

EXODUS 20:7 - TAKING THE LORD'S NAME

This 3rd commandment deals with misuse of the Lord's name.

Names are meant to mean something and are important, or at least they used to be. All of us have names that have a significant meaning. For example, my name is derived from Dionysius, the Greek god of wine. Of all people, a total teetotaler, is named after this god. I don't think that fits my personality, but it is a good name and was popular at one time. Alistair Begg tells of a story of a lawyer with the last name of Odd. He was plagued by this name all his life. People always made fun of him calling him names such as odd ball. Because he suffered throughout his life, he decided to not have his name on his tombstone, and at least he could have peace in his death. He left instructions to put the following on the stone. "Here lies an honest lawyer."

People would walk in the graveyard and pass by his grave and say, that's odd. He just couldn't get away from that name.

Nevertheless, names are significant, but God's name is of utmost importance. On top of that, He actually has allowed His name to be known and spoken and even maligned by sinful creatures.

But God acts for His name's sake. —Ezek 36:22-23

1. THE PROHIBITION

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

To misuse His name brings on guilt, so this is very serious.

This may seem very simple but it is far reaching and broad.

In fact, it is one of the most broken of all the commands. When we look to the depth of this, we will all have our toes stepped on. Even among Christians, this commandment is trivialized.

A. THE MEANING

1. Take-lift up, carry, appropriate, use, wear

This is to wear that name, to identify with it, to appropriate it, to carry His name.

2. Vain-empty, meaningless, no purpose, useless

This is to make His name of no purpose or meaningless.

It is using His name not giving Him glory. It empties His name of His glory. It is saying something using God's name but it has no bearing on the character of God. It is meaningless to use His name this way. If we are not speaking to Him or about Him, it is useless to use His name.

We sometimes might say, "the Lord bless you", but may not truly mean it. That is using His name in vain. We often say things without thinking about it. We finish a prayer with the phrase, "in the name of Jesus", but really don't think about it as we speak. That is vain repetition when we do that over and over, as we use that as an automatic tack on to prayer.

It comes down to any wrong use of God's name.

3. Name-YHWH—self-existent, self-sufficient, sovereign,

self-fulfilled—in need of nothing and no one
How do you pronounce this 4 letter Hebrew word? It is called the tetragrammaton, in that it has four letters, that is four consonants and no vowels. God didn't want His name pronounced. He wanted them to learn how holy His name was. This name is super significant.

The Jews never wanted to say His name. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest and he alone, would pronounce the name Yahweh. This was a precious, holy name. Exodus 3:14, The One who always is

In this passage of the burning bush, the name Elohim(God), falls short of expressing the immensity of His character, so God reveals to Moses the I Am. The verb, “to be”, reveals He is self-sufficient, self-existent, self fulfilled, and sovereign. He was in need of nothing or no one. Who do you know that is like that? No one.

Exodus 33:18-23, 34:5-7,

In this passage, Moses makes a request to see God's glory in v 18. The Lord said He would proclaim His name. Nobody could see God, but His name would be known. Yahweh, Yahweh(twice) explains what He is like in the following verses. In expressing His name, it was not only precious, but revealed His character. His name expresses His character, power, control, and influence. Psalm 20:7, Jn 8:58, 17:6 Isa 45:10-12—I am Yahweh and apart from me, there is no savior. Yahweh is the only God and only Savior. If God is I Am, it makes you think of how many times this 3rd Command is broken by pagans.

There are many names of God and they are related, but distinct. Names of God—Elohim, El Elyon, Yahweh Jireh, El Shaddai, Yahweh Tsidkenu, Yahweh Nissi

God's name can be defined as such:
That which He is called, that which He is made known to us, and that which is His nature, works, and Word, sovereignty, power, holiness, and His love.

His name is the summary of all that He is.

We must know this significance, or breaking the commands won't make any difference. We need to understand His name, so when we are confronted with daily living, we can draw from who He is. When one becomes a Christian he takes God's name. That is a good thing, as long as we act the way Christ would.

B. HOW THE PROHIBITION IS BROKEN

1. Without any *reference* to God

This happens most often. People do this all the time when they speak but have no thought to God. There is no meaningful reference to God. It can be the obvious expletives that we are all too familiar with in hearing. It can be profane, vile language. This should be very offensive to us because it offends the holiness of God. We should ask ourselves questions sometimes. Can I sit in

a theatre and let them abuse the name of my God? How uncomfortable it is to be among a group of people and many of them are using God's name in a blaspheming way.

Using God's name in vain in this way is very easy to recognize. We would all agree wholeheartedly this is very wrong.

Cursing is highly offensive.

Swearing unnecessarily is an affront to God's name. This is when someone brings God's name into a statement to try to strengthen what is said. They are using His name but it is meaningless. They use God's name to affirm what they say.

Trivializing is where we have to address ourselves who identify with the name of Christ. There is some language we use that seems innocent but can be just as concerning as four letter bathroom words.

Any wrong abuse of God's name is taking His name in vain.

For example, OMG is the single most common abbreviation in text messaging. It may not seem serious but it is, because it is trivializing the very name of God.

2. Without *reverence* of God

This means using God's name but not really bringing reverence to God.

John Calvin said.. "we should be zealous and careful to honor His name with godly reverence. Therefore, we ought to be so disposed in mind and speech that we neither think nor say anything concerning God and His mysteries without reverence and with much soberness, that in estimating His works we conceive nothing but what is honorable to Him." This commandment is far more wide reaching than we think.

Hypocrisy We can pretend to be holy but not be holy. That takes His name in vain. Sometimes when we sing, we sing but really don't mean it.

We might be thinking about something else. Maybe we are thinking the music is too loud, too soft, somebody is off key, somebody might hear me.

When we pray, maybe our heart isn't in to it and we are thinking about something else. We do things without thinking about it. That too is vain.

We can worship without engaging in it. We can minister but if it's not for God's glory, we have broken the 3rd commandment.

We might say to someone, the Lord bless you, but not mean it.

Insincere and careless, frivolous

Some words we all have used that seem to be innocent but actually are vain are, goodness, mercy, Good Lord, Lord of Mercy. These deal with His attributes and if they are not said to glorify God or edify someone, they are useless, empty. How about good heavens, or holy cow? How about golly, gosh, gee? These are substitutes for God's name.

We have already been shown that God's attributes represent His name. If we say His attributes but they don't glorify Him, it is a useless statement that undermines His glory.

When we pray, we often say, "in Jesus' name" but not even think what that means. It is used just as a tack on at the end of prayer, like a formula. Or we say our prayers at a meal by rote, but we do not even think of what we are saying.

We pray and ask for the wrong things.

God's name can be brought into jokes and that can be cheap and irreverent.

Some preachers will say bless God, or glory to God, all the time, but they do it like it is a rim shot after telling a joke.

How insincere we can be when we use His name.
We should only use His name when we are speaking to Him or about Him.
We have no right to use His name in an empty way. It truly is a serious thing.
Now I am not going to follow you wherever you go and try to catch every word that comes out of your mouth. I am guilty of using some of these words.
I am guilty and all of us are guilty. We can take God's name in vain by thought, word, deed and even omission. We love God, but what have we done or not done throughout the week where we have taken His name in vain?
This truth of this commandment goes deep and we should all be effected.
We all break the 3rd commandment. It is very broad and is not that simple after all. When we see the law for what it really is, and it's a mirror to show us that we don't measure up to God's perfection, we are convicted and we have to look to Christ who kept all the commandments. He is the only one who has. The law is too demanding for us and it is perfect.

Covenant breaking

When we break this commandment, and we all do, we break His covenant.
But we are a new creation and God is teaching us and empowering us to follow His law.

C. HOW THE PROHIBITION IS KEPT

Sanctify the Lord's name

Hallowed be thy name Mt 6:9 We are to see His name, or everything about God is holy. When we know Christ, we can hallow His name.

We are to exalt God's name in our hearts. We are to pray for what Jesus would pray for.

The only time to use God's name

1. *To glorify God* When this is our motive, we can't go wrong to use His name.
2. *To edify others* When we are building up the work of God by edifying other Christians, then it is perfectly right to use God's name.

2. THE PENALTY

A. THE SIN WITH GUILT

1. The guilty

This commandment is different from the others. It is one that has a guilt.

"I know of nothing on earth so much like a damned soul in hell, than someone who curses and swears using God's name in vain." Thomas Boston

This has to be a serious sin. It is a hellish sin.

2. Judgment Rom 2:5, 3:23

What bothers me about this commandment is that I see myself in the mirror.

Way too often I have used God's name in a light way, my prayers have been superficial and my prayers have been selfish and unprofitable.

Our worship can be shallow and flippant.

But don't despair. There is hope. There is a remedy. Take all of our bad prayers and worship to Christ. He has the power to take away the guilt.

B. THE REMEDY

1. Christ is the only one who didn't break the commandments.

2. Christ has paid the price

He took our sin at the cross and even the sin of breaking this 3rd command and paid the debt we owed. It has all been paid for.

The Savior has provided for us. Amen.