

The 1st Commandment Forbids Irreverence

What is irreverence? It is when a person fails to give to God the honor and respect that He deserves. The Webster's Dictionary of 1828 says that irreverence is a lack of due regard to the authority and character of the Supreme Being. It is when His laws or institutions are disregarded. This irreverence is something which can be shown either in the person's attitude or actions; but reverence is especially important in the private and public worship of God. What is true and spiritual worship? This is how Stephen Charnock answers it in his great book, "The Existence and Attributes of God". "Worship is an act of the understanding, applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God, and actual thoughts of His majesty, recognizing Him as the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, which is natural knowledge; beholding the glory of His attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge; this is the sole act of the spirit of man." "The same reason is for all our worship as for our thanksgiving." "This must be done with understanding. Psalm 47: 7 – "For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding." Charnock goes on to say that this spiritual worship is an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverences God's majesty, is ravished with His amiableness, embraces His goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with this most lovely object, and pitches all his affections upon Him." To regard God with reverence is to regard Him with fear mingled with respect and affection. To be irreverent is to manifest a careless, lazy, or disrespectful attitude towards God in our thoughts and actions. Let's look at reverence first.

Psalm 89: 1-8 God is to be held in reverence by all those around Him.

Psalm 96: 4-9 God is to be revered because He is great and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared, which is another word for reverencing Him. To reverence Him is to stand in awe of His majesty; it is to honor Him with our offerings of our hearts, our lips, and our regard for His holiness and what we can do to become more holy.

Hebrews 12: 28 To serve God acceptably we must have grace, and we must also serve Him with reverence and godly fear. (reverent caution lest we should offend God)

Genesis 18: 27 - Abraham addresses God with reverence when he says, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord."

Now, what is it to have an attitude of irreverence in thoughts, actions, or worship?

Genesis 4: 3-9 Cain's attitude of irreverence is shown in his not regarding God's reproof in the kind of sacrifice that he brought, his sullenness toward God because God had not accepted his offering, his anger toward God and his brother, and his not regarding the reproof of God to him about dealing with his sin.

Exodus 5: 1-5 Pharaoh's attitude of irreverence is shown in his casually tossing aside God's word spoken to him by Moses and Aaron in favor of his own thoughts of desiring complete control over the children of Israel so as to prevent them from worshipping God.

Ephesians 5: 1, 2, 4 – Sometimes even those who profess to be Christians can fall into foolish talking, coarse jesting. They may not see the importance of being sober-minded or being cheerful and joyful in a holy way. There is a great difference.

Titus 1: 15 – 2: 10 – The pure being spoken of here in verse 15 are true Christians who, in sincerity of heart, are constantly striving by God’s grace, to be pure in heart and mind; setting their thoughts on things above, setting their minds on what is true and honorable and pure and lovely. But a person who is being irreverent is not sober, or temperate, and in many cases they may fall often into idle talk and speaking things to others about the word of God which are not true, thus subverting their faith. But notice that the word reverent is used of older men in verse 2, older women in verse 3, and even young men are exhorted to “reverence” in verse 7.

James 3: 8-12 – Irreverence can be seen and heard in the speech of some who claim to be Christians; maybe are true Christians. At one point, in their speech, they are blessing God the Father, and the next minute they are cursing men who have been made in the image and likeness of God. These things should not be.