

His Holy Name and You

The Ten Commandments

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Bible Verse: Exodus 20:7
Preached on: Sunday, September 19, 2021

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I remember when Nancy and I were newly married. We were attending a church back in Chicago where we lived and for some reason, I had been asked to teach a Sunday school class. Now I would not endorse me teaching at that stage in my life but they did. And I remember asking a question, you know, what are the marks of godliness, and you know, just trying to start a discussion with the people that were there. What are the marks of godliness? And one of the answers from one of the adults that was there that came out was that, you know, a godly person can be marked by the fact that, you know, he is there every time the church is open. He's there and he's present. Well, it's a good thing to be at church when the doors are open. You know, usually I'm here anyway, it kind of works out that way. You know, you can't measure godliness by that kind of superficial external matter. You know, we all know that people come to church and sometimes marked by ungodliness, we realize that, and so there must be something more to the reality of godliness than simply external behavior or simple church attendance, and I want you to have that thought in mind as we come and return to our study of the third commandment in Exodus 20. I invite you to turn there with me, Exodus 20:7.

For those of you that are visiting, we have been studying through the 10 Commandments. We're at the third commandment now, doing two messages per commandment, one to interpret it, the second to apply it, and last week we took our first message at Exodus 20:7, the third commandment. Today we take our second look at it in order to apply it to our lives, and one of the things that we'll find as we look at it, is that our view of godliness is going to be challenged and this commandment is going to search us far more than you might expect, and what it has to say to us, what the Spirit of God would do in our hearts, you know, we look forward to with anticipation.

Exodus 20:7 says this, it says,

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.

What we saw last time was that this commandment calls us to revere God and to revere his presence. There is to be a sacred regard in our hearts, a sacred respect, a sacred honor, a sacred fear for the God of the Bible. And this is a command that is universal; it applies

to everyone throughout all of the world. It applies to Christians today and it is a guide for our moral life as well. There is such a sentimental strain that runs through the evangelical church these days that I'm very very concerned about. I've been reading and writing on it and preparing things for it, and I'm just very concerned by this sentimental approach that just relies on emotion as being a guide to whether someone is responding rightly to God, whether they're responding in worship or not. Well, look, you can find a lot of emotion in a lot of places and the same kind of inner excitement generated by things that obviously have nothing to do with true worship. There will be a lot of excitement and buzz and cheering at football stadiums throughout the country today, there will be emotion in response to music that has nothing to do with God, and concerts and all of these things, and just whipping people up into an emotional state, an emotional frenzy, and what's happened is that the church has started to identify worship with that rather than according to what God has commanded that he wants us to be like in worship.

What does God want in worship? Well, in the first commandment he said in verse 3, he said, "You shall have no other gods before Me." In other words, "You shall sanctify Me in your thoughts and in your mind, and you shall sanctify Me so that there is no rival for your affections compared to the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ." There should be nothing in your heart that is more important to you than the Lord Jesus Christ. Our country is not more important than the Lord Jesus Christ. Our personal freedoms are not more important than the Lord Jesus Christ. Our wealth or lack thereof, our friendships, our marriages, our families, our children, our grandchildren, none of those things surpass in importance the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is a demand of true discipleship, this is what is true of genuine believers, is that Christ is set apart in that way, so much so that Jesus said back in Matthew 10, you don't need to turn there, I'm just touching on this and I've alluded to it before, but Jesus said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who does not take his cross and following after Me is not worthy of Me." Look, this is not the cuddly Jesus of moralistic therapeutic deism that is rampant in the evangelic church in America today. You know, Jesus wants to be your friend. Jesus will help you with all of your problems. Jesus will do this or that, and Jesus doesn't make that many demands on you. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus Christ came and asserted his Lordship and demanded that those who would be saved would follow him, and this is in perfect keeping with the first commandment that says, "You shall have no other gods before Me."

So right from the get-go of the 10 Commandments, we are challenged with this claim on our exclusive devotion and worship and there is to be no competing affection in your heart for the supreme allegiance that belongs to Christ alone. And if that's not clear in your mind, you need to humble yourself before God and says, "Help me to understand. Sort this out in my mind. Something is wrong here." And I don't mind saying that even in the midst of this room with people that I love and appreciate as brothers and sisters in Christ, I am deeply burdened, I am deeply concerned that we're missing the importance and the strategic nature of this exclusive demand on our worship. If this was clear in our minds, I think our affections and the things that we want to fight about and the things that we want to advocate, I think it would all be radically different than what it is. You know,

I place myself under that concern as well. You know, we need to realize and ask that we need God to help us understand and to apply these things rightly to our mind because the person who understand this has a different spirit about them and realizes that mere church attendance is not sufficient, that there is a love and a commitment and a devotion and an understanding and a reliance and a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ that is unique and naturally sets a person apart when these realities are true in their heart.

So God says, "You know, if you want to love Me, if you want to follow Me, you must have Christ as the exclusive object of the devotion of your heart." Is that true of you? You know, people in here I don't know, so of course I ask that. This is a matter of profound importance. You know, what is it that occupies your time and thinking throughout the week? What is it that you get upset about? You know, is it tied to Christ? Is it related to Christ or is it with your, you know, your own pride and personal interests? We need to consider these things deeply. God says in the first commandment, "Worship Me alone." Secondly, in the second commandment 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." Without going into our exposition of that again which we've done before, what this second commandment is teaching us is that not only must God be exclusive in our hearts, he's saying that, "You must worship Me in the way that I command you to worship. You cannot make images and you cannot have imaginations in your mind that you use to worship in ways that I have not commanded." And this is a prerogative of God, beloved. God is God. God is the authority in the universe. He has the prerogative to say, "You will worship Me alone," and he has the prerogative to say, "You must worship Me in the way that I command you to worship." That's his prerogative as God.

So we don't have the freedom to make up our own approach to worship, we must come to Scripture humbly, say, "How has God commanded that He would be worshiped," and respond accordingly in that way. And so God is the exclusive object of our affection, God being worshiped only in the way that he commands, and now as we come to the third commandment that is our subject for this morning, he is telling us how we are to regard his name and what the impact of his name is to be on our hearts and upon our lives. Last time, we considered how this command applied to the nature of oaths in the Old Testament era, and we walked through that, but we left unaddressed last time the full nature of biblical revelation of what God means when he says that, "You shall not take My name in vain," and attaches to that a warning of great penalty against those who do.

Look at it there at the end of verse 7, "the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." What does that mean and how does it affect the way that we live today? Well, what this command is telling us is twofold. On the negative side, it's telling us to never appropriate or use God's name in a worthless way. God's name was never intended to be a casual part of daily conversation without regard to his great holiness and his great authority. It's never to be used in a casual way and we're going to address that as we go along. There's a positive aspect to the command as well, is that when we take up God's name it is to be with reverence. Jesus said in Matthew 6:9, "Pray in this way, 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'" There is to be a regard in your heart

that desires God's name to be glorified and at the same time has this sense of holy awe in his presence that makes you cautious, makes you careful about the way that you think about God and the way that you speak about him to others, and the way that you use his name and we're going to look at all of that here today. Just a little bit of a preview here. It is stunning, it is stunning to realize as you go through the rest of Scripture that this command literally goes to every aspect of your thought, words and deeds. This covers everything in life and we'll see that as we go along. It is far more than what you might think.

So what we're going to do this morning is we're going to kind of pick up where we left off on last time and then expand out as we consider four areas of life that this command examines for us, and this is doing two things for us. Number one is that it's going to bring a spotlight into our souls and it's going to open up closets in life and areas that have been neglected and say this needs to be addressed. It's going to shine light into the remaining darkness in our hearts where we have failed and not honored God in this way as his command requires us to do. Secondly, it's also going to point us to the way that we are to love him and the way that we are to live for him. It shows us the way forward in loving him as we should, as Christ called us to do. What does it mean to have exclusive devotion for him? How do we live that out? It's astonishing to realize that it's found right here in the third commandment, and I have no fear of having over-promised what is about to come in the remaining 45 minutes that we have together.

So what I want to do, start in these four areas of life and, first of all, just address the matter of oaths. There are four points here, each one is going to be "the matter of" and just start with the matter of oaths. I just want to touch on this very briefly because some have suggested that what Scripture teaches is that Christians should never take an oath and they think that they're honoring the commands of Scripture when they say that. So they will refuse to take an oath in a courtroom, they will refuse to pledge allegiance to their country, all in the idea that they are not to make oaths of that kind. Well, Scripture does not sustain that view. In Numbers 30:2, which was also written by the hand of Moses, in Numbers 30:2 it says this, "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth." That's Numbers 30:2.

And so Moses himself wrote about proper occasions for the use of oaths by believing people, and as you go into the New Testament, we're just going to look at these examples, I'm just going to allude to them for the sake of time, as you go into the New Testament, you find this reinforced. In Hebrews 6:17, you see that God himself swore by an oath. If God himself swore by an oath, oaths must not be intrinsically evil, and so that absolute prohibition is not sustainable. Jesus Christ at his trial before Pilate, he spoke under oath before he went to the cross, you can see that in Matthew 26. And the Apostle Paul called God as his witness as he wrote to the church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 1.

And so you see in the Old Testament oaths being prescribed, you see in the New Testament God using an oath, Christ using an oath, the Apostle Paul using an oath, and so obviously this command is not teaching us something that is simple and mechanical

and just a very plain prohibition against that, it's teaching us something else, it's teaching us something different, and what we see is that there is a spiritual nature to this commandment that covers all of life. And I just wanted to kind of clear the air of some of you maybe who have come out of those traditions that have those superstitions about oath-taking, I just want to clear the air and just point you ever so briefly to the fact that the Scriptures do not point in the direction that that text is misused.

So that's the first matter, the matter of oaths. That's all the more I'm going to say about it, we addressed so much of it last time. Now let's get personal, let's get to what this commandment, where this commandment really addresses us, and we can go to a second matter that we can just refer to as the matter of speech, the matter of what you say to others. In a practical matter, the third commandment does this: it teaches us to speak the truth in a clear and simple way. In a clear and simple way, and for this I want to turn you to the book of Matthew 5, if you would just turn back there with me. Matthew 5. What comes out of our mouths matters and Jesus is taking matters from the Old Testament and explaining their full significance.

In verse 33, Jesus said, "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.' But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil," or of the evil one, it is satanic, in other words. And having just gone through the New Testament use of oaths, we see that Jesus is not forbidding all oaths in formal settings in like a courtroom setting; that's not what he's talking about here. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 through 7, is addressing the personal righteousness of disciples of Christ and what it means to live a godly life of repentance. What does repentance look like, that is what the Sermon on the Mount is addressing and so he is addressing your personal righteousness in your day-to-day ordinary conversations, not addressing things that don't apply, you know, except in very rare occasions to your life.

Look, how many of us end up in a courtroom where we have to testify as a witness, or testify in some kind of formal setting? It's very unusual for that to happen. That's why it's a unique setting that does not have much to do with ordinary life. Well, then isn't it obvious as Jesus speaks to his disciples, that he's not addressing something of rare occurrence when he's teaching us how to live for him? What is it, then, that he's talking about and this is what he is saying: Jesus is saying that we should not use oaths, we should not swear, we should not take vows in ordinary conversations. We should not be saying things like, "I swear to God that is the best roast beef I've ever had." That is very bad. That is treating the matter of the name of God and the matter of oaths, it is treating them in a trivial casual way. Don't say that. In a more serious matter, we should not be saying, "I swear that I will do this for you." What Jesus is saying is just let your bare word be enough. "I'll be there," and then do it without bringing the name of God in to affirm something that should just be a matter of simple conversation and that your bare integrity should be enough to guarantee the truth of what you're saying.

Well, in the context of the first century, what Jesus is addressing is the fact that the Pharisees did not do that. The Pharisees did not speak that way. They had an intricate set of oaths in conversations that they would use, and so they distorted speech and they distorted honesty in ways like this, they said that if you made an oath in the name of the Lord and you actually used his name, then you were bound to keep it because you had brought the name of God to bear upon it, but if you did not specifically invoke his name, you were not bound to do it so that they had oaths where you could swear by Jerusalem, you could swear by heaven, you could swear by earth, but you weren't bound to keep your word in the same way because you had not specifically invoked the name of God, so that they used oaths that were designed by God to ensure truthfulness, they used a false system of oaths to practice deception. It was their way of crossing their fingers when they talked. "Yes, I'll be there. Oh, but I had my fingers crossed so I'm not bound to keep and to do what I said that I'd do."

They used superficial oaths as a pretext for deception and Jesus is addressing that matter and the matter of honesty in human speech, and how does the name of God fit into this and how does it affect the way that we speak? Let's just be really simple and clear here. When you understand something about the name of God, when you revere God as we all are commanded to do, it has implications. Dominoes start to fall that exclude certain patterns of life from you and lead you in a particular direction. Who is the God of the Bible? What is his nature? Well, among other things, God is a God of truth, God is a God of omnipresence meaning that he is everywhere present, God is a God of omniscience meaning that God knows everything about everyone and everything everywhere for the whole course of time, and God is holy and God is true, God is everywhere present and God knows all things. Well, do you realize that those attributes are summed up in the totality of what his name is? His name stands for all that he is, just like your name stands for who you are. "You know, who is that guy over there?" This is Tim. This is Troy. This is Becky or whatever. The name represents the person. Well, the name of God, multiply that by infinity, the name of God represents his attributes and his name indicates that he is everywhere present, that he is a God of truth and he is a God of omniscience among many other things that it indicates. I'm just choosing attributes right now that bear directly on the point.

Well, think about what that means in terms of your daily life, then. That means that every word that you speak is spoken in the presence of God. Every thought that you think, every representation that you make to someone else is made in the presence of God, the God of truth, the God of holiness, the God who knows, the God who hears. The God who made your tongue and made your ears has the ability to understand and to know human speech and to hear it as it happens, indeed, Scripture says he knows our words before they come off our tongue. Well, what that means is that all of a sudden when that sinks in on your mind, you realize that everything that you say is in the presence of God. You don't need an oath to invoke the presence of God. He is already present at everything that is being said so that in his presence you realize that everything you say is the subject of his scrutiny and that means that what we say to each other must be reflective of the holiness of God, the truth of God. His omnipresence means that what we say should be

contemplated as being said in his presence. Is it true or not? Is your yes, yes? When you say no, does it mean no, or do you equivocate? Do you say things you don't mean? Are you full of insincere speech, jesting and those kinds of things, misleading people with the things that you say? Well, understand that's a violation of the third commandment in addition to other commands of God because it is a violation of his name, because reverence for his name would instill personal integrity in the things that you say.

So it affects the way that we speak, reverence for his name brings personal integrity to the things that we say and forbids us from being misleading whether we invoke the name of God when we say it or not. Thinking in terms of, you know, the way we treat our marriage vows, our membership commitment in a church, all of these things and you could multiply the examples, driven to integrity, driven to fidelity, driven to keeping what we say because we respect the name of God. So Scripture tells us that you cannot use your mouth to mislead in any situation whether the name of God is invoked or not because the presence of God is always there.

Now beyond that when it comes to the matter of speech, understanding that this is more than a negative prohibition, Jesus, as I mentioned earlier, Matthew 6:9, "Father, hallowed be Your name," there is a positive aspect to the commandment. It's not just that we avoid certain kinds of speech, the fullness of our speech is designed to promote the glory of God. What we say is to advance the honor of his name when his name is used. So you and I, we have a positive duty to honor God's name and his attributes whenever those things are mentioned. It should never be a matter of light conversation to us. And think about it, beloved, those of you that are Christians, there's something in your heart that prompts you to agree and honor that. If you love God, if you love Christ, if you know that Christ is the source of your salvation that you did not deserve, then, beloved, isn't it obvious that his name will be precious to you? It will be dear to you? You will cherish that name? If you have any regard for salvation, if you have any regard for being delivered from sin, being delivered from hell, being delivered from bondage to Satan, isn't it obvious that the name of the one who did that for you in love would be precious to you and something that you would adore and reverence and never treat in a casual flippant manner? That's obvious.

And, my friends, we need to understand how much we sin against his name in the ways that I'm about to describe. God's holy name is not ours to use in the way that we want. His name belongs to him and he has the right to command the way in which it would be used and to punish, as he said there at the end of the verse, to punish the misuse of his name. You know, we're conditioned by our culture and the environment that the name of God is treated so badly and is just drug through the gutters of the street, drug through mud so repeatedly that even you and I as Christians are being conditioned to think, "Well, maybe it's not that important." Well, we need the Spirit of God to wash our minds and to cleanse us and to renew us to a reverence for his name as he's commanded it to be. God does not view it the same way the world does.

So God's name is not ours to use to express our unrighteous anger and to curse using his name or the name of Christ to express our dissatisfaction with providence. God's name is

not to be used casually in discourse, and God's name should not be the object of empty humor as well. I'll illustrate this in a moment. Arthur Pink in his book on the 10 Commandments says, "The third commandment is the negative way of saying God's name must be held in the utmost awe and used in a holy manner in thought and word and deed." And yet what has our culture done and what have we done, more importantly? Let's forget about culture outside and just talk within the walls here. What have we done? Well, we flippantly use "Oh my God" as an expression of superficial passing surprise. The name of Christ is used as a cuss word. People readily, easily say, "Well, I swear to God. I swear to God this is true." That is a violation of the third commandment that God punishes.

Let's get a little more personal. Let's get a little bit more direct. Think about this. There was a baseball announcer at one time, his signature call was, "Holy cow!" Think about that, the holiness of God being attached to an animal in a baseball context in an utter violation of the supreme glory of God. His attributes should not be used in this way. His attributes should not be spoken in such a casual flippant way. And friends, I want to tell you that even words like gosh and golly are not innocent. They are euphemisms for the name of God. They are euphemisms that people developed over time to use as a substitute for the word "God," the holy name of God but still expressing the same kind of casual use of conversation in a way that is not appropriate for Christian lips. This commandment, the third commandment comes against all of that and says, "Stop! Don't use the name of God, don't use his attributes in that casual flippant way." He's to be respected. His name is to be set apart, it is to be honored.

Look, I understand this convicts all of us. This convicts me, you know? It just exposes to us how even the remnants of sin even in a believer's heart, it's just bubbling fountains of sin intentional and unintentional. You know, one of the things that this does, one of the ironic things that this would do, it would actually make us use the name of God less because we would recognize that the invocation and the use of his name is such a holy matter of personal responsibility that we don't treat it lightly. Phil Johnson says this, he says, "If you are not actually speaking to God or speaking about Him with the reverence that is due His name, then don't use His name at all. God has every right to guard the use of His name in this way."

Understand why this command is given. If we develop a sense of reverence and holiness for the name of God, what will flow from our lives is a sense of the fear of God that shapes the way that we live. If we regard his name with reverence and with regard, it will shape the way that we worship him and the way that we honor him. We will come and gather together as believers not as the sense that this is some kind of duty that we have to do, we won't wake up thinking, "Oh, you know, it's Sunday. I guess we've got to get up and get ready," or whatever. No, there's this holy regard that shapes the way that we think about everything else and the way that we speak in particular, because every word that you speak is in the presence of God and when you speak of him, when you speak of Christ, when you think of Christ, there is to be a reverence attached to it. And for some of you teenagers, maybe, where you've got OMG in your texts, you need to go and you need

to...you ought to just in my opinion, you ought to just go and delete all of those texts as an act of repentance for ever using God's name in such a casual way.

So we come to Christ, we recognize our guilt in these matters and we ask him to forgive us, we ask him to cleanse us, we ask him to sanctify our tongues so that we would speak of him in a proper way. If I can step outside our church building for just a moment and to illustrate this, you know, this goes to pulpits as well, you know, and I'm just thinking of the, you know, the Super Bowl of preaching that happens down the street when the Super Bowl time comes, and this lighthearted engagement about preaching takes place as competing pastors preach and do different things and try to entertain their audience this way. Do you understand what a great disregard that is of the holy name of God for things to be treated like that in such a casual flippant way? This is not the way that God or his word are to be regarded. There is to be a reverence and a zone of holiness that takes place in this matter of our speech and so, you know, we come and we humble ourselves before God in it.

Now let me just say as a practical pastoral matter, you know, I'm not going to become the speech police for you, and if a word comes out of your mouth that, you know, if you say something flippant, you know, in a casual conversation, I'm not going to rebuke you on the spot on that and become that kind of a pain in your neck that makes me someone that you don't want to be around. It's not like that, rather this is a matter for each one of us to contemplate, to meditate upon, to take before God and say, "God, make the way I regard Your name to be holy. Help me that the way that I use Your name would be reflective of the great honor and majesty to which it is due." That's what we're talking about. That's what we're trying to promote here as we address this matter of speech.

So we've addressed the matter of oaths, we've addressed the matter of speech, let's go to a third point here: the matter of life. The matter of life and this is where it expands even more. The matter of life. To name the name of Christ, to name Christ as your Lord, to take up his name, to use his name in a worthy way has implications for the way that you live. If you address Christ by the name of Lord, then do you realize that that has massive consequences for life? It calls you to obey him. It causes you to teach truth and to regard the way that you represent Christ not only in your words but with your whole of life, and Jesus made this all very very plain.

Look at Matthew 15 with me. Matthew 15 in verse 7. Jesus said, "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'" In other words, when the name of Christ is invoked in a teaching situation, the doctrines that must come out must be biblical, it must be what God has commanded, and a teacher, an instructor, even a father with his own children speaking in the name of Christ and saying this is what Scripture means, we're not at liberty to inject our own personal opinions about these things. It obligates us to teach truth, to teach what he has revealed. So a matter of false doctrine is invoked by the third commandment.

But let's go further. Turn over to Luke 6 with me in verse 46. Jesus says this, he invokes the use of his name and he says in verse 46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great." Jesus says, "Why do you call Me 'Lord'? You're using My name. You are using My name and yet you do not do what I tell you to do." In other words, the third commandment condemns all of our hypocrisy. It condemns all of our tolerated sin in our lives. It condemns all of those patterns of life that we do not repent of but that are condemned by the word of God. To call yourself a Christian and to call yourself and to call Christ Lord means that you are not at liberty to live like that. The third commandment convicts you of hypocrisy. That's the implication of it, it's the matter of life, and what we find is that that kind of hypocrisy and that inappropriate inconsistent use of the name of Christ is going to send many people to hell.

In Matthew 7:22-23, Jesus said, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Do you see the incomprehensible scope of this? These people claimed to have done miracles, these people claimed to have prophesied and to cast out demons in the name of Christ and as Christ responds to them, he doesn't challenge what they're saying. He doesn't challenge the facts that they claimed to that. He goes beyond that and says, "Look, you violated My name. Not everyone who simply uses My name is going to go to heaven. The ones who practice lawlessness, the ones who consistently violate My word, it doesn't matter what you've said or done in My name, the hypocrisy and the inconsistency shows that you were never Mine to begin with." Wow! This is breathtaking. It gives us a sense of how greatly God regards his own name that he warns us and convicts us that a hypocritical life lived in his name will face his judgment in the end. There is no other explanation for what Jesus says.

So while we can talk, you know, the way that we talk is addressed by this, the way that we live is addressed by this commandment. You know, I can remember long before I was saved having gone out and do what rebellious teenagers do on a Saturday night. I remember thinking, "Okay, now I've got to go to church in the morning and make up for this." So I went to church in the morning and did the church thing, you know, not recognizing, not understanding that that incident and that kind of pattern of living is cause for great judgment because of the way that it abuses the name of God. To live in sin, to pursue sin, to revel in sin, to glory in drunkenness and drugs and sexual sin and things like that and to engage in it, and then to, in your mind, to think, "Okay, I'll go on Sunday and I'll make up for it and I'll put on an appearance for the people of God." That's a great great sin against God. It's a great sin against his name because he sees it all. He's not deceived by the inconsistency that men are deceived by.

So this goes to the matter of life. This prompts us to genuine repentance. This prompts us to examine our hearts and to ask God to cleanse us and to change us. "God, change my tongue. God, change my life." The true Christian says, "I see it now, Lord. I come and I repent. I turn from it. I realize I've violated Your holiness and it grieves me to know that. So God, just work in my heart and help me. By Your grace, change me into what You want me to be because Your word has instructed me that I have been on the wrong path in this way and that way and going forward."

Fourthly, final point for this morning: the name of God affects the matter in which we pray and the matter in which we worship. Look over at John 14, the gospel of John, chapter 14. Jesus said in verse 13 as he addresses the matter of prayer, he says, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Then he repeats himself, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." Now most of us when we pray to one way or another, we're praying, we vocalize the name. I try to do it each time I pray from the pulpit. We verbalize the name of Christ, "In the name of Christ we pray," as a proper indication that we are coming to God in the merits of Christ and not in our own selves. Well, that has implications for the way that we pray. This commandment, if you are going to pray in Jesus' name, then it means that you need to be praying in ways that Jesus would approve of, that are worthy of his honor, that your praise and your petitions would be consistent with who he is.

That's the implications of praying in his name so that when you pray in Jesus' name, you ask for what he approves. How do I know if it's something he approves of? Is it biblical or not? Is it a biblical prayer that you are making? Your requests are to be consistent with his character. And let me get to something that convicts me and convicts all of us. If you are praying in the name of Christ, praying in the name of that holy and awesome one, don't you see, do you see how our careless praying when our minds are wandering away, when we're not really engaged in prayer, we're not thinking about what we're saying, we're just using mindless repetition as Jesus condemned in Matthew 6, by the way, don't you see that this careless half-hearted praying is not worthy of his great name? It's not worthy of the cross? It's not worthy of the resurrection? It's not worthy of the ascension? It's not worthy of his continual intercession at the right hand of the Father? If you're going to invoke the name of God, then how do we pray in such a lifeless, indifferent, erratic, inconsistent way if we're praying in his name? How can that be? How can that be? We're so used to doing it that we're numb to the way that it is a violation of the holy name of our Savior.

God tells us to deal with his name seriously. The theologian from the 19th century, Robert Dabney, in his lectures says this, "Among these abuses may also be classed all irreverent uses of sacred Scripture, all heartless and formal worship whether by praying or singing, all irreverence during worship, and all casual uses of His name and attributes." Now look, I realize this is all very convicting. We need to embrace the conviction. You and I, we need to embrace the conviction. It's a good thing for us to be humbled by the word of God. It's a good thing for us to realize where we fall short of his glory and to respond in repentance, and respond with a prayer for grace that the Lord would change us and to conform us more closely to his image. I realize this isn't the most comfortable thing to

hear. Maybe it will give you a modicum of sympathy for what it's like to study this over a period of a few weeks and to have it raining down on my own head in the conviction that it brings to me. You know, we're all convicted by this. We all fall short of God's glory on this commandment alone.

Now what are we to do with that, then? Well, the law is given to us so that we would go to Christ. The law has become our tutor, Galatians 3:24 says, in order to lead us to Christ. And for the believers here with me here this morning, what this means for us is that we go to him with two confessions. 1. We go and openly confess, "I didn't even realize how far short I fell just of the third commandment. If only the third commandment was in the Bible, I would be condemned and crushed eternally because I have not lived in a way and I have not spoken and I have not thought, I have not worshiped in a way that is consistent with the greatness of Your name. Guilty as charged. Guilty as convicted by the word of God, O Lord, and I confess that before You humbly without any excuses. I just humble myself before You and acknowledge it all to be true."

So there's this matter of confession and then it brings us back to a sense of dependence, and we realize something more, we have a new insight, a new perspective on the significance of the cross. When Jesus bore our sins in his body on the cross, among many many other things he was doing, he was dying for our repeated violations of the third commandment. He was dying so that all of our false use of God's name would be washed away and cleansed away from us. After going through God's word in such a quick overview kind of way here today, at least we have some kind of indication that that's a really significant thing that he did; to cleanse us from all of our violations of the third commandment with his shed blood is a great sacrifice that he made.

But going further, one of the things about Christ that's true is that he never violated the third commandment. He kept it perfectly. There was never a time once where he used the name of his Father in an unworthy way. There was never a time once where there was a measure of inconsistency between his life and what he taught. There was this perfect symmetry, this perfect harmony. Everything about his life was in full compliance with the law of God. It's stunning to think that someone walked on the earth that was that righteous. We magnify him for his intrinsic righteousness, for his perfect obedience to the law of God, and then we realize that his life and his death was a gift that he was making. He was doing that on our behalf. He fulfilled the law of God on our behalf. He paid the penalty of the law of God on our behalf so that we might be able to stand before God in his righteousness, not our own. And that is the gift of God to everyone that believes in Christ by faith alone. Justification, righteousness before God is a gift from him. It is not something that any of us have ever attained to or ever could. We are humbled before this, humbled before the law, humbled before the cross, humbled before Christ with the outcome being that we realize that for all of our sin, Christ is the one who has dealt with it and with genuine reverence, with genuine regard, we say, "Oh, praise His holy name, that He dealt with my sin in a way that I never could."

So what do we walk out with today? We walk out recognizing our need to repent and ask forgiveness from Christ. We rest again. We are renewed, we are refreshed, we are glad to

know that his death covers even the way that we have taken God's name in vain. We're humbled and yet confident at the same time and then we walk out with a renewed consideration, a renewed commitment to set his name apart in your heart so that you are pained whenever you hear it taken in vain.

Let's pray together.

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. We pray that in our speech, in our thoughts, and in our lives, You would find a desire in us to honor Your name of which You are so greatly worthy. Father, for the Christians that have been convicted here this morning, I pray, Father, that Your Spirit would work in them not to dismiss the conviction but to deal honestly with You before it, and to repent and then to receive and rest in the shed blood of Christ in the forgiveness that our Lord has purchased for us. Father, for the unbelievers that are here with us today, we pray for them, we pray that they would see how much Your law condemns them and that You would use that sense of conviction and urgency to lead them to Christ to cry out for mercy from a gracious Savior who is willing to forgive but, Father, must be approached on His terms. So we commit these things to You with gratitude for all that You've done. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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