltless. It's not what this verse says, that's not what the Old Testament testifies to, all of Israel fell in that category and He killed them all in the wilderness except for a handful. This verse specifically says the opposite, I will not hold him guiltless who takes My name in vain. We need to be very careful not to treat salvation as a cheap thing. You know, you hear someone say some words or crying some tears or they sing with such zeal, 'Oh how I love Jesus', or they attend church all the time and they're always there whenever the doors are open, all those can still be taking the name of God in vain if they go out and steal, if they go out and look at women to lust at them, if they're an angry man. This is still taking His name in vain, it is not a frivolous thing when we associate ourselves with the true and living God, when we say we are His it means something and God will not hold them guiltless who takes His name in vain. We've made salvation a cheap thing when we accept these vain actions instead of having an expectation that there will be real demonstrable substance in their faith. When we accept these as Christianity instead of saying Christianity is dying with Christ instead of walking in the newness of life. Don't be deceived, those who practice righteousness are righteous and those who don't practice righteousness are the sons of the devil regardless of what they say. Think about our responsibility, if God says He won't hold Israel guiltless, I won't say it doesn't matter that you're called the people of God, I am going to judge you for this, I am going to judge you because you won't follow My commandments, how much more responsibility does the modern church have? How much more fear should be upon us? Hebrews 10:24-31, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It's a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God. If He is saying this third commandment to

Israel, be afraid because it applies far more to us for we have more revelation, we have the blood of Jesus Christ. To think somehow that you come to church and you're okay because you made a profession of faith, the opposite is what the writer of Hebrews is saying. How much more if you treat the blood of Jesus Christ as a vain thing than if you just treat the tablets of stone as a vain thing? God won't hold him guiltless. When we think the sacrifice of Jesus Christ doesn't actually change people, it doesn't actually cleanse people, we have counted the blood of Jesus Christ as a vain thing, we have treated the Holy Spirit as a futile God, we have treated Him as an idol instead of treating Him as One who can make one holy, instead of treating Him as the Spirit of truth. We get false comfort because instead of Him being our comforter, we pretend like He is our comforter so we can ignore the fact that He will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. It's gospel without true repentance. When we look at repentance and say that they shed tears, they were so sorry about their sin, that's not enough, you have to truly be repentant. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11, "For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter." That's what it looks like to not take His name in vain, it's that we actually have to have a zeal to turn from our sin, we actually have to have a fear of God and see sin as a bad thing. It's really easy for Christians to look and they see worldly sorrow and they think it's godly sorrow. Godly sorrow changes your life, worldly sorrow just changes your moment, there's a big difference between the two. As we think about this, remember what God says about a good name. Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold." God says that because He cares about His name. Remember I have read from Ezekiel 20:9, "But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles among whom they were, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt." All those plagues, all that delivery, that was to deliver a people that God wanted to kill. He took them out in the wilderness and He killed them, but the reason He delivered them was so that His name would not be blasphemed among the Egyptians, that they wouldn't say those were the people of God, but they can't do anything. That's why all those plagues came upon Egypt, it wasn't to deliver the people because He was going to kill all those people, it was because He didn't want His name to be treated as a light thing. That's why all those plagues happened, it was to deliver a people to destruction so that the Egyptians wouldn't say God couldn't do anything, that God is vain. Remember when Aaron makes the calf and the people reject the law of God, Moses' basis for pleading that they shouldn't all be killed wasn't because He should save these people, it was because of the name of God. Exodus 32:11-14, "Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: "Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,

Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' ” So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.” He did it because God cares about His name, do you care about His name?

Applications:

1. This Scripture is widely twisted. We need to make sure that we don't twist Scriptures to make them something a lot lighter and a lot easier than they actually mean. You see people do this by saying, 'Oh that's cultural'. You see people do this by taking it to the most minor case and saying they can avoid this, which is what the Pharisees did all the time. There are so many ways to twist Scripture and there's a lot of Christians that think that it means not using the name of Jesus Christ in vain. We need to recognize it's not just people that are outside that accept the twisting of Scripture, it's those that actually know God. We need to work to make sure we untwist the Scriptures. 2 Peter 3:16, "as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." This is what the unbeliever does, he twists Scripture. This is where you have all these leaders that start out pretty well. We did a podcast on Ravi Zacharias, he started out pretty well, but then you see where he goes. He twisted the Scriptures and we can listen to him and think that's good what he said, but understand his heart was to twist the Scriptures, that's where his desire was. Everybody who hates God, they want to twist the Scriptures. They also want power and other things so sometimes they speak truth to build up a following, but understand when you listen to those things, they can sound like they are good and logical and true, but that's not good enough. We actually have to check them against the Scriptures because their heart is to twist the Scriptures and your heart might be to twist the Scriptures too because in your flesh you will want to twist the Scriptures. Make sure that you don't because that's how you take God's name in vain. You say this is what He said, but I'm going to take it as a vain thing, instead of saying if you profess to be God's child, yet have no fruit, that if you can take that and say He won't hold you guiltless to that and you can say "Jesus Christ" when you hit your thumb with a hammer, understand how easily we can do this. Understand how easily we can twist the Scriptures and make sure you don't twist the Scriptures. Make sure you actually look at the words.
2. We should expect to see this. God didn't make this a commandment because this wouldn't happen in the world. Last week talking about graven images, I talked about how Islam, Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, the vast majority of the people in this world bow down to idols. It's not like some narrow little thing that happens, it's all over the place. We know the fourth commandment of breaking the Sabbath, that's all over the place, it happens all the time so we shouldn't say there aren't people that take God's name in vain, we should realize the majority of people take God's name in vain. The majority of

professing Christian take His name in vain. We know the parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the ten virgins are here are ten people that are holy. They're not ten people that look like they are harlots, they are ten people who look like virgins and only half of them are saved. What about all the rest that look like harlots? They're not saved either. We should expect to see this a lot, not like an occasional thing, this is the normal thing that you should expect to see if you hear someone say they are a Christian. So we looked through the Old Testament and we can see these cases, like with Elijah or Micah, or other cases where there are all these false prophets and only one true prophet. There are all these other false prophets and they are taking the Lord's name in vain, they are saying that God said this to them and they are relaying it to the people saying, 'Thus saith the Lord...' There are always more false prophets than there are true prophets. Just because someone professes the name of Christ doesn't mean that they have actually been adopted into the family of God, there will always be many who weren't. Matthew 7:21-23, ""Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" If you don't treat God as your head, like a son or a wife, if you don't treat God as a head who gets to tell you what to do, you are taking His name in vain and He will say, 'Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

3. You see how church discipline is directly related to this commandment. Not just for the person being put out, when Paul rebukes the church in Corinth, it's not really about the man, it's about them. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you." Paul is rebuking them for taking the name of God in vain. They are allowing this guy who had had sexual relations with his father's wife to remain in the church and he is saying to them that they are taking His name in vain, they are acting like you can mix leaven in with the lump, they are acting like this is acceptable, they are puffed up. The accusation is against the church of Corinth because they didn't do church discipline. So many people want to put that restoring the person is the main purpose of discipline, but that is not the main purpose of church discipline. The main purpose of church discipline is to not take the name of God in vain. When you allow people in the church to have a pattern of sin in their life and do not put them out, you are saying the Holy Spirit is vain, the Holy Spirit is an idol that can't do anything, the Holy Spirit doesn't change lives. The main purpose of church discipline is to make sure that we don't fall into the trap of thinking that God is an idol, that He can't do anything in the world instead of saying God is the God who judges. The main purpose of church discipline is to enhance the reputation of God and not let those who steal or those who commit adultery or those who lie or do all the sins that people get put out for, not to say this is okay with God, instead it is to protect His reputation.

4. Do you care more about His name or your name? God promises blessings for those who care more about His reputation than their own. It doesn't mean that it's not normal to suffer because of it, because it's normal to suffer because of it. Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." If they lie about you, if they make up stories about you, if they attack you because you are declaring the true nature of God's reputation, God promises He will bless you. He says to rejoice and be exceedingly glad, not just a little happy, be exceedingly glad because God promises blessings for those who care more about His reputation than about their own reputation. Are you willing to sacrifice your own reputation for the sake of God's glory? I think this is a determining factor between what is unrighteous anger and what is righteous anger. Unrighteous anger is when it's about your reputation and you get angry instead of realizing you are just the slave and why should your reputation deserve anything? When God's reputation is attacked, that's where we seek Jesus Christ. It certainly seems like He is angry, John 2:15-17, "When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." Jesus Christ cared about His Father's reputation when there were people being thieves in the temple doing false changing, basically manipulating people and making them take a bad exchange rate. Jesus Christ goes in and cleans up the reputation of His Father's house, He cares greatly about the reputation of His Father. Think about that, when we think about what Jesus Christ did, it's really important to put it in the context of how important God considers His reputation. Remember, He won't kill all the Israelites in Egypt because He doesn't want His reputation to be hurt. He won't kill them all in the wilderness because He doesn't want His reputation to be hurt. Over and over again He says He is going to stay His hand, He's not going to pour out the fullness of His wrath because He wanted the nations to know who He was. He cares about His reputation and we should consider that in the context of what Christ did. Philippians 2:5-8, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." His reputation, that He cared so much about, He put aside so we could be saved. This is a big deal that He would come as a helpless baby, the ruler of all creation, the One through whom all things that were created were created. He put aside His reputation so there was a path to the Father. Do you care more about your reputation or do you care more about God's reputation?
5. Is the church blessing the name of God or cursing it? A wife's duty is to be a blessing to the name of her husband. If she is walking around gossiping about him, she is failing in her primary duty. The primary duty of a wife is to respect her husband. Is the testimony

of the church that we respect Jesus Christ? Is that our reputation? I think when you hear so many churches going out there saying that there is no law, it's just relationships, they're saying they don't respect Jesus Christ as the law-giver, they don't respect Him as the head. They say they love Him, but they show no respect to Him. Let's make sure we are different than that, that we actually respect our Husband. Does this church bless the name of God or does it curse it? When we reject His commandments we are cursing His name rather than blessing His name. When we don't preach the gospel to those who are outside we are cursing His name, we are saying there is no power in the name of Christ, there is no power in the gospel. When you walk by that person who desperately needs to hear the gospel and you say, 'Oh I have other things to do', understand you are cursing the name of God and saying that God doesn't have the power, He's just an idol like all the other idols. Our job is to express Habakkuk 2:14, "For the earth will be filled

With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea." Are we blessing the name of God? Are we bearing His name, not in vain, but as a faithful bride?

6. Another way we take His name in vain is by taking oaths. Do we take oaths seriously? Do we recognize that taking an oath is joining God's reputation with us when we take it? It used to be in this country that you couldn't testify in court unless you believed that there was a God who judged the living and the dead. You didn't have to believe in Jehovah, but you had to believe there was judgement after life because an oath is saying God will judge. When we pretend like God doesn't judge we're taking His name in vain. When we don't hold our government officials, who swear to keep the Constitution, accountable when they don't keep the Constitution, we are taking His name in vain. When we vote for people who are running on a platform where almost every single thing is to violate their oath of office, do we treat God's name as if it's a vain thing or do we treat it as if it's a real thing? Do we warn our elected officials about the reality that God will not hold those guiltless who take His name in vain? Especially the ones who call themselves Christians, some of them may be and just are so blinded by their own sin that they don't recognize that when you take an oath God says He will judge you for taking an oath. Do we see that as a reality? Do we see that as a reality that God judges those that add His name, His reputation to their words? Hebrews 6:16, "For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute." Oaths are supposed to end disputes because we are supposed to believe that God will actually judge. God does judge, consider the case of Joshua when the Gibeonites come to deceive him. They come and they pretend like everything they have is old. Joshua 9:15, "So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them." This was an oath they shouldn't have joined into, this was an oath that God told them that they were supposed to destroy these people, but they fooled them into thinking that they were from far away so it was okay to join with them. They entered into a covenant with them. God had commanded them to kill everyone of the tribes that were in Canaan and they violated it, but this didn't mean they were free from their oath. You find out in 2 Samuel 21:1, "Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, "It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because

he killed the Gibeonites.”” Hundreds of years later Saul breaks Joshua’s oath so God starts to kill Israel. Do we believe in that God? Do you believe that all this judgement that’s coming upon our country, we are a country under judgement, how much of it is because we allow elected officials to take oaths in the name of God? We elected them, we appointed them to take that oath knowing that they would violate it. We should expect the judgement in this country to get a lot worse until the church starts to fear the name of God. God takes oaths very seriously, He kills people hundreds of years later because of it. How seriously do we take oaths?

7. Don’t walk away from this passage without asking the question, are you holy? Leviticus 19:12, “And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.” This verse is in a passage about holiness. Verses 1-2 of 19, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’” This is what it means to not take His name in vain, it is to be holy, it is to be separate from the world, it is to be cleansed from the world and turning from sin. Don’t think that just because you made a profession, just because you prayed a prayer, just because you come to church, just because you come to prayer, or whatever else, if you’re heart hasn’t turned towards obedience to God, God will not hold you guiltless. Don’t walk away without examining yourself, God will not allow people to bring disrepute upon His name. A lot doesn’t happen in this world, but God will not allow them to bring disrepute upon His name. Are you holy? Are you taking His name in vain? When Jesus Christ says, ‘Swear by the temple and you swear by the throne in the temple and you swear by all these things’ and the Jews say, ‘The only one that you actually have to do to obey is if you swear by the name of the Lord’. Jesus Christ says, ‘No, let your yes be yes and your no be no.’ If you have not taken the name of God in vain, that is all we need to say. If we truly have the reputation of God, God’s yes is always yes and His no is always no so we should be the same. We shouldn’t have to say that we swear this in the name of God because if we haven’t taken His name in vain then ‘My children do not lie’ is what God says so we don’t need to add to it in an oath. Are you holy? Are you this? Are you somebody who the reputation of God the Father actually sits upon you as a son? Not that you’re perfect, but that you follow your Father’s ways. I talked about it in terms of taking an oath related to going into office, but remember the other oaths that we take. We take oaths about marriage, we take an oath when we enter into the covenant of the church. Do you take these oaths seriously? All the members here have taken an oath to keep the covenant, are you keeping the covenant or do you just consider that as a vain thing that doesn’t matter that much? Because you joined God’s name to taking the oath, if you treat the covenant as not mattering very much, you treat God as not mattering very much, you take His name in vain. It’s really hard when you talk to people, like when Ben Sheehy was mostly excommunicated because he refused to take the covenant seriously, he took his oath in vain. God says He won’t hold him guiltless, it’s not like we punished him too severely for that, God says He won’t hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain and the church should reflect that. Let’s make sure we’re thinking about that too. If you are a member of this church you made a covenant, do you take that covenant seriously? We can’t expect to fix the divorce in this country, we can’t expect to fix the blatant disregard

of the Constitution and the lawless public officials if the church won't take it seriously themselves. If we won't take our covenant seriously how can we expect those who have a nominal profession at best, how can we expect them to take it seriously if we don't?

8. I do want to talk about the positive aspect of this commandment. In putting no other gods before Me can be put in a positive sense, you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strength, and your might. In the second commandment, make no graven image, you can rephrase that in a positive sense, we must worship God in spirit and in truth. The third commandment can be stated in a positive sense as well. What are we supposed to do to make sure that we don't take God's name in vain? How do we bring honor to the name of God rather than dishonor? I think it's best summed up in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." This is the testimony that we haven't taken His name in vain, that we love the brethren. This is the testimony. The people that say they love Jesus Christ, but will never have anything to do with the church, that's taking the name of God in vain, that's not showing love of the brethren. How will people know that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ? It's that you will love the brethren, that's what Jesus Christ said. How do you treat the brethren? Do you esteem them better than yourself? This is the testimony to the world that God is a God of love, not as the world loves, but how God says to love, how true love is. It's that we're willing to make sacrifices for one another, when we weep with those who weep, when we rejoice with those who rejoice, we confront each other in sin, we exhort one another to love and good works. Is that our testimony? Is that your testimony? Do you bear His name in vain or do you love the brethren? The passage that Noel read this morning from 1 John 3, that's a summation of it, if you don't love the brother who you see, don't say you love God who you don't see. You either treat God as vain or you love the brethren, it's one of the two, everybody is in one of the two camps. Are you taking the name of the Lord in vain? If you are, repent. It's not the unforgivable sin. One of the proofs for care of His name is that He will allow us to repent, He will allow His name to show that the person who is in darkness now walks in the light. It shows that His name is greater than the works that you do, His power is greater than any of your sin. Taking the name of the Lord in vain or if you haven't taken the name of the Lord, take the name of the Lord not in vanity, but in truth for that is the only way to escape from hell. That is the only way to escape from the destruction, the eternal damnation. Let's not take His name in vain.

Let's pray. Oh Lord God, we do thank You for where You have us. We pray that You guide us to see where we fall short of obeying this commandment, that You open our eyes to where we fail to do the things we ought to do and we do the things that we ought not to do. Lord let us have a love for Your reputation, let us care more about our Master's house than ourselves. Lord, we thank You that through the power of the Holy Spirit it is possible for us to do this because in our flesh we could never do this. Lord we pray that You make us a people who have a greater testimony to the world around us, testimony not about ourselves, but about the power of the Holy Spirit in our life, the power of the blood of Christ, the goodness of the Father. Lord, let us

be proclaiming these things to the people around us, not with vain words, but with truth and with a life that reflects on Your character. May we be a people who bear Your name well. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.