

God on His Holy Name

The Ten Commandments

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I suppose we don't always explicitly state it but every time that we gather, we gather in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, don't we? We gather to honor him. We gather because of the access that he has given to us to God through his death and resurrection. We gather in trust of his continuing intercession for us. We gather in the hopeful expectation of his soon return. The name of Jesus Christ is precious to us. It is sacred to us. It is set apart to us. The name of God is set apart to us. And if you think about it from a New Testament perspective, you'll see how plainly and how vitally this is set forth before us in some of the most familiar teaching of all of Scripture. True Christians find rest in the name of God, in the name of Christ. True Christians find reverence in the name of God and in the name of Jesus Christ. And if you think about it from some of the most familiar passages that you know, if not by heart you certainly know them by easy ready reference, think about Matthew 6 when the Lord taught us how to pray. The name of God was center to it; it was the cornerstone to it. You remember what he said, he said, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be," what? "'Your name.'" Your name, the name of God right at the start of the way that we are instructed to pray. And he goes on, he goes on in Matthew 6 and tells us in those familiar words, "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as in heaven so also upon earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." All of that flowing from an initial addressing of God in his name, and so the name of God frames that very familiar prayer which is given to us as a pattern, not as something to be recited in blind repetition as if the prayer itself had meaning if our hearts were not in it, as long as we echoed the proper words. Jesus is giving us themes to talk about and what are those themes that flow from – this is the point for today – that flow from the name of God and that make the name special and reverent to us? Well, there are themes of hope and submission, and dependence, and confession, and honor to God and trust in his provision. All of these things which are the spiritual lifeblood of a true Christian all flow from the name of God and if those things mean something to us, our hearts are inclined to the name.

Now just one other little New Testament perspective here to remind you of how Christ taught us to rely on his name and to make his name the source of access that we have to

God, he said in John 16, "If you ask the Father for anything in," what? "My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive so that your joy may be made full." And so, my beloved friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, we recognize just from a very simple reminder from a couple of familiar texts how central the name is to everything that we hold dear. Everything that we hold dear is wrapped up in the name of Jesus Christ. Everything that we hold dear is wrapped up in the name of God. And I think that perspective is necessary and helpful for us as we come today to the third commandment found in Exodus 20:7, and I invite you to turn there with me in your Old Testament. Exodus 20:7. As we approach it from a sense of endearment to the name, a recognition of reverence for the name, then the meaning of the third commandment not only becomes obvious to us why it's necessary, it also becomes the heart desire of ours to comply with what God has instructed.

Let's read it there in verse 7 where God commanded Israel through Moses, he said this,

7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

In this text, God does something of great importance. He protects the holiness of his name from its misuse by sinners. As the Puritan, Ezekiel Hopkins, said back in the 17th century, he says God here instructs us on how to maintain our profession of his name with our mouth.

Now beloved, let me remind you of something that I've said along the way in this series on the 10 Commandments. Time doesn't make it possible to repeat it every single message, although I probably should. The 10 Commandments are not given to us in order to simply give us a code of morality that we are to live by, and by obedience to it we can somehow earn our salvation. That's not why the 10 Commandments are given to us. We have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we are under the judgment of God apart from Christ and we cannot regain his favor through obedience. Now having said that, when a person becomes a Christian, when you are in Christ, you do not fear punishment from God because of your failure to keep the 10 Commandments and you should all understand and know instantly why that's true, why there's no fear of punishment, eternal punishment especially, it's because Christ has paid the penalty for violating the commandments with his shed blood for us at the cross. When God saved you, he did a wonderfully gracious thing to you. He gave you an immeasurable incalculable gift. He forgave you of all of your violations of his law, all of your failure to glorify him, and in its place when in Christ he gave you and imputed to you the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ so that God treats you as though you had perfectly fulfilled all of the 10 Commandments, all of his moral law, you had perfectly fulfilled it, you stand before him in the righteousness of Christ with all of your sins washed away. The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin and so we do not – we're going someplace really important here – we do not obey the 10 Commandments in order to earn our salvation. We do not obey the 10 Commandments out of fear of eternal punishment as Christians because we understand that Christ has saved us from the wrath of God, and so we are in a secure position in Christ before a holy God. If you're not in Christ, none of this is true of you but

I speak predominantly to believers today with an open invitation for those of you that don't know Christ to come to Christ and be saved. He calls you, in mercy he offers you grace to come and have your sins forgiven in his name.

So the question then becomes, well, if we're not trying to earn our salvation through obeying the 10 Commandments and if God has forgiven us of our past, present and future violations of the 10 Commandments, then why do we even need to bother to study them? There are many teachers who would say that what we're doing is not an appropriate study for Christians to undertake. We reject that theology vehemently but the question does need to be answered. Then what is the value, what is the purpose of the 10 Commandments to the Christian today? What do they do for us? Well, here's what they do for us. I want to keep our minds tightly around the introduction here, that we realize that in the name of God, in the name of Christ we have our salvation, in the name of Christ we have all of the riches of heavenly wisdom, all the riches of heavenly grace are given to us in Christ. And that is precious to us. That's the point. It's precious to us and because it's precious to us, because Christ himself is precious to us, because the God of our salvation is precious to us, we want to know something very important, we want to know how to love him in a right and proper way.

We want to know how he wants us to express our love to him and the 10 Commandments guide us into a life as a believer knowing practically how we are to express our love to him so that in the first commandment, go back to Exodus 20:3, God says, "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall have no other competing affection for Me." Nothing on earth. Nothing anywhere else competes with your affection. God says, "You love Me by sanctifying Me, setting Me apart in your heart so that I have an exclusive realm of affection that no one else has from you." You love him in that way. You set him apart in that way.

In verse 4, he says, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth." What we said was is that God there is instructing us how to worship him. We are to worship him, he wants us to love him in worship through spiritual means, through truth and not through visual images. We are to know the truth and respond by faith to the truth to give him loving obedience in response to the truth, rather than creating visual images that represent God to us. We are not to interpret the attributes of God through images that we see, through pictures that we see or that others set up before us. We are to interpret and to respond to the character of God, the attributes of God, through what he has revealed to us in his word. Our mind is to be engaged in the truth and that is to form our perception of God, not visual images created by the sinful hands of men. Visual images could never possibly represent the eternal invisible God to us rightly. We separate ourselves from that. We worship him in spirit and in truth, and that's how we love him is by applying our minds to his truth, understanding his truth and responding in our hearts with heartfelt worship.

Now God is instructing us how to love him. You say, "How do you know that? The word 'love' isn't, you know, this isn't prevalent in the 10 Commandments so, you know, how do you know that?" Well, the words of our own Lord told us that. Someone asked him,

"What is the great commandment?" And he said, "The first and foremost commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind." He said, "The purpose of law, the purpose of commandments is to instruct us on loving God." And so we love God in this way. We love him by sanctifying him in our hearts. We love him by worshiping him in spirit and in truth. Today, we're going to see how we respond to his name but there is this element of love that God is instructing us in. In this greatly degraded age in which we live, we need to understand these things. In the greatly degraded nature of the so-called evangelical church today that is built on visual images, that is built on sentiment and provoking emotion in your heart so that you think if you've got the right feeling in your heart you're actually worshiping God appropriately, whatever that right feeling is, you know, just this syrupy emotion that I feel good about Jesus, well, that is not true worship. That is not true love for God when that is the driving component of your exercise of faith. No, God has given us more specific direction and exactly the way that we are to think and process these things. "Set Me apart so that no one else competes with Me. Set Me apart in a way so that you worship Me in spirit and in truth according to the way that I have commanded you." And now here in verse 7 of Exodus 20, it gets even more specific in the way that we are responding to his holy name. In this text, God is protecting the holiness of his name and giving us his instruction on how he wants us to love him in response to the saving mercy that he has shown to us. That's the point.

So today, just as we've done in the past two commandments, we're going to start today by trying to understand the commandment in its original Old Testament setting, and then next week we'll move on into more particular ways that this commandment instructs us today in our daily lives. What we're going to find is that we're going to feel like we have, you know, we're going to sympathize with Isaiah when he said, "Oh, oh, I'm a man of unclean lips!" And so the word here is going to instruct us and as the Spirit of God works in us, it will convict us of sin, we'll go to Christ for cleansing and we'll be purified and better enabled to love God in the way that he has commanded us.

We're going to see three things from the text here this morning from Exodus 20:7. We're going to just kind of walk through the text today and leave the application for next week. First of all, today what I want you to see is number 1: the serious prohibition. The serious prohibition. This command forbids us from doing something. A prohibition forbids you. You know, a positive command tells you something to do, a prohibition tells you something not to do. This command, like the others, is telling us something not to do and the structure of the original language in the Hebrew is saying, "Never do this. Don't ever, don't ever do what I'm about to say to you," there in Exodus 20:7.

So let's look at the verse again, understanding that it's giving a prohibition that says, "Never do this." He says, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain." Now earlier in the book of Exodus, God had made his name known to Moses. You'll remember this as you turn to Exodus 3. Go back there with me. We've done entire messages on the names of God. If you want to look those up online, they would certainly be a good adjunct to what we're saying today. But you remember that Moses was confronted with a burning bush and he

stopped in verse 3, he said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'" God said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." Then he goes on, God goes on later in verse 13, "Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.'" Now they may say to me, "What is His name?" What shall I say to them?"

Now go back to verse 5 for just a moment. God had warned Moses that he was walking into an encounter that had especially sacred connotations. Verse 5, God said to Moses, "He said, 'Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'" This is sacred. You need to remove your sandals in an outward expression of recognition of how sacred, how consecrated this moment is. So God is impressing upon him how holy this moment is and then he proceeds to reveal to Moses the name of God. So there in verse 13 Moses said, "What's Your name? What shall I say to the people of Israel?" And in verse 14, God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM,'" that is his name, Yahweh, "and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you.'" God, furthermore, said to Moses," verse 15, "'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.'" I AM WHO I AM. It is an assertion of the self-existence of God, the sovereignty and the majesty of God. He is who he is. There is nothing that can be used humanly to describe him. We simply understand that he is who he is. He will be who he is now and who he always will be. He is the immutable, unchanging, immortal, invisible God. He is unlike us.

So his name which identifies the essence of his being is necessarily sacred. It is holy. In its own right, intrinsically in its own essence, the name of God is holy, set apart, unlike anything else, and what the third commandment is teaching us is that given the intrinsic sacredness of his name, we are to respond to it in a sacred consecrated way as well. A. W. Pink said, "The name is that by which God is called and made known to us." This is how we are to address him. This is how we are to know him. We are to know him as an eternal self-existent God, unlike us, separate from us. And so his name is a summary for the other aspects of his attributes that are revealed elsewhere in Scripture and those are to be regarded with reverence and with a sacred holy fear. God is called by many names in Scripture, Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide, for example, El Shaddai, God Almighty. These different names express his nature and his authority. The name of God shows us how he relates to us in addition to who he is.

All right, all of this is just very foundational, very fundamental, and if we can stop and just step back for a moment. Long ago hopefully, not entirely purged out of my system, I suppose, but long ago it became less important to me whether someone just new to the ministry of Scripture, what they think about a topic that's chosen for discussion. It would be easy for an unsanctified man, an unsanctified woman, to come into a room like this and say why are we spending all of this time on it because they have no paradigm in their

unredeemed mind, they have no paradigm to even understand why this topic is important, let alone to try to understand it and embrace it and make it their own. I have higher hopes for all of you, that you have a sense of why this is important. God is the Supreme Being in the universe. God is holy. God is our Creator. God is our Judge. And it ought to matter to you, it ought to matter to me, it ought to matter to everyone how God wants us to relate to him. "God, You're the authority. You're the high one. You're the majestic one here. Speak and command me, tell me what You want so I can respond rightly to You." A person that isn't somehow asking that question is a person that is missing the entire reason for existence and I don't overstate my case when I say it that absolutely.

And so it was with good reason that Charles Spurgeon said, "It is well to study the name and character of God so that in our distresses we may know how and by what title to address our Father who is in heaven." Think about that. Jesus commands us to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name." Well, what does that name "Father" represent? What does his name mean? What is he like so that I can have some idea of who he will respond to me? These are matters of the highest essence.

And so we see why the name of God is important and we can see why God would place a fence around the way his name is to be used. Look at verse 7 with me again when he says, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain." And you see that phrase to "take the name of the LORD." Well, the Hebrew verb there means somehow to lift up the name or to use it in some manner, and to take it up in the sense that I'm going to take it up in my heart, or I'm going to take it up on my lips and speak it and use that name, how am I going to do that? How do I regard the name in my heart? How do I interact with the name of God in my heart? And how do I use that name in my conversations before men?

Now listen, we'll talk about this more next week but I just want to impress an important speed-bump in your mind to recognize that the name of God has been trivialized so much in casual conversation, even in texting OMG, "Oh my God," responding to who knows what kind of silly triviality that's being stated. God's name being used as a common curse word. God's name being used by euphemisms that we'll talk about next week. The utterly irreverent way in which the name of God is being used. People in superficial excitement about earthly matters with no regard to the holiness of God, taking his name on their lips to express their passing excitement saying, "Oh my God!" In light of everything that we've said here this morning, beloved, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name," you know, Jesus says, "If you ask anything in My name, the Father will give it to you." Do you see the vast discrepancy from the environment in which we live? I fear perhaps the way some of you routinely speak, although I have no one immediately in mind as I say that about the name of God, do you see the vast discrepancy? Do you see the problem here? This is the great and holy name and we use it for trivial interjections in common ordinary speech where we could just as easily say, "Oh my foot!" God's name being treated in the same way that we would speak about our feet. Something is wrong here. That's not okay. That's a serious serious problem and a serious assault on the holy name of God. So we're talking about taking up the name by which we mean this, that you are appropriating, you are using, you are speaking his name in thought, word or deed, and

his name is somehow in the realm of your consciousness. It's from that simple point that we'll enter into this commandment, understanding that God has said, "You shall not take My name in vain." In other words, "You shall not use My name," God says, "in a worthless way, in a trivial way, in a passing way, in an irreverent way. You shall not use My name that way."

Now look, the fact that this is so common doesn't somehow mitigate the commandment and make it less important than it actually is. The fact that we're used to his, the fact that we see this in anything earthly that we read or any kind of media that you engage in, the fact that this is so commonly done does not indicate that the commandment is not serious, it simply indicates how seriously degraded and fallen our culture is that this holy name could be used like that so easily and so often and reverence for the name cast into the gutter. The name of God thrown casually into the gutter like so much refuse to be cast into the street grate and carried off into the sewer, Christian friend, that ought to offend your sensibilities that God's name is used like that and it should make you all the more aware of being conscious about how you sanctify his name in your heart and how you use it with your lips.

So you can see why, in light of everything that we've said here this morning, you can see why God says, "You shall never do this," because when his name starts to be treated irreverently, disrespect for him follows as a natural consequence of it, and when you live in a culture like ours, it just becomes a foaming sea of shame that the Creator and the Judge and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ would be used as it is. Isn't it painful to you? Doesn't it pain you to think that people use the name of Jesus Christ as a common cuss word? Doesn't that hurt? For me it hurts to know that I used to do that. I used to be like that. Oh, the way I used his name! It grieves me to this day even knowing that I'm fully forgiven of it all.

So I trust that in these brief things that we've said so far here this morning, you are sensitized to the issue, you want to honor the name of God and you want to separate yourself from an approach that does not do so, and that your desire is shaped by a desire to love him in response to the saving mercy of Christ in your life. We're not talking about this out of some slavish desire to obey that's divorced from the desires of our heart just because, "Well, God said it and so I guess I have to do it." That's not the spirit of it at all. That's not the spirit at all. We love him. He's precious to us and so we want to honor that which represents the totality of his essence.

So you see the need for the serious prohibition. The second point for this morning: the serious violations. The serious violations. All men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and so it wouldn't surprise us to find that Scripture speaks to the way that this is violated by sinful men. Now to step back or to step away from our culture today and to step into the Mosaic era, I want to just show you a few passages to show you how the immediate use of this command was contemplated and lived out in the days of Moses, and in the immediate Mosaic era, this command was particularly applied to the matter of taking and using oaths. Oaths. An oath is a call upon God to be a witness to what is being said. It calls upon God to confirm the truthfulness of what is being said. So you can think

about it maybe in a courtroom setting, I mean, you know, as we've gotten increasingly secular, oaths are not used in the same way, you just affirm something under the penalties of perjury; but you know, it wasn't that long ago where you were asked to confirm that you were going to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, what? So help you God, so that a witness was entering into or sitting on the witness stand having taken an oath before God and before men, "I am calling upon God to confirm the truthfulness of what I am about to say," so that God is called upon to confirm the oath, God becomes the witness that says, "Yes, that is true." And implied in that oath is the witness's agreement, the witness's testimony that he submits to the punishment of God if he speaks falsely.

So we can see this in the books of Moses. Exodus 22, just turn over a page to verses 10 and 11. The name of God representing the truth of God becomes a way of confirming human truthfulness. So in verse 10 of Exodus 22 it says, "If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking," there's no witness to the injury or death of the animal, verse 11, "an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution." The care of the animal was in his care without anybody seeing what happened, the animal is hurt or dies and now the question is what's going to be the account of that stewardship? "You had my animal and he died on your watch. Something's wrong here." Well, the idea of an oath is that in a holy reverent way he says, "I call God as my witness. I didn't see it and I didn't raise my hand against your animal. I was not negligent. This happened and no one saw so we don't know what happened but your animal is dead." The owner of the animal was to accept that oath as a testimony of the truth of the fact that there was no culpability on the one to whom he had given the stewardship.

Look over at Leviticus 19:12, and all we're doing here is getting a sense of what this commandment against not taking the name of God in vain, how it was used in the immediate Mosaic era. Leviticus 19:11, "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD." And so one way not to take the Lord's name in vain was that you would speak truthfully when you took an oath; when you were swearing, you would have a heightened sense that, "I must be accurate in what I say. God is my witness and I must honor His truth by speaking truthfully in what I am about to say." And so the name of God was honored and protected in that way.

Look over at Deuteronomy 6:13 so that we see in this verse, "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name." So God commands worship in his name, swearing by his name, fearing him in his name, and so you see the positive duty as well as the negative. There's this negative side, "Don't speak falsely under oath." That's a violation, that's taking the name of the Lord your God in a worthless, vain way. And in a positive sense, "Worship, speak the truth. Fear God in His name." So that there's a whole spiritual disposition that is enjoined by this commandment. It's not only saying, "Don't do this," by the positive implication of the negative command

it's saying, "Do this instead," so that we say, "Okay, I don't treat God's name lightly which means that I take it seriously. I reverence His name. I revere His name."

So in the original Mosaic context it's used in these solemn situations. False testimony in God's name was a sin of grave proportions. Think about what a false oath does. A man says, "I swear to God that what I'm about to say is true," and then he goes and tells a lie. He's called the God of truth to be a witness confirming his falsehood. It is an absolute violation of the holiness of God. And so the false testimony is a grave sin, it is an obvious way of taking God's name in vain to use it like that. God's name must be honored in the fullness of truth and if we love God, his name will be precious to us.

Now what we're about to see a little bit later on this morning is that the implications of the third commandment go beyond oaths. It's not simply these formal occasions. We'll see that in just a moment, but before we explore those, I want to consider our third point from Exodus 20:7. We've seen the serious prohibition, the serious violations, and thirdly, we see here the serious penalty. The serious penalty, and if our world, if individuals who profane the name of God could only appreciate the significance of what is said here at the end of verse 7, if they would have a moment of insight given to them by the Holy Spirit, there would be an utter undoing of their very mental constitution.

Verse 7, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for," here's why you shall not do it. God attaches a warning to reinforce the importance of the commandment and he says, "for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." God lays out the consequences of having violated this commandment. Remember, he has said, "Don't do it once, never do this, for the ones who do, I will punish." Doing it once invokes the penalty, what about a lifestyle of it? What if your pattern of dishonoring the name of God is so routine and embedded in your character that you don't even realize you're doing it? How great is the judgment there if one violation is enough to invoke all of these consequences? Downright frightening.

And God warned the nation of Israel, he warned his people about the consequences of not fearing his name. Look at Deuteronomy 28. As you're turning there, we have gotten so accustomed to grace that we don't realize the holiness of God upholding his command. His justice begins to look like injustice because we have presumed on his grace. Can't go there. God says in Deuteronomy 28, beginning in verse 58, as he speaks to the nation of Israel, "If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the LORD will bring on you until you are destroyed." He says that you will die as a result of not keeping this commandment and he goes on in the remainder of Deuteronomy 28 and gives the nation of Israel these tingling warnings of how severe the consequences would be. The hair on the back of your neck stands up straight in response and you say, "Oh, He means business here!" Look at verse 65, just choosing one more at random, "Among those nations you

shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life." All of this flowing from the failure to fear the honored and awesome name "the LORD your God."

Now beloved, let's carry this into the New Testament a bit, realize that what Israel was originally seeing as earthly consequences for their nation, realizing that there are eternal consequences for every individual man, woman and child. You know, hell is a real place. Real people are really going to go to hell and really suffer punishment for their real sins against the name of a holy God. He is not messing around. As I said often in my series on the Sermon on the Mount, God is not bluffing here. For him not to carry out and defend the honor of what he says here would turn him into a liar. God would violate his own truthfulness if this was not something that he meant. So this is earnest. This is serious. And the fact that we don't immediately fall into hell at the first OMG text that we send is not an expression that God doesn't mean business, it's a measure simply that he's being gracious and patient toward you, giving you opportunity to repent.

So there's an eternal dimension to the punishment. You can think about it another way. How holy is the name? Well, beloved, the name, the name is going to be the climax of human history before the introduction of the eternal state. It says in Philippians 2, you don't need to turn there, it's familiar, we've taught on it, but after describing the crucifixion of Christ, the Apostle Paul says after Christ "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross," Paul goes on to say this, he says, "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." Do you see it? Sanctified. This name is set apart. It is viewed unlike any other name, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." I don't know exactly what that's going to look like. It's overly simplistic to say what I'm about to say but picture all of humanity from all of time gathered together in a great triumphant climax of the glory of Christ and the name, "Behold, the Lord Jesus Christ, God Incarnate," and all of humanity will bow. So great is that name, it will be the climax of history. Well, you look at the serious penalties for violating it, you look at the depth of hell, you look at the power invested in that name that everyone will bow and acknowledge it, one day everyone either gladly in worship or under compulsion against their will, will acknowledge the name of Christ to be supreme. That's what's coming. That's how great and holy and awesome is the name of God, the name of Christ.

And so we see this, beloved, God has emphatically stated in his word that he will uphold the honor of his holy name. The Puritan, Matthew Henry, said it something like this. He said God will avenge his name against those who take it in vain. They will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And so God requires us to give the highest sacred honor to his name and, beloved, what that means for you and me, true for everyone but even moreso for Christians, you know, we claim the name of Christ not only in a creative sense, not in an ultimate judicial sense, we claim him as Savior, as

Redeemer. I will praise my dear Redeemer out of love. All the more we set apart his name so that we have it as an established principle in our heart that however often we may fall short, and we'll see more of that next week, but the principle of our heart is committed to the principle at least, that whatever we think about Christ, whatever we say about Christ should be a reflection of his holiness and point to the exaltation of his name, so much so that we realize, again we'll talk about this more next week, that our lazy, distracted praying in his name even is a violation of the holiness of his name.

Now there's more that we could say about this from the words of Jesus but I'll save that for another time. Let me just wrap it up this way. Where this commandment ultimately points us to is a recognition of the need to live in conscious recognition of the presence of God. You know, God is witness to every word that comes out of your mouth. It's not just when he's specifically invoked in the taking of an oath. God sees everything that we say. Jesus made that plain in Matthew 5. So the recognition of his presence changes our view of life as the Spirit of God works and gives us understanding, and reverence for his name instills in us a recognition of the need for personal integrity in the things that we say and the things that we do and so the third commandment evokes fear of God and fear of his name.

Now let me just say this because I know for some of you, you're not used to thinking about God in terms of fear and that sounds foreign. "I thought Jesus was all love and all grace," and you know, all of that. Well, that's a partial truth and if other truth is ignored, that partial truth becomes an untruth because it's understood in a wrong way. The third commandment evokes fear of God and his name and, beloved, what I want you to understand as we contemplate coming back to this text next week, fearing God, it's a good thing. It's a good thing for us to fear God. Scripture says it is the beginning of knowledge. It's the beginning of wisdom. Scripture says it's by the fear of God that one turns away from evil. This is critical to spiritual life, spiritual living, knowing God. Fearing God helps us to better recognize our sin and while we may not like that aspect of things, think about it this way: having a knowledge of sin is necessary for one to become a Christian. Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous," that is, those who consider themselves to be righteous, "I've come to call sinners to repentance. It's not those who are well who need a doctor, it's those who are sick." And so Jesus comes as a Savior for sinners. If the commandment somehow convinces you that you are sinful, that's a good thing because it will humble your soul and cause you to cry out to Christ. The law is our tutor. It teaches us to come to Christ. Fearing God is the path to blessing.

Psalm 112, you don't need to turn there. Psalm 112 says, "Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments." Then the rest of the Psalm goes on and talks about how much blessing is on the one who fears the Lord like this, who gives God reverence, who gives God fearful reverence, who gives God loving reverence and obedience.

And so grace brings us to the word of God, it was a gracious act of God today to bring you to his word. Grace, it is an act of grace to give us understanding, to illuminate our minds to understand it. It's an act of grace to teach our hearts to fear. It's an act of grace

that provokes us to confession of sin when we fall short. It's an act of grace that restores us with a sense of forgiveness when we're trusting in the shed blood of Christ. Grace teaches our hearts to fear him and then the fear of God leads us to our rest in Christ.

Let's pray together.

Gracious Father, holy God, Lord Jesus Christ, hallowed be Your name. May Your name be sanctified throughout all of the earth and may Your name be sanctified within each individual heart beginning with today's speaker. We pray, Father, that our lives henceforth and forevermore would reflect a profound reverence and love for the holy name of God, Yahweh, the Lord Jesus Christ, and may we all be found among that number redeemed and at the end bowing before Your name with the rest of all creation but doing so out of love and obedience and reconciliation and not by way of the unthinkable alternative. Help us all to that great and glorious end, O God. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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