

of our least concerns, and on account thereof without even realizing it, there is so much violation of this third commandment of God.

Do you want help keeping the third commandment? Isn't it true when that is our attitude, it is a great help by itself in keeping this holy law of God? Likewise, when it is not our attitude, it leads to repeated and most offensive violation of this holy law of God? Be sure to be wanting help in keeping this commandment of God daily and in worship too, and let us pray God constantly that this commandment be truly and increasingly obeyed in all our life.

As we conclude now this first part of our message on the third commandment ask yourself if you can identify with the words of a song based on Psalm 111:

"O give the Lord wholehearted praise,
To Him thanksgiving I will bring;
With all His people I will raise,
My voice and of His glory sing.

From Him His saints' redemption came;
His covenant sure no change can know;
Let all revere His holy Name
In heaven above and earth below.

In reverence and in godly fear,
Man finds the gate to wisdom's ways;
The wise His holy Name revere;
Through endless ages sound His praise."

Praise be to the Lord when this is your Christian attitude before God's third commandment, and when this is what you desire and pray your attitude truly will be. Next time we will hear more about this third holy commandment of God: "*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain.*" Amen."

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



THE THIRD COMMANDMENT [1]

Continuing with our series on the Ten Commandments which you find written in the Bible in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, we have before us now the third commandment of God which states, "*Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*" Is this commandment of God one you also seek to obey with all your heart and soul and mind and strength? Are you wanting help, needing help, finding help, and reflecting help in keeping this holy law of God?

God's true people are lovers of God's law and are committed to keeping all the law of God. Is that true of you too? Do you believe that sin against all the commandments of God, especially now also this third commandment, is something very serious and so offensive to God not only, but so weakening in our witness to others? As we study the commandments, is it your prayer, as expressed in Psalm 119:33-35 for instance, "*Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight.*" Isn't that the Christian attitude we all should have?

Speaking of attitude is it not true that the third commandment is all about what your and my attitude before God should be? Our attitude before God Triune, the Lord God of the Bible, the one only true God, the God of all creation, the God of all providence, the God of all salvation, should be one of awe and reverence and respect and devotion. Never are we to think lightly of God the Lord, or act carelessly and disrespectfully and irreverently before Him. God is so great and glorious and so majestic and almighty, so supreme and so high and holy, that always in coming before Him, and in speaking of Him, and in all of life before Him, we are to be living in awe and admiration and adoration and acclamation of Him. We were made ever to glorify God, and the third commandment is calling for this mindset, this heart attitude from you and me, especially as those who confess belonging to Him and wanting to live to His praise.

The third commandment focuses on God's Name and names. But why this focus on God's names? The Bible makes clear throughout that God's names are actual descriptions of Who He is and what He is all about. God is His names, you could say. Any misuse of His name in thought, word, or deed is an assault and an insult against His Person and His works. In the

Westminster Shorter Catechism with the question (54), 'What is required in the third commandment?', the answer given is: "*The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's Names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works.*" And what is forbidden in this commandment as taught in Question & Answer 55 of that same catechism "*is all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes Himself known.*"

The third commandment is about our attitude towards God and everything about Him expressed especially also in the revelation of His Names. Psalm 8 begins with the words, "*O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth!*" Psalm 145:1-3 states: "*I will extol Thee, my God, O king; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy Name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.*" Do you have this same holy, respectful, humble, loving attitude before God and all that He is about and all that He has done and is still doing? What is your attitude towards church? What is your attitude with the Holy Bible? What is your attitude with singing God's praises? What is your attitude towards God's names, His works, and His ways? Is your attitude and mine, "Oh God, let me praise You in everything and in no way at any time in anything at all bring discredit and dishonor to Your great and holy Name?" Is that what lives in your heart too?

Do you know the prayer so related to this commandment, "Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name"? Yes, hallowed be Thy Name, that is, [as the Heidelberg Catechism explains about this petition in Question & Answer 122], "Grant us, first rightly to know Thee, and to sanctify, glorify, and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which Thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and truth are clearly displayed, and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words, and actions that Thy Name may never be blasphemed, but rather honoured and praised on our account." Is this your heart attitude before God and others in regards to the third commandment? Isn't this the testimony of God's true people, when it is well with our soul?

"*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 us study this holy law of God focusing on the theme, Helps against taking God's Name in vain. With this theme I am addressing God's people and how to live in accordance also with this holy law of God, giving four helps in keeping the third commandment: wanting help, needing help, finding help, and reflecting help.

One big help in keeping God's law, especially now the third commandment, is wanting help. What I mean by this is, really caring to keep God's law and realizing in your mind and heart how important it is that we do so. Behind this point of wanting help is the urgent question, 'Do you really care that God's Name be not taken in vain by yourself or by others? If you

don't really care about God's Name being blasphemed and His being dishonored in so many ways, you are not going to be concerned to live by this commandment and you won't be wanting help then either in living by this law. Do you want help in keeping the third commandment of God in your life in your situation, in your worship?

The fact is that the third commandment is often transgressed and broken because people are not caring about it. To live by this law is the least of their concerns. Is it a concern for you to use God's Name rightly and not to use His Name in vain, that is emptily and fruitlessly, and carelessly and thoughtlessly? Is the dishonor of God's holy Name and Being in your own life and with others something that truly bothers you? Or can you shrug it off as no big deal? Is it true that you have not so much respect for God's Names and His being, nor His Word? Could it be that others show more respect and regard for their false and idol gods then you do for the one true God and for the Bible and His worship? Others take off their shoes going into their empty temples or into those temples full of lifeless idols, but you don't think twice about coming into God's holy presence in worship, and in living before the Holy One, the Most High and lofty only living Almighty God? If you live mostly unmindful of God, you won't want to keep the third commandment for it won't be on your mind!

A help in living by the third commandment is wanting so to live and realizing something is seriously wrong when you don't want this above all. More than any earthly treasure or pleasure, do you want to keep God's law, and are you wanting help in the keeping of this third commandment too, not just for yourself but also for your loved ones and those around you as well? Is God so important to you that you want help that He and His Name and works be rightly remembered and honoured and praised every day by you yourself first of all, and then by so many others as well? Do you care enough about God that you want help in this matter?

Or could it be that you and I have come to accept that God's Name is dishonored by so many and in so many ways? Could it be when you hear God's Name misused in the way of swearing and cursing, or when you observe it misused in careless and thankless and heartless worship that you just shrug it all off? Or does it hurt you and pain you, grieve you and make you cry and weep before God that His Name not be dishonored by yourself or by anyone of us. Do you want help in the keeping of God's third commandment in reference to self and in reference to others?

A big help in the keeping of the third commandment is wanting help that it be kept and having a sanctified tender conscience and consciousness that God's Name not be taken in vain. Do you have this sanctified, tender conscience and consciousness that God's Name not be taken in vain? Is there a danger in our times that we have lost respect and awe for God's holy Name, and we don't think about nor worry about not taking God's Name in vain? Is there a danger that even in Christian worship this has become one