

3rd Commandment Honoring God's Name

Let us turn to our Bibles to Psalm chapter 105. Psalm 105 verses 1 through 5. Let us listen intently to the Word of God. O give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing psalms to him, talk of all his wondrous works, glory in his holy name. Let the hearts of those who rejoice, who seek the Lord, seek the Lord in the strength, seek his face evermore. Remember his marvelous works which he has done, his wondrous and his judgments of his mouth.

Let us pray. Gracious God above, you have done marvelous things for your people in history and here and now as we are part of that unfolding history. Until Christ returns, that we would give thanks to your name on high, God.

Call upon your name to make known your deeds, deeds of providence, deeds of creation, and deeds of redemption among the peoples, among the world, among the redeemed in particular. That we would remember, recall, and meditate upon your marvelous works which you have done. The things that you have presented and given and granted us, God, wonderful blessings for our soul and for our body.

And these, God, as we will see, fall under the third commandment. All things in which your name is attached, which is more directly honoring upon you and related to you, God Almighty, we are called to take care and to do and to use properly and always with honor and love towards you. Help us in this regard, we pray, in this day and age which does not take the first table of the law seriously in so many ways.

Therefore, we have many bad examples around us and bad influences upon us. Strengthen our resolve, we pray, and give us more of your spirit. Amen.

I don't think I need to go into much detail to explain the age of defilement that we find ourselves in. Defilement of God's name, God's institutions, God's attributes, God's works and wonders. It's simply there in the media, the books, advertisements, and unfortunately it has affected the churches at times.

We struggle. The church is never going to be perfect this side of heaven, but that can sometimes be the worst for it. We have action figures of Christ.

As you recall, I've mentioned this before because I just can't get it out of my head how terrifying that is. It's terrible. You run across this, you see it at a Christian bookstore as though Jesus is just a game to these people and to children and is not.

It's a flippant use of God's Bible and gospel truths for as well or other examples within the church besides the obvious flagrant examples outside the church. Well, let me continue here into the text, simply dividing it up the easiest way. What is forbidden in the third commandment and what is commanded in the third commandment.

What Is Forbidden in the Third Commandment

And we will get to the text more particularly in the second points because it gives us more of the positive here to give thanks to God and to remember his marvelous works. This falls under the third commandment. What is forbidden in the third commandment? This is the Shorter Catechism question 55.

The third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes himself known. That's pretty broad. The classic passage, of course, is 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.

And, of course, as a commandment it is short and to the point, doesn't give a lot of detail. You find the rest of detail from the rest of the Word of God and moral reasoning and connection therein, as we'll see here in going through the text. And we understand therefore when it talks about the name of God it's not just the name of God as such, although it includes that, the word God or Jehovah or Adonai or Jesus, Holy Spirit, those are his names, but anything he has his name attached to whereby he makes himself known.

Because clearly a name is by which he makes himself known, isn't it? And so that is, in other words, a part of the whole is one thing of many things in which God makes himself known, but it's the most obvious thing, his name. His name on high. Now when it says you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, what does it mean by vanity, emptiness, uselessness, false, unreal, worthless? Or perhaps we would say a trivial thing, a little thing.

In short, taking God's name in vain refers to a range of improper actions, attitudes, and words from flippancy, abuse, misuse, blasphemy, cursing, or manipulation of the Lord's name, the Lord's works, the Lord's word, like his laws we'll see. If you think about it, it makes sense because we reflect this in our own lives. We think of ourselves with respect to a good reputation and that's proper in its place, and that we don't want people, what, bad-mouthing our good name.

And it's a similar thing here. Who he is and the things that he owns should not be taken so lightly, any more than we want people taking our mother lightly or her name in vain and turning her into a joke, for example. The same thing on a whole other level when it comes to God, a whole other level.

Profanity, so I'll break it down here, profanity of God's name as such, the name of God properly speaking. Leviticus 19.12 is one of the classic passages we can go here. And you shall not swear by my name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of the Lord your God.

I am the Lord, that is, I am Jehovah, I'm the covenant-keeping God. So you shouldn't swear by my name falsely and lie in the name of the Lord or have false oaths and the like, or profane the name of God. Matthew 5.33 is the New Testament equivalent.

In Matthew 5.33, again, you have heard it said, to those of old, you shall not swear falsely, but you shall perform your oaths to the Lord. But I say to you, do not swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is footstool, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. So between the time of the Old Testament, the giving of the law there in Exodus, coming out about 1250 BC to the time of Jesus, they had developed a history of manipulating and using God's name, as well as God's ordinances and God's

institutions, such as the temple, the throne, the earth, or the footstool, to swear by those things, and swearing they have actually broken the third commandment.

And we know this because Jesus says this. This is what he's critiquing here in the Sermon on the Mountain, Matthew 5, that they were swearing by heaven, or God's throne, or the earth, for it is his footstools, nor Jerusalem. And they would give these oaths, but they weren't real oaths.

They just sounded real pious. They had no intention at all to fulfill these words. You shall not swear falsely, but perform your oath.

And I say, don't swear at all. What he's saying, don't swear the way they're talking about swearing here, because we know Jesus swore. That is, he gave an oath.

Paul did the same thing, as well. When you were children, you probably, although I think it's probably dying away generation after generation, did this, right? Sure, I'll pick you up today. You hide it behind your back.

Remember that? Yeah, I'll pick you up today at three o'clock. It was okay to lie, because this was your exception. And that's the kind of game the Pharisees were playing when they swore to Jerusalem.

They swore by heaven above, because they knew they were playing this kind of a game. And Jesus called them out for it. A rank violation of the third commandment.

Or, swearing to false gods, instead of the true God. Jeremiah 5, 7, your children have forsaken me, and sworn by those that are not gods. So, giving an oath, the equivalent today would, I guess they still give an oath in some places, maybe small counties in the name of God, I swear before the Bible, that's God's, his name's on the Bible, isn't it? You don't have to use God's name, but the Bible is there.

And you make an oath. You better uphold it, and it shouldn't be in the name of the Koran. Remember that? I guess it was 13, 14 years ago in Michigan, they did that.

And it was a big scandal. And now it's just, oh hum, that too is wrong. Profanity, or profane the name of the Lord.

See that word there, Leviticus, I think it was 19, I had earlier. Yeah, 1912. To profane the Lord's name, to desecrate, to pollute, to defile, all those sound a little, I suppose, abstract.

The best way to think of it is to take as common. To defile in the Old Testament sense, when they're talking about defiling the altar, and defiling the temple and the priesthood, is to take it as a common thing. Not a special thing made by God, given to you, and used for him.

Which is what the altar obviously was, and the sacrifices in the temple, for example. Those are things he put his name on, he literally gave them to us. And he said you need to use these for proper worship back then, and use them aright.

And part of the using aright is here in the third commandment. Flippantly using God's name as a crude curse word is an obvious no-no here. It's got a logical language as well.

Common curse words of creational facts, for example. And you get that, if you realize here in Matthew 5, where he says that they swore to heaven. That sounds a little more divine.

It's not a good oath. It wasn't really a binding oath in the Pharisees' mind. But they also swore by Jerusalem.

A city. Something of the earth, is what I'm saying. And that was still wrong, or false.

It was a profanity and a false use of God's name attached to an earthly thing. But more, profaning or abusing anything of God. So it's not just his name, and attaching his name explicitly, but even implicitly, perhaps is the word we want to use here.

Larger Catechism, question 113. I'm not going to go through all of that. It's a long one.

What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment? The sins forbidden in the third commandment are the not using of God's name as it is required, and we just talked about that. And the abuse of it, dot dot dot, or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works by blasphemy, perjury, and the like. Misusing or abusing his titles, attributes, ordinances, and works.

That's a lot of things. The Bible is his works. The Ten Commandments are his ordinances for us.

And so misusing God's law, therefore, falls under the third commandment. When legalism comes into the church, and they add to the word of God, or they manipulate the word of God, whatever you want to call that, maybe it's antinomianism, legalism, or some combination thereof, in playing with God's commandments and holy word, is a violation of the third commandment. They may not say anything with God's name on it.

They may not swear on his name, but it's something where obviously his name is there. It's his. He owns it.

And he's given it to us. Misuse of the Sabbath day and things like that. Intentionally misapplying it, for example, for selfish gain or protecting yourself from the consequences of your sin.

Aren't you supposed to love one another? That's one of the things you hear me bring up now and then, because I run across it so often. And of course, you can go the other way with it as well. Isaiah 5.12, and the harp, and the viol, and the tambourine, and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.

And so these things, of course, the music here, and the wine, and the feasts, are good in themselves, but unfortunately they're not honoring God therein. They have not regarded the work of the Lord, that he was behind the blessings they had, and being able to have these festivities, and having the wine, and using of the musical instruments, nor consider, the text says, the operation of his hands, of his wondrous works for us. That too is a violation of the third commandment.

And today, of course, it's not just harp. I don't think many of us have harps at home. Perhaps you have a guitar, maybe a piano, a computer, a car or two, and the like.

Do we consider that these come from God, and they are works of his providence for our good? And so we should use them aright, and not flippantly. We should use them properly for God's glory, and not for our own selfish gain. We should regard them as a blessing from him.

To honor what someone owns, in other words, is to honor the owner. When you key my car, I take it personally. We just all do, it's how it is.

And, of course, if you steal my car, it's even worse. But this is just one step away from that, and we recognize something here by analogy, moral analogy, because we're made in God's image. And it's the same with God.

If you're flippant with his word, if you're flippant with his name, and his church, and you regard it little, a little regard, you curse it and the like, we should not like that. What are you doing attacking my fellow Christians, and the fellow pastors, and brothers and sisters in the Lord, and God's institution, and mocking his preaching, and mocking Christians? Our name is not what's important. It's God's name, and God's name on us, and on his institutions, and his church, and the like.

If you trample on someone's garden sometimes, you tell a joke about someone's mother, you'll find out real fast. It's not just the person, it's things that they're attached to, and they put their name on. Other examples, people violate this by breaking their oaths, of course.

I touched upon that earlier in Leviticus 19, and vows before man. What do we have in particular in America? Unbiblical divorce from the 60s onward, went rampant. Doesn't matter if it's legal, it's still morally wrong if there's not a biblical grounds for it.

You can legalize murder all you want, it doesn't make murder wrong, or right in that case, it makes it absolutely wrong. Because marriage was what? Instituted directly by God himself, in the garden. You two were together, you have no one else, this is how it's designed, you're gonna have kids, they're gonna grow up, they're gonna have families.

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers, God will judge, Hebrews 13.4. What I'm saying is, violating this is also violating the third commandment. Because it's an institution and an ordinance of God to give marriage to the world. And it's not a dirty thing or something to be joked about, in fact.

And so, you have all those sitcoms in which the marriage is being mocked, the father's being mocked, the mother's being mocked, and the kids and the like, and everything's topsy-turvy, thrown up on top of its head. Those are people, this world, destroying and going after and undermining what God has given us, marriage. Jokes about heaven, or the last judgment we ought to be careful about.

People violate this third commandment as well, with respect to prosperity or poverty. Proverbs 30, verse 9, lest I be full and deny you and say he was the Lord, or lest I be poor

and steal and profane the name of my God. And so your economic status, your social circumstances may sometimes be used towards this sin of profaning God with your actions.

Because in the case of Christians and believers in the Old Testament, the world knows that you're followers of Jesus, and how you're acting, you're acting in a profane manner, perhaps. Families and like, and the churches in this world, in America, and that reflects badly upon God, to put it this way. Profaning God's name, here by being poor and stealing.

Or on the flip side, being full and deny you and say he was the Lord. We see this where in the book of Hosea, I stopped Hosea to go into other commandments because Hosea talks a lot about the second commandment, the first commandment, and now hopefully you see now it's also talking about the third commandment, isn't it? Because when they take the ordinances of God, the sacrifices and the holy days, and misuse them, they're violating the third commandment as well. Because his name is upon those items.

Flippant, irreverent proclamations of God's truth when you commercialize, I hope you understand what I mean by commercialize, when you make common what is holy, and you turn it into a game, you turn it into a Star Wars, stylized Star Wars, may the force be with you, may the Holy Spirit of God be with you, and use Darth Vader's voice or something, it's just, what is this? You're trivializing it, we understand what that is, but trivializing it, making it a little thing, this is another common exciting action thing you can do on Sunday now, just like any other events in the nation here, but rather it's a holy and a special time before the Lord our God. I'm not saying you can't advertise, I'm just saying you've got to be careful and not make it a trivial commercialized thing to make it common. And one thing you'll notice here, if you go through the Old Testaments, lots of places talk about what? The name of God, the name of our Lord, and so that should bring up to your mind the third commandment over and over again, and the third commandment, of course, it's about honoring God and honoring God, the things that God has given us, his church, his preaching, the prayers, not just the pastor's prayer, but you're praying before God, you do it properly, and not, you know, slipshod and half-hearted while you're half-asleep, although if you have to pray, you pray, I'm not saying don't stop, but preferably you should be alert and praying before God and asking for a proper heart attitude especially.

That's the third commandment, the use of the things that he has given us. You can find it all over and use most of the passages of the Old Testament. I talked about natural law and instituted law.

Instituted law is what? You have the temple, God's like, I'm not instituting that anymore, that's merely based upon my good pleasure, and my good pleasure is we're done with that. And so that makes it easy, you can go to the Old Testament and from that rubric and say, I don't have to worry about the temple, but what I see going on in the temple still teaches me the importance of honoring God and what? His ordinances. What he's given us today is baptism, the Lord's Supper, preaching, that's still the same, in fact, in both Testaments, the church and the like, the Lord's Day.

And so you can go to the Old Testament and those passages in the Old Testament and say, these are still for me today. I can still learn from them, because the third commandment has lots to teach us as I'm going through here. So that's the negative, let's go to the positive.

What is Required in the Third Commandment

What is commanded in the third commandment, the second point? Question 54 of the Shorter Catechism, what is required in the third commandment? The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works. And this is where I have Psalm 105. Psalm 105, verses 1-5, O give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, and sing to him, glory in his name.

Seek the Lord, verse 5, remember his marvelous works which he has done, his wonders and the judgments of his mouth. So there you have clearly things that God has done, so they are not God himself. He has done creation, he has made the things in this world around us, he has done redemption, that is he has saved us and delivered us and given us the body of Christ to be united with and in through baptism.

Those are his wondrous works for us. So they are not him proper, but they are closely related to him, that's the third commandment. The things that he owns is probably another way of saying it.

Works, providential preservation of Israel. Miraculous works as well, the wonderful things that we see of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Of his word of judgment from his mouth, verse 5. Not just his wonders, and this is great, the long suffering, the mercy, the patience of our Lord and Savior upon a stiff necked people, but also his judgments of his mouth, the end of verse 5. Which is what? His teachings.

Judgments there doesn't always mean a bad thing, that God is going to sit there and gut the gavel. It also means statutes, ordinances, law often. Just very, we have English words like that are context dependent.

And so here being a poem, it's going to be very flexible I'm sure. The judgments include the things that God has given us in his revelation. And these fall under the third commandment.

And we ought to rejoice in these things, to remember, to meditate, and to think highly of what God has done for us and given us these good things that we may worship him accordingly. And so the third commandment is about that which comes from his hand with his stamp upon it. And how we ought to therefore properly use them in our heart and our actions.

How would you like to be honored? Or your parents? Or the truth of freedom and peace? We cringe when people what? Trample the US flag. Or speak ill of our history, of our family tree. How much more for God's way and God's works, God's word, and God's ordinances.

We want to stand up and defend them, and defend God's word and his glory. How to wholly use God's name, titles, and attributes. Speak the truth about God to our neighbors.

That's pretty straightforward. God has blessed us and blessed you. I doubt that you're running around lying about God.

I'm not saying that you're lying when you don't speak. Sometimes you don't say anything. That's fine.

But when you do speak, you're going to speak the truth. That's the spirit of God working in you. Explain to our children how God is holy and how cows are not holy.

We shouldn't be flippant in the descriptions of what God is and attach it to things of this world. Be careful to know God and his ways, to speak clearly of his word and his truth and not in a befuddled fashion. Living a life that does not blaspheme God's name, the larger catechism uses the phrase, holy profession and answerable conversation there in the larger catechism in which we are to reflect and not blaspheme God's name by our life.

Why is that? I mentioned it before. Because his name is on us. It's stamped upon us in baptism and upon our soul by regeneration.

1 Peter 2.12, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they observe, what? Glorify God in the day of visitation. Not glorify you, but glorify God because they recognize we are what? God's people. His stamp is upon us.

We are his. And so our lives fall under the third commandment by having a holy profession and an answerable, that is a proper conversation. They don't mean talking, right? The old word conversation you'll see in the KJV means life, the way you live, your conduct reflects upon God, humanly speaking.

We ought to realize that. That's how it's related to the third commandment. To honor God with our possessions as well, he has granted us.

Proverbs 3.9-10, honor the Lord with your possessions and with the firstfruits of all your increase and so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. And so we honor the Lord by using the things he has given us in a proper way, part of which we turn and give back to him and his work in the kingdom of God. Honoring God's name also means turning to Jesus our Lord and Savior every day because we are called to a life of repentance.

This is a gift and what is the gift of repentance? What is the gift of faith? But a work of God in your life. And the third commandment is whatever he stamps his name on, whatever comes from his hand and faith and repentance and the fruit of the Spirit come from his hand. And so honoring God that way is to live a life of faithfulness.

More importantly, faith or belief and trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is to honor him and his name because the name above all names is our Lord God. But also honoring his worship in particular.

We are on the first table of the law. We must honor God's word by listening. And so we teach our kids to sit a little longer than normal, stretch them out.

That's how you stretch the body. You do a little more heavier weights. You run a little further and you get the kids to sit a little longer, a little quieter.

It takes time. It takes much patience, but that's our goal. You must honor God's worship by heartfelt attendance and not take it as just another burden upon us.

To honor prayer and the praise of God throughout the week and not just on Sunday. God has given us these ordinances, these means by which we honor him, prayer being one of them, reading the Bible, meditation, praise, singing psalms and songs and spiritual songs before him. It's not just on Sunday.

It's throughout the week, as occasion arises, in your car, in the evening before you go to bed, whatever works in your situation that way. Use it because God has given it to us and when we use it we must not do it drudgently, not do it half asleep, but our heart engaged in it because God is our God and we are his people. The use of his churchly ordinances in particular, such as the things that he has granted us by the particular ordinances of the sacraments and the like.

Malachi 1.6 we read, a son honors his father and a servant his master. If then I be a father, where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Says the Lord God unto you. O priest that despise my name, and you say, where in have we despised thy name? You offer defiled food on my altar, but say, in what way have we defiled you? By saying, the table of the Lord is contemptible.

And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Or offer it then to your governor, would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably, says the Lord of hosts? And so the first commandment teaches that God wants the heart, and the second commandment teaches us that he tells us how to properly worship him. The third commandment teaches us that he wants his ordinances respected properly as well and to be used aright. Here, of course, the priesthood and the altar, you're not supposed to give blind and the second best to the Lord and use it in a haphazard fashion or manner.

If, here, look at this, what natural law and way of thinking, a master and a slave, he starts out at the beginning, he fears his master and gives him proper honor. Here at the end, you're going to take these things and offer to your governor? Would you give him half hearted, no, you take him seriously, I'm going to give the best, I'm going to dress up the nicest, I'm going to act the best, it's going to be my best behavior before the governor. And here they are on their least best behavior before God.

And again, not just on Sunday, because you could do offerings as priests throughout the week, and they did, whenever we come before his presence, but not just that formal way of with respect to God, but just the rest of our life in general as well. We should be thankful to God for giving us the things for our spiritual good, that he has created all things for his glory, and that we get to participate in these things that come from his hand. For the preaching, in particular, and the teaching of the law of God and his word that he has blessed us with, for pastors come and go, but the word of God is here.

For the Lord's day that he has granted us, for simply who he is, the great I am, the provider of his people, brothers and sisters, these are all his works and wonders, and the things that he has granted us, and we ought to use properly and carefully, and with respect that they deserve, because they come from God's hand. He gets the greatest respect of all. Let us

honor God's name this week, brothers and sisters, as well as his word, his works, and his worship, standing boldly in his promises that he is working in us both to will and to do his good pleasure.

Amen. Let us pray. Indeed, Lord God, we are thankful that you have given us the Ten Commandments, because we would easily make excuses for what we know and what is written on our hearts.

Our God and Savior, may we examine ourselves again with respect to the Third Commandment. If we are too lackadaisical, if we are too indifferent towards your worship, your praise, your word, your works, and the like, God, help us, we pray, to move beyond that and to contemplate that these things have your name upon them in a special way to help us, God, and to point to you especially that we would honor you in all that we do. We pray these things by our Lord and Savior's mercy upon us.

Amen.