

Holiness (Part 1)

The Third Commandment

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It is not too hard for me to make a judgment as to what is the most common sin. What would be your choice of what the most common sin is? To me, it is idolatry; and I offer you as evidence that five commandments bear directly on the sin of idolatry. That is, the first, second, third, fourth, and also the tenth commandment as well. I think that the other four commandments can be brought into this in the spirit of the way that they are to be used and applied.

I want to focus on a commandment today that I feel is generally not understood by many of us. Those of us who do understand it, generally understand it only in its most obvious application. This is the commandment that deals with the quality of worship.

The first commandment deals with what we worship. We worship the great, awesome, Creator God who, in all of His majesty, rules as the Sovereign over His creation. The second commandment deals with the way that we worship. That is, we are not to worship by bowing down to something man has made (or even that God has made). We are to worship *in spirit and in truth*. The third commandment has to do with the quality of worship. It has to do with glorifying God!

We are going to begin this sermon in Isaiah 40, and go through a number of verses here. First of all, just so that you see who this section is addressed to, in verse 9 it says:

Isaiah 40:9 O Zion [which is the church], you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountains; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

Then comes a section that deals with a set of contrasts between this God and others, which people were worshipping. Also a series of questions are asked in order to stimulate our thinking in regard to the God we worship—and being able to see Him in some of His majesty. And we get down to verse 18, and the question is asked:

Isaiah 40:18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?

Have *you* thought about that lately? To whom then will you liken God? What is He like, to you? Then comes another series of expressions in regard to men who make idols. They go out, they cut down a tree, they carve an image out, and then they bow down to that thing. It cannot even speak. It does not think. It does not have any kind of life within it. Then, down in verse 25, he repeats the same question:

Isaiah 40:25-26 "To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing.

I think that it is obvious, from the second commandment, that God expressly forbids the making of any representation of Him. God is unique. There is nothing to compare with Him. There is no point of contact—no physical reference—to whom He can be compared; and that ought to show you and me the folly of making an idol (that is, of image-making).

But should we try to understand, try to learn, what God is like? God does not want us to be concerned about what He looks like. He tells us, in a general way, that we are made in His image; and that is enough. We might say that, generally, He looks like a man. And any time we might delve into something regarding what He looks like, we, being human, are going to begin to focus in on the wrong area. That is why He has hidden His form and shape. He does not want us to focus in on those things at all. He wants us to focus in on other aspects of what He is.

Does He want us to know what He is like? Well, the answer to that is absolutely "Yes." The entire Bible is a revelation of His mind, His character, His attributes, His offices, His power, His will, His promises, His plan, and His relationship with us. And it is these items that the third commandment is concerned about.

Let us go back to Exodus 20:7, where the commandment is written there, for you and me.

Exodus 20:7 "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."

This commandment, like the second, has a warning connected to it. "Guiltless," God says. Sometimes I think that God deliberately understates, as a subtle form of emphasis that ultimately—upon meditation—magnifies its meaning. Brethren, the penalty is death! "Guiltless" sounds soft; but the penalty for breaking the third commandment is the same as breaking all the others. It is death!

There are four words here that I feel need to be defined as to their usage. The first of these is "take." The second is "vain." The third is "guiltless." And the fourth is "name."

The first—*take*. Would you believe that throughout the Bible there are seventy-four different Hebrew words that are translated into the one English word "take"? But this one (that is used here) means to lift up, to bear, to carry, to use, or to appropriate. So, let us put that back into this commandment. *You shall not lift up, bear, carry, use, or appropriate the name of the Lord your God.*

How about the word *vain*? The root word has a sense to it that implies "desolating". It is that which is lacking in reality, in worth, value, or truth. Thus, it is translated in the Bible as lying, false, worthless, profane, foolish, reproachful, cursed, blasphemed, without purpose, useless—in

addition to "vain" or "vanity." *You shall not take, you shall not use, you shall not bear, you shall not appropriate, you shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God in a lying, false, profane, foolish, reproachful, curseful, blasphemous, useless way.*

Now, *guiltless*. This one is very interesting. It does not have many English synonyms. It means to be free. It means to be clear—implying clear of guilt. It means innocent. It means to be clean—either inside or out. It means to be blameless. It means to be unpunished. So, *you shall not bear, lift up, appropriate, use, or carry the name of God in vain—that is in a useless, purposeless, blasphemous, reproachful, curseful, lying, false, vain way. For the Lord will not hold you clean, or blameless, or innocent* (for someone who does that).

Now the word, *name*. We are going to expound on it a little bit more in depth. The root here denotes something that is high, elevated (as a monument). It implies majesty and excellence. It is a mark, or a sign, standing out the way a billboard does on a highway, or a neon sign does along the road. It is a mark, or a sign, standing out. It is a word by which a person, place, or thing is distinctively known. A name signifies, identifies—it specifies.

This commandment has nothing at all to do with proper pronunciation. The Jews got into a superstitious mode in saying that one should not pronounce the ineffable name of God. It has nothing at all to do with that! The application is much broader and deeper than that.

In biblical thought, a *name* is not a mere label of identification. It is an expression of the nature of its bearer. Indeed, there are some commentators who say that the Hebrews thought that a name had a life of its own—an existence of its own.

What I just said—that a name is an expression of the nature of its bearer—is something that you and I commonly use in the English language as well. All I have to do is say to you a name—let us say Jerry Lewis. Immediately, more than just a name comes into your mind. You begin to see a shape and a form. You begin to see a personality. You begin to see facets of that personality—good, bad, ugly, tall, short, thin, fat. We begin, maybe, to recall events in this person's life. Can they be trusted? Do they have integrity? Are they someone who is a liar? And on and on it goes. Color of hair. Are they bald? Do they have a lot of hair? The kind of clothing that they wear. The shoes that they wear, and the way that they walk. Instantaneously, facets of that personality begin to come into your mind. Friend or foe? Fear? Are they someone that you love and care for? Or, is it someone that you would rather not see very much of?

Now Adam, in all probability, named the beasts that God had pass before him by observations on their nature. Hence, by extension of that principle, to know the name of God is to know God as He has revealed Himself. That is, to know His nature—even as you would *know* someone whose name with which you were familiar. For example, Jacob means supplanter; and twice Jacob supplanted his brother Esau. And it is remarked in the Bible that Esau said, "These two times has Jacob supplanted me. [That is, in terms of the birthright and in terms of the blessing.] Is he not rightly named Jacob?" You see the name "supplanter" fitted his personality.

Again, in another place, when Abigail was appealing Nabal's case before David. Nabal means "fool" or "folly." And she said, "As his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him." Thus the Bible shows something that is very interesting, and maybe ought to jog something in your mind in regard to naming your children. The Bible shows that a name

exercises constraint upon a person to conform to the nature of the name. Very interesting proposition.

Again, in terms of *name* in Hebrew thought, "name" is inextricably bound with existence. Nothing exists unless it has a name. That is, the very essence of what this thing, or being, or person is concentrated in its name. Hence we see in the book of Genesis that, in Hebrew thought, the creation was not completed until Adam named the beasts. The opposite hand of this is that, on occasion, the Bible says, "I will cut off his *name* from Israel." That is the Hebrew way of saying that this person is no longer going to exist.

You begin to collect thoughts like this from the Old Testament and you apply it to a verse like Revelation 3:12, where the Philadelphians are going to receive three new names. That is, (1) the name of our God, (2) the name of the city of our God (Jerusalem), and also (3) as Christ says, our new name. So these names then, in connection with Revelation 3:12, designate the very existence, the nature, and the responsibility of those great beings who are going to be in God's Kingdom.

A change of name in the Bible indicates a change of character. Thus, Jacob (supplanter) becomes Israel (the prevailer with God). There was a change that took place there. Also, Saul (the destroyer) becomes Paul (the worker). There was a change that took place, and God showed the change that took place in the very nature of those men by changing their name to suit their new nature.

Similarly, to act or to speak in another's name is to act as the representative of that person and to participate in that name's authority. Thus, we are ambassadors for Christ. We are acting in His name; and we are participating in the authority of that name. Or, to be called by another's name implies ownership by that other person. The one bearing that name comes under the authority and the protection of the one whose name is called upon.

Remember the word "guiltless?" That is what it means. "I will not hold that person *clean*." The test of one's spiritual cleanliness is in how one uses the names of God. Do we use it in truth? Or, do we use it in vanity? What it indicates is that a person is better off being sincerely wrong, than to be a professing Christian and denying God's name by the conduct of one's life. That is a scary thought.

In Herbert Lockyer's book, *All The Divine Names And Titles In The Bible*, he lists 364 names and titles for Jesus Christ. And it is through His names and titles that God has chosen to reveal much about His attributes, His office, His authority, His prerogatives, and His will. Each name of God is given to set forth some distinct virtue, or characteristic, of His nature. So God has made known His glory—let us say, the glory of His nature—by and through His name, and it is not to be abused.

This commandment is certainly against common swearing—that is its most obvious application—and also the use of euphemisms. A "euphemism" is a good word, a softer word, an innocuous word, that is used in place of a harsher, less acceptable word in polite society. So we commonly grow up hearing words like "Gee." "Gosh." "Golly." "Cheese and rice." "Got all muddy." "Jiminy Cricket." "Doggone." Those are all euphemisms for God. I think that most of you are aware of that, and much of the public is aware of that. I have an article here from *The*

Chicago Tribune, that I cut out about five years ago, on euphemisms; and those people understood that those words were swear words for God—and that they ought not to be used.

But this commandment also covers the light or disrespectful use of *any* of God's attributes or character. It is this commandment—more than any other—which shows how much God is to be a part of every word, every act, and every attitude of His children.

In order to know David, God shows us, in His Word, David as a boy. He shows David as a shepherd. He shows David as a warrior, fighting Goliath. He shows David anointed as king but still under the authority of Saul. He shows David as king himself. He shows David as prophet. He shows David as poet and musician. Every one of these is an aspect of a very rich nature.

Now, God is manifold times greater than David; and He reveals Himself, as He revealed David, in much the same way. In all kinds of eventualities and circumstances, from Genesis all the way through Revelation, we have a revelation of the mind, the action, the character of Almighty God. That is, of His nature in any circumstance that might come up in anybody's life, whoever lives, for all of time, on this earth. God is revealed in His Word in the same way that David is revealed. And God names Himself what He is, even as He names people what they are—such as Jacob (supplanter) and Israel (the prevailer with God).

Psalm 8:1 O Lord, our Lord, How excellent [or, glorious] is Your name
in all the earth. You who set your glory above the heavens!

Or, as the *Soncino* (commentary) says: "You who rehearse Your majesty in the heavens." That is kind of interesting. We will get to that in just a minute.

Psalm 8:2-4 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have
ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the
enemy and the avenger. When I consider Your heavens, the work of
Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is
man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?

"*How majestic,*" David says, "*is Your name!*" The majesty of God is revealed in His creation, and one of His names is *Creator*.

Now put yourself in the psalmist's place. He is standing out, maybe shepherding a flock of sheep; and the starry heavens are making a beautiful canopy above his head—an awesome and spectacular showcase of the majesty of God! Night after night, this is rehearsed. As Psalms 19:4 says, "Their line has gone out through all the earth."

Every night we have the opportunity (except maybe here in "Smogville") to look up into those starry heavens and see a spectacular reminder of the greatness of the God that we worship. And it is rehearsed night after night. Day and night—on and on, year after year. And we have to wonder how often we stop to take this into mind, and put it into perspective, the way the psalmists did here.

What is also implied, in this same context, is that the same glory of that same God is equally

shown on the earth, as well. So we have, day and night, an awesome display of the power and the majesty of our God. What else do we see there, besides power and majesty? We see *order*. Awesome *beauty* that is constantly changing and shifting—so that no two sunsets are ever exactly alike.

We see *loving providence*, as He provides for His creation every day. Awesome *wisdom* as everything is balanced and in harmony—except where man has gotten things disharmonious. We see reason, and logic, and we see vastness of thinking—of this great God that we worship.

This psalm is intended to direct yours and my thinking toward the vastness of this God and His majesty as compared to the puny insignificance of you and me. And yet that great, awesome God has it in mind—it is His purpose—to glorify Himself in *us*. Yes, "out of the mouths of babes and infants." This is where that principle in I Corinthians 1: 26 comes from. God has called the weak of the world—to glorify Himself in. He has chosen that which is weak and foolish (by this world's standards) to come to appreciate and to respect the glory of God—the glory that is in His name.

Here in the first line of this psalm, God reveals Himself in two ways. (1) The first one is capital L-O-R-D. "Adonai" in Hebrew. It is roughly equivalent to the English word "owner." So He introduces Himself, in this psalm, as the *owner* of the heaven and the earth. And then (2) we have L-o-r-d. This is the very famous Yahweh—the YHVH. The one that is translated there in Exodus as "*I AM that I am*." It is interesting to put the emphasis in different places. "*I am THAT I am*." (Just to play with that, once in a while, is kind of interesting.) The "*I AM*"—YHVH. He is the one who has made a covenant—an agreement—with man. He is the Eternal One.

YHVH is connected to other nouns, in order to further describe His character to you and me. We have *Yhvh-nissi*, which means "God, my banner." That appears in Exodus 17: 15. It is intended to give encouragement. And it will appear in places where God is teaching that we need to be encouraged, by the context of what He is teaching us in that area.

We have *Yhvh-tsidkenu*, which means "God, our righteousness" or, "our Deliverer." It appears in Jeremiah 23: 6. *Yhvh-roi*, "God, our Shepherd"—the one who guides. That appears in Psalms 23: 1. There is *Yhvh-mekaddishkem*, "God, who sanctifies you"—the one who anoints. This appears in the Sabbath Covenant, in Exodus 31: 13. *Yhvh-jireh*, "God, our provider." It literally means, "the one who sees"—meaning that He is there in Genesis 22: 14. *Yhvh-ropheka*, "God, our healer," in Exodus 15: 26. And *Yhvh-shalom*, "God, our peace." He used that when He was with Gideon, in Judges 6: 24.

Turn with me to Psalms 23—this psalm that is supposed to be the most beloved of all pieces of the Bible. Most of us are not familiar with the very interesting fact that Psalms 23 is really a brief expounding of eight names of God. The names do not actually appear here; but in each verse—sometimes twice in a verse—the implication of God's name appears.

Psalm 23:1-5 The Lord is my shepherd [There we have Yhvh-roi. He is the one who guides.] I shall not want. [Yhvh-jireh, the one who provides.] He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. [Or, waters of peace. Yhvh-shalom. That is, He

is the God who gives peace.] He restores my soul; [Yhvh-ropheka, the God who heals.] He leads me in the paths of righteousness [Yhvh-tsidkenu. And He does that, what for?] for His name's sake. [His name, not ours. His—so that we can glorify Him.] Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [Yhvh-shammah. This is one that we did not give you before. It means, "He is there"—He is with us.] You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; [There are two of them there. Yhvh-nissi, the encouragement (the banner) and Yhvh-mekaddishkem, the one who sanctifies or anoints.]

Now, I have no doubt that the psalmist, David, was meditating on the names of God; and this is what came out. What he knew of the nature of God is this most beloved section in all of the Bible. And it is nothing more than a study of the names of God.

Psalm 18:1 I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

In the Hebrew, it is much stronger than that. It says, "Fervently do I yearn over You." Maybe that is a little too syrupy for those of us in this day and age. But that is what it says. "Fervently do I yearn over You!" And then comes a literal torrent of names of God. There are eight of them, right in a row.

Psalm 18:2-3 The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies.

David knew God's attributes as expressed by His names; and, thus, he conducted his life accordingly. He called upon the name of God. By faith, he trusted God to intervene in the affairs of men. He knew what God would do (i.e., what He could be trusted to do) by the way that God expressed Himself through His name.

Put this into a very simple illustration. You are doing things like this virtually every day with other human beings. If your car breaks down, you take it to the dentist? No, you take it to the person who has the *name*—auto mechanic. (Or, the person who has the reputation.) You call upon that person, when you are in need to repair your automobile. When your teeth need fixed, you do not go to the bank teller. You go to the person who has the *name*, the title, and the reputation of being able to take care of your teeth.

It is this same principle that is at work with God. By His names, He illustrates what He is skilled at doing; and not only skilled at doing, but what He will do. Sometimes the *name* will even describe the perimeters of His blessing, or the conditions that are imposed upon receiving the fulfillment of that.

So that is what David was doing here, in his prayers. He was calling upon God, as God had

revealed Himself by His names. And he would be confident—just as you would be confident in taking your automobile (or whatever it was) to the person who had the reputation of having the skill to be able to do that. You would call upon that person. That is what David did; and that is what you and I need to do. That is why you need to know the names of God. God is skilled, and God is willing to help. Through His names, He reveals what He is willing to do.

There is a very interesting episode that took place in the life of Moses, recorded back in Exodus 33 and 34. The context is right after that horrible incident with the golden calf. That was a terrible mark on the Israelites integrity before God. He was quite upset, and justly so, about what they had done; and He executed some punishments upon them.

Exodus 32:35 So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

In Exodus 33:1, God tells Israel to get up and go on—that He would send an angel; but He was not going to go with them. Well, this really shook Moses up; and Moses was really feeling down in the dumps regarding what had occurred.

Exodus 33:12-14 Then Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' [That is what God said to Moses.] Now therefore, I pray [I beg of you. I plead with you.], if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people." And [God] said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest [or, peace].

Exodus 33:17 So the Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.

He is telling Moses, "I know you inside and out. I know you intimately. I am not just acquainted with you, Moses. I know everything about you." And so Moses jumped at that.

Exodus 33:18-20 And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then [God] said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

Then God tells Moses to "stand in here, in this cleft of the rock."

Exodus 34:5-7 Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.

God obliged to Moses' request; but how did He do it? How did He show Moses His glory? He preached him a sermon on *His name!* I might change that and say, "He preached him a sermon on the third commandment." He expounded before Moses. And I say "expounded" here because I feel certain that all that we have is just the barest evidence of what God said—the notes, as it were, of what He talked about more fully. I am sure that He preached him a sermon on eleven names of God: Yhvh, El, the merciful being, the gracious one, the longsuffering one, the mighty one, the bountiful one, the true one, the preserver of bountifulness, He who bears away iniquity, and He who visits iniquity.

What He did before Moses was rehearse His nature. And that was so encouraging to Moses, because he knew then that they were not abandoned, that He would be with him because of what He is (what God *was*, and what God *is*). Not because Israel deserved in any way, shape, or form for God to be with them because every single one of them deserved to be dead! But because God is God, He would continue through with His purpose; and these names exemplified what He would be doing.

So God did not give Moses a vision of His majesty and power—but of His love, of His way of relating to His creation. The glory of God is the manifestation of His nature, of His character, of His way of relating to His creation—especially to His children. *His names are signposts of His nature.* They are reminders, to you and me, of what we can expect Him to do. That is why Moses was so encouraged.

Normally, one cannot see God. And, even when we read it in God's Word, what we read here was originally said in Hebrew; and it is translated rather vaguely into English. Now where does that leave you and me?

Matthew 11:25-27 At that time Jesus answered and said [a prayer, in the hearing of his disciples], "I thank You, Father Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. [Psalms 8:1-2] Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows [Remember that word "*knows*." We get to *know* David "inside and out" you might say. And we are to *know* the Father. So, it says no one *knows*?] the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

Here is where we stand. We cannot read Hebrew. And we are not so conversant with God (as Moses was) that we can even see His hinder parts and have Him speak to us face to face. But we do stand in the position of having God revealed to us by His Son, Jesus Christ. Now, how has He done that?

John 1:14a And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we behold His glory.

What did Exodus 33 and 34 say the glory of God is? It is the revelation of His nature. Certainly there is glory in a revelation of His power and majesty—if He should choose to do it, in Person. But, to you and me, that is not what He is interested in. He is interested in that we understand His nature. That we are conversant with it, that we perceive it, that we understand it, that we can act wisely upon it, and that we can call upon God because we understand His nature.

John 1:14b We behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

*The glory of God has been declared in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, did Jesus Christ come radiating beauty all over the place? Was there a heavenly aura about Him, a halo over His head? Did He glow like burnished bronze everywhere that He went, so that everybody could point out and say, "Hey, there goes God"? No. He did not do that. He revealed the glory of God by what He *did* and by what He *said*. And much of what He said is recorded in this Book—for you and me.*

John 14:5-6 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Tie that together with Matthew 11:27. Those who can know the Father are those who are having the Father revealed to them by the Son.

John 14:7-10 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."

It is through the life, the works, and the words of Jesus Christ that we come to know the names of God. Moses asked God to show him His way. "If you want to see what God is like, if you want to see the mind of God, if you want to see the nature of God, if you want to see God's whole attitude," Jesus Christ is saying, *look at Me!*" He is the way because of all of mankind who have ever lived, He is the only one who has intimate knowledge of the Father that is totally, completely, unmarred by sin. His vision of God is absolutely perfect and accurate.

Jesus Christ shows the way men should walk. Actually, I should not say, "should." The way men must walk. He shows us the direction, the manner, the method of doing things. The way to God lies in knowledge of the Son. This is exactly what Christ has done, in declaring the glory of the Father to mankind.

Let me illustrate it this way. If you are in a strange city, and you ask for directions to such-and-such a place—something like this is likely to occur. "Well, yeah buddy, I am not real familiar with this area around here either; but I think you go up here about six blocks, and then you turn right. You go another four blocks and on the right hand side you will see a brown stone church with a real high steeple on it. I think that right there you ought to turn left. Then you go another five blocks. Along the way, you will see the Post Office, and you will see the City/County building. And, along the way, there will be a gas station on the right hand side. When you go past that gas station about another hundred yards, I want you to turn right again. Then you go down three more blocks and turn left."

By this time, there is total confusion; and you do not know which way to go. You start on your way and then you say, "Did he say go right or left? Did he say six blocks, four blocks, three blocks, or two blocks? Did he say church or what?"

When you go to Jesus Christ and you ask Him the way, He says, "Come. Follow me. I'll show you." That is why He is *the way*. He shows us! It is not just in words. He shows us the mind of God, so that we know the *name* of God—because we see Him in all kinds of circumstances. As Jesus acted, so would the Father act. ("If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.") And so we have no excuse when we say that we cannot understand the Father, or that we cannot know God—that He is distant from us. How can I keep the third commandment if I do not know God, and I do not know His name? It is right there in the New Testament. We have been shown.

In addition to that, He *is* truth. There are people who can speak truth. They can teach us truth. I can teach you truth. Many others can teach you and I truth. But Jesus Christ *was* truth. He embodied it! Everything that He did and said was absolutely right on the mark—every time, without fail. No misleading, no shadow of turning. No time, at any time in His life, was there ever even the tiniest hint of deception about God, about what He is, or the way to go, or the way to do things. Everything is right on the mark.

That is important, because I could get up here and I could teach you things—let us say about geometry. Whether I am a man of integrity, of responsibility—and what my character is like—does not matter a great deal. It does not affect the mathematical truth of geometry. But if a person is going to teach you moral and spiritual and ethical truth, what that person *is* makes

all the difference in the world.

Would you like to receive a lesson on purity from an adulterer? There is an inborn resistance to that kind of thing. But it is awfully hard to refute and to find fault with the words of a person who embodies truth, and he is teaching truth—because you know that person is living it. Then those words carry weight and authority.

Let us continue to carry this thought out. In Colossians we will see that Jesus Christ was absolutely qualified to do what He did—to reveal the names of God.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

These are two of the strongest statements in the entire Bible about the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not only "equal to" God. He is God! Jesus Christ not only reflects God—He reveals God. He was not a mere statue—like the moon reflecting the glory of something else. He was a channel for it, completely and totally. Completely holy, He has the authority to judge the world. There is no clearer view anywhere of what God is like!

Now what did He do when He became a man? The full revelation of God, the complete expression of God in a human body—He is unique. He imposed upon Himself all the time and space limitations that are imposed upon all other human beings. He had every opportunity to waste time, to get drunk, to be a glutton, to get angry, embittered, depressed, upset, frustrated, to have headaches, to strike out at others. He had to work, just like other men did. He ran a business. He was a building contractor. Did He have to meet a payroll? Very likely. Did He have to make sure that people paid Him? Very likely. Did He ever have to deal with people who did not pay their bills? Very likely. He imposed upon Himself those kinds of things.

Maybe He even had the opportunity to be a brother-in-law to the wives of his brothers. He had to learn to live without a father in the family. Tradition says that His father died. At least, His father was not around when He was doing His preaching. He is not mentioned at all when Jesus was crucified. That gave Christ the opportunity to be the head of a family, as well, and to take care of a widowed mother.

He had the opportunity to live through the deaths of loved ones; and to face His own death, as well. And so, in Jesus Christ, we see God coping with life on the same terms as other men. And we are able to see the kind of character that God possesses. We are actually able to see it in actual, real life, every day kinds of experiences, if we will just dare to meditate on these kinds of things.

We can have firsthand information about how we ought to react in our situations in our life. We see God teaching. We see God healing. We see God laying down His life. We see God correcting in love. We see God patiently counseling.

With that in mind, turn with me to John 17. This is particularly interesting because it is that prayer of Jesus Christ for the church—for His disciples, for His church—prior to His crucifixion. It

is very interesting to see this, in the light of what we are talking about this day.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

John 17:6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

John 17:11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one [If we are going to be "one" with God, it is going to be through His name.] as We are.

Now drop down to verse 26. This is a recording of the last thing that He said to His disciples (before being crucified). He did talk to John while He was hanging on the stake, when He said, "Behold, your mother." But in a teaching situation, this is it.

John 17:26 I have declared to them Your name, [This was a final reminder, in a teaching situation.] and will declare it, [Notice. This is the reason it was declared.] that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Does knowing the name of God have anything to do with salvation? Or, to put it another way, does the third commandment have anything to do with salvation? It has everything to do with the quality of the way that we do things. And the quality of the way that we do things is directly attached to knowing the name of God.

Now back to verse three, just to touch on this—the Bible's definition of eternal life. You know that the Bible says that sin is the breaking of God's law. This is a strange definition: *Eternal life is to know God*. I think all of us understand that "know," biblically, has a sexual connotation to it; and what it is implying is experiential knowledge—not theoretical knowledge.

In Amos 5: 4, God through Amos said, "Seek Me, and live!" He is implying *eternally*. If we seek God, we will live. Now eternal life does not especially have to do with duration; because living the kind of life that God wants us to live is an enjoyable life. Just because one lives eternally does not mean that they are going to be enjoying life. Look at the demons. They are not enjoying an abundant life, though they live eternally.

When Jesus Christ says that *eternal life is to know God*, He is implying *a quality of life* primarily and *length of life* secondarily. He is implying that, if we begin now to know God, the abundant life already begins; and we begin to experience the kind of life that God lives—the only kind of life that is worth living eternally (that is, days without end).

We find then that this kind of life comes from an intimate relationship with God—implied by the word "know." Sexual connotations. Adam *knew* his wife, Eve; and suddenly she had babies. So eternal life comes about as a result of experience—intimate experience—of living with God.

Again, I ask the question, "What happens if you do not know anything about God?" That is partly what His names are for—that we might get to know Him. This that I am heading for is even contained in the Greek word "*aionios*" (translated here "eternal"). It has to do with quality. Eternal life is the life of God.

Did you notice how frequently Jesus (in this prayer) mentioned the name of God? Three times, He did. The name represents what Jesus Christ is revealing to us about God. This is how you come to know God—through what Jesus Christ has revealed about God. *We are kept by that name*: First, *by trusting in it* as David did, as in Psalms 18. When David was in trouble, when he had need, he went to God; and he named names of God that would indicate what God would do for him. And so *we will be kept, we will be guarded; we will be preserved by God because we know Him through the revelation of His name*. But it also implies *by obedience*—because of those names. Because we understand what those names mean, we are obedient to their nature—to their character—because they are showing what we ought to be following.

Psalms 9:9-10a The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You.

That is why Jesus said, "Keep them through Your name." Those who know the name of God will put their trust in His name. They will have faith in it; and salvation is by grace through faith.

Now let me drop something on you, here in Matthew 28:19. Everybody knows these verses. We sing them so frequently, in the hymnal.

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Did you catch what that says there? We have been baptized into *the name*. Brethren, since you have been baptized and you received God's Holy Spirit—now you bear that same name! That is your spiritual Family name—God!

Does that have any effect on the way that you conduct your life? Do you ever think that you bear *that name* around? No, most of the time, brethren, we think only of the name that has been passed on to us by our father or, the name that we have taken because we have become married. We are now immersed into the Family of God and we now bear the name of God. Even as a son physically bears the name of his father, we now have this spiritual family name.

Let us review just a second. The first commandment has to do with *what* we worship—the Almighty Creator. The second commandment has to do with *how* we worship. We worship in spirit and in truth. The third commandment has to do with the *quality* of our personal witness to everything that the name that we bear implies.

Proverbs 22:1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,

loving favor rather than silver and gold.

I think that we can speculate that this might be considered a person's most valuable asset. *His name!* That is, the name of God that we now bear, and of which the commandment says, "You shall not bear that name in vain." Now what are *you* doing to uphold the Family name? Are you guiltless? Are you clean in your bearing of it? What is your witness like before men? What is your witness like before God? These questions need to be asked—now that we know that we bear that name. What is the quality of your Christian life?

Proverbs 30:7-8a Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me....

Remember that word "vanity"? What does it mean? It means falsehood. It means lies—that which is lacking in reality, in truth.

Proverbs 30:8b-9 Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.

Let me read a poem to you. It's entitled "*Your Name*." Edgar Guest wrote it, some time ago. You might think of this spiritually, even though it applies only humanly.

You got it from your father.

'Twas the best he had to give,
And right gladly he bestowed it.
It's yours, the while you live.

You may lose the watch he gave you
And another you may claim,
But remember when you're tempted,
Be careful of his name.

It was fair the day you got it,
And a worthy name to bear.
When he took it from his father,
There was no dishonor there.

Through the years, he proudly wore it,
To his father, he was true.
And that name was clean and spotless,
When he passed it on to you.

Ah, there's much that he has given
That he values not at all.
He has watched you break your playthings,
In the days when you were small.

You have lost the knife he gave you,
And you've scattered many a game.
But you'll never hurt your father,
If you're careful with his name.

It is yours to wear forever.
Yours, the while you live.
Yours, perhaps some distant morning,
Another boy to give.

And you'll smile, as did your father,
With a smile that all can share,
If a clean name, and a good name,
You are giving him to wear.

Let us go to Romans 2:17, where I want you to think of yourself in this context.

Romans 2:17-24 Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You, who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.

We know that Paul was speaking to those Jews who were not yet converted. At least, I hope that they were not yet converted and that they have opportunity yet to repent of those things. But this makes it very plain that God's name is hallowed—or profaned—by our conduct. The third commandment is kept—or broken—by the same. This is the commandment that tests the quality of our witness.

You might want to write down Isaiah 43:6-12, because God shows us there that we are His witnesses that He is God. That connects directly to the first series of verses I gave you in Isaiah 40, where the church is supposed to say to Judah, "Behold your God." And we are His witnesses, that He is God.

Now here, in Isaiah 48, is something that is written to Israel; but I think that we can pick up the principle here.

Isaiah 48:1-2 Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah; who

swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness; for they call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is His name.

These people were standing in, that is, they were relying in, they were trusting in, the name of their bearers—both physically and spiritually. Physically, they bore the name of Israel. Spiritually, they bore the name of God. But God is complaining, here, that their actions did not live up to either the majesty of their physical or their spiritual names. This is a warning, I think, both to physical Israel and *to the Israel of God*, as the church is very plainly pointed out to be in Galatians 6:16. If *we*, who have taken (or bear) the name of God, use the name of God in any way that denies the true meaning, or character of God—we are either breaking the third commandment or coming awfully close to breaking it or, we are on our way to doing so. And it is interesting that the prophecies contain very much revelation along this line.

Ezekiel 36:16-18 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying: "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it.

You can begin to see the context. Ezekiel is speaking to people who are in captivity; and he is telling them *why* they went into captivity.

Ezekiel 19-20a So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. When they came into the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name.

God is complaining here that, even though He put them in captivity, it did not change them. Now listen to this next part and think of it in light of the church.

Ezekiel 36:20b When they [meaning their captors] said of them [the Israelites who were in captivity], 'These are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of His land.'

Anybody ever heard people say, "These are God's people, and they do things like that?" Is the name of God being profaned? Maybe.

Ezekiel 36:21-23 But I [God] had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's

sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

Yes, when they one day repent.

If we had the time, I could show you many verses where God shows the rewards that are going to go to those who glorify His name. Remember that we do that (i.e., break the third commandment) not just with what comes out of our mouth—swear words. That is just one small part of it. God is interested in the whole landscape of our witness for Him—the conduct of our lives in every area, and even our attitudes. Do they live up to, are they holding up the reputation of, the name, which we now bear?

I John 3:1-3 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

What John is doing here is calling upon these people to remember their privileges in *bearing the name of God*.

I mentioned earlier about thinking about what you might name your children. What made me think of that was that I read in a commentary somewhere that Chrysostom (who is one of the early church fathers) actually gave a sermon to people about what they should name their children. And he suggested in that sermon that they give their children the name of a great personage—especially, maybe, a great personage out of Bible. And tell their children (while they are small) about all of the deeds of that person, in order to encourage them to live up to that name, and to continue to bear it.

That is what John is doing here in 1 John. It is a gentle reminder to those of us who bear the name of God to purify ourselves and uphold that name. There might be what could be considered a paradox here. We think that, in order to know God, we have to see Him. In order to be like Him, we have to see Him. But God says, "*No*." He has not given us opportunity to see Him. And we are not going to "*see*" Him *until* He chooses to reveal Himself to us this way. Instead, God has chosen to operate His purposes *by faith*. He has revealed *what He is* (1) through a multitude of circumstances, and (2) through His names, and (3) especially by the life of Jesus Christ. And, *by faith*, He wants us to emulate Him by means of His Spirit. The *power* is there to do it.

Brethren, I feel confident that if we saw Him in the flesh (that is, our flesh—not His flesh). If we saw Him while we were still flesh and blood, either one of two things would happen. We would

be so over-awed by His holiness, by His purity, that we would just give up and quit right there. Or, our curiosity would be satisfied and we would give up even there. God's way is best. He knows what He is doing. He wants us to emulate Him and uphold His name through the revelation that is coming through Jesus Christ.

Psalm 34:1-3 I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.

Yes, brethren, Hallowed be His name.