

“How to Honor God’s Name”  
(Exodus 20:7)

I. Introduction.

A. Review.

1. When Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15), and “He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me” (v. 21), He meant our love for Him should move us to obey Him.
  - a. The essence of obedience, the essence of worship, what makes it real and honoring to God is love.
  - b. Obedience is showing God we love Him.
  - c. Worship is expressing that love to Him in word, song and deed.
  
2. But implied in what Jesus said is also the command or the way we are to show that love to Him: if you keep My commandments, you are loving Me.
  - a. The Lord wants that love directed a specific way.
  - b. It is the language of love He wants us to use.
  - c. The first commandment tells us to love Him by taking Him as our God alone.
  - d. The second tells us how to show Him our praise and thanksgiving in a way that shows our love for Him.

B. Preview.

1. This brings us to the third commandment: “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” (Exodus 20:7).
2. This shows us the third way the Lord wants us to show our love for Him.
  - a. Usually, we apply this only to not using His name as a swear word, and that’s true. But it means much more than this.
  - b. This commandment tells us not only that we should not take His name in vain, but everything by which He reveals Himself.
  - c. Looking at the opposite side of the coin, it tells us that we should use everything by which God reveals Himself in a holy and reverent way.
  - d. And it reminds us that the Lord watches over what we promise, especially when we take an oath or make a vow. When we do this, we need to make sure we fulfill it.
  - e. And this is what we’ll do, if we love Him.

II. Sermon.

A. So what are the things God uses to reveal Himself, to teach us about Himself that we are to treat as holy?

1. His names and titles.
  - a. Jesus said, “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name’” (Matt. 6:9).
  - b. The psalmist wrote, “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in holy array” (Ps. 29:2).

- c. Such as His name Yahweh/Lord: meaning the eternally existing One, the One who is.
  - d. Elohim/God: the One who is all powerful, who created all things.
  - e. Father: the One who brings forth and cares for His creation.
  - f. We must think reverently of His name, speak reverently of it, and do what we can to help others treat Him reverently.
2. His attributes:
    - a. These too are a revelation of who He is.
    - b. His infinity, eternity, unchangeableness.
    - c. Wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.
  3. His ordinances or commandments are a reflection of His moral uprightness.
  4. His Word: "I will bow down toward Thy holy temple, and give thanks to Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth; for Thou hast magnified Thy word according to all Thy name" (Psalm 138:2).
  5. His sacraments.
    - a. Baptism reveals His love of holiness and His desire that we be holy through His Son.
    - b. The Lord's Supper reveals His love for us by giving us His Son and His desire that we be one body.
  6. His works.
    - a. His eternal decree.
    - b. His mighty acts of creation.
    - c. His powerful work of Providence.
    - d. Especially, His work of redemption in His Son.
- B. And what does it mean to take these things in vain?
1. The word means to make them empty or worthless, to treat them as common.
  2. How do we do this?
    - a. By asking for things He doesn't want to give us in His name.
    - b. By taking an oath that something is true, or by saying something is true, when it isn't.
    - c. By vowing to God that we will do something, and then not doing it.
    - d. By promising something in His presence, but not doing it.
    - e. By using His name flippantly, or as a common swear word, or by thinking it in our minds, or desiring to do so in our hearts.
    - f. By misunderstanding, misinterpreting, or misapplying His Word.
    - g. By trying to pry into areas of God's plan that He hasn't revealed.
    - h. By complaining about His Providential dealings.
    - i. By not living the kind of life He wants us to live individually and corporately and bringing reproach on His name.
- C. How are we supposed to use these things?
1. We should pray in Jesus' name only those things we know He wants or are consistent with His will.
  2. We should speak the truth.

3. We should keep our promises/vows.
4. We should use His name and think of it reverently.
5. We should study God's Word carefully and interpret and apply it responsibly, with the help of His Spirit.
6. We should not pry into the secret will of God.
7. We should accept His Providence, knowing that He will work it together for good.
8. We should live a life honoring to Him – let our light shine, love one another as He calls us to: as ourselves.

D. What does God threaten for using His name in vain: “For the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

1. He threatens punishment, what kind depends on His will.
2. When the Israelites dishonored His name by worshiping the golden calf, He would have destroyed them all, but for Moses intercession (Ex. 32).
3. When His people dishonored Him by not believing His promise to bring them into the land, He sentenced them to wander for forty years until they all perished (Num. 14).
4. When Ananias and Sapphira dishonored Him by lying about their offering, He took away their lives (Acts 5).

E. But He promises blessing for honoring His name, as He does for all obedience.

### III. Application.

A. But which of us here can say we have never broken this commandment?

1. How many times have we asked in prayer for things we shouldn't have?
2. How many times has the Lord heard us say and think things we knew weren't true, or weren't sure were true?
3. How many promises have we broken, vows we haven't kept?
4. How many of us have blasphemed God in our thoughts, in our words, have not been injured when we heard others blaspheme it or been jealous for God's glory?
5. How many of us have been lazy in our Bible study, or interpreted or applied God's Word with our own benefit in mind and not to understand God's mind?
6. How many of us have tried to second-guess God's plan, or complained at His Providences?
7. The fact is we have all broken this commandment many time, as we have all the others.
8. We are weak and feeble and fail so often. So often we don't even feel like keeping them.
9. How will He punish us for using His name in vain? I don't know. But I do know this: if we repent and turn to His Son in faith, then Jesus has already taken that punishment away.

B. There is forgiveness, mercy and the strength to obey this command in Christ.

1. There is forgiveness for our sins: He has borne them all.
2. There is perfect righteousness in Christ: He has obeyed them perfectly.
3. There is power and strength to reverence His name and honor Him: He can help us honor God's name.
4. So again, let's look to Him in prayer. Amen.