

# ***“I Swear, You Swore!”***

*Exodus 20:7*

**Intro.** – It’s been almost 35 years ago. One of the men in the church where we were serving in Rush Co., IN had open-heart surgery. It was harvest time, and this brother in the Lord being a farmer needed help bringing in his crops. Several of the men and I from the church family showed up at the appointed time. There were several neighbors who were present to help as well. One came up to us and began speaking to John... This neighbor didn’t know me, nor had I ever met him. It didn’t take long, however to get to know him. Every other word was a curse word. I mean, vulgar, nasty words were pouring out of this guy’s mouth. And he was animated... I saw John wanting to hide under a rock, but I decided to let this guy go on... He did for several minutes. The man finally stopped and said, “I don’t blankety, blank think I know you.” I said, “My name is Paul Nichols. I’m John’s preacher at Fairview Christian Church. He looked at me as if I were saying, “I swear, you swore!”

What happened next was the nearest thing to a modern day miracle I’ve seen. This man’s speech cleared up immediately. Now, I use this to introduce this message today. Our Lord made clear in the Ten Commandments that His name was to be used properly and that language itself is a reflection on one’s relationship to Him.

Story is told of a little girl who went to Bible School for the first time. It was around the holidays. She eagerly listened while the teacher told of the birth of the Savior, the appearance of the angels, the visit of the shepherds. “Then,” added the teacher, “they called Him Jesus!” The little girl was mortified. She asked, “Why did they have to name such a sweet baby a swearword?” The teacher understood. It was the first time the little girl had heard the name of Jesus used for something other than a swear word.

*Purpose: to reexamine the use of God’s holy name*

Are you ever shocked at how flippantly the name of our Lord is used? Ever get into the habit of loosely using the Lord’s name yourself? Like the title to this message: “I Swear, You Swore!” just what do we mean “I swear?” Let’s look more closely at this text and come to a clearer understanding of this:

## **I HOW WE MISUSE GOD’S HOLY NAME**

- When we misuse God’s name we reveal something about ourselves – either we don’t understand the nature of God and/or we just don’t care.
- Isaiah 52:5 – heartbreaking verse where God is mourning the plight of His people. He lists the evils of that day and then says, “...*And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed.*”
- Basically speaking there are five ways people misuse God’s name – first two ways are the way people of the world misuse God’s name. Last three ways we in the Church misuse His name:

### **A. Used as a Curse**

1. This type of profanity is illustrative of weak people using strong words...
  - a. Illus. – ever work around someone who didn’t think people took them seriously unless cursing was attached to what they were saying? E.g. the propriety of instructions is measured by amount of profanity used (not pressing = calm/polite... pressing = profanity flows...)
  - b. Illus. – AT&T rep called... “It’s a (blank) of a deal...” “Listen there are other reasons why I don’t use AT&T, but fact you swore is enough to keep me from using AT&T.”
2. We all know someone who gets angry/frustrated... who tell God to “damn” whoever/whatever...
3. What can be more unholy than “damning” someone or something in the name of the Lord?!

### **B. Used as an Exclamation Point**

1. People often use God’s name(s) to express *reactions* – e.g.:
  - a. person hears startling news = “O, my God!”... even used in texting OMG
  - b. person sees a gruesome scene = “Jesus Christ!”
  - c. Illus. – black boxes on ill-fated flights record the final seconds in cockpit = high % profanity!
2. There was a time when this type of speech would have been frowned upon by society = such is certainly not the case today!

3. Illus. – Co. Harland Sanders (*Finger Lickin' Good*) p 7: "...my conversation was always laced with so many curse words you'd think I knew more of them than anything else. And when I asked the Lord to help me stop cussin' five year ago, I lost half my vocabulary..."
4. God makes clear His revealed names tell us much about His character and nature. Also, the way we use His names reveals much concerning our character and nature...

#### C. Used as a Cliché

1. This is what one author calls "divine name dropping" = sounding spiritual when in reality it's totally self-centered and egocentric in nature.
  - a. Illus. – camp = "attitude check" and everybody was to dutifully say "Praise the Lord"
  - b. middle of a sad elders' meeting... effort to push something through that was unbiblical, unsound and just not right... One man said, "Let's pray." Didn't "feel" like praying; instead, I felt like ringing a couple of necks...
2. God desires/deserves His name(s) be used/associated only with matters substance/genuineness.
3. God's name(s) is not a designer label to wear to look good when it is expedient.
4. To use God's name(s) lightly or in a cliché manner, then we show we take God accordingly...

#### D. Used as a Weapon

1. People in church often use God's name(s) to intimate and/or manipulate:
2. Illus. – ever have brother/sister walk up, put arms around you and say, "God told me to tell you..."
  - a. before you can blink this "good brother" is laying out his agenda, not God's for your life.
  - b. such is using God's name as a weapon and means of manipulating/intimidating.
3. Illus. – had a church "call us" while we were serving a church that made clear to us they wanted us to continue ministering... Vividly remember one elder saying, "God is calling you to this church. We've prayed and God is definitely calling you here..." We went, this elder soon resigned, left...
4. One of the great calls of the O.T. prophets was against those who claimed to be delivering messages from God when in fact they were not... all sorts of examples of this:
  - teachers, preachers, and leaders – we MUST be sure we're delivering God's Word not ours!

#### E. Used as an Endorsement

1. Using God's name(s) for personal gain = "credibility by association game" = name dropping
2. Illus. – 1988 V.P. debate – Dan Quayle responded to a question likening himself to J. F. Kennedy. Lloyd Bentsen rebutted, "Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy." = both guilty name dropping
3. Some even commercialize the name(s) of God to sell products... -- it's clear God does NOT want His name(s) "marketed" for selfish ends...

Ouch – this has been a tough point. Let's move to the practical side of this message:

## II HOW WE SHOULD USE GOD'S NAME(S)

- I believe the way some churches profane the name of God is every bit as offensive to Him as the profanity on the streets...
- Matthew 7:22-23 "*Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*"

#### A. Use His Name as a Claim to Authority

1. This is all about caring whether or not God's name is honored through our lives.
2. God's name always carries authority
  - a. Acts 4:12 "...no other name given among men whereby we can be saved."
  - b. Romans 10:13 "*Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.*"
  - c. Acts 22:16 (Ananias to Saul) "*Now why do you delay. Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" Now that's power = awesome power!

B. Use His Name as a Call to Integrity

1. A soldier was brought before Alexander the Great for punishment. “What is your name?” Young man responded, “Alexander.” Taken aback, Alexander the Great said, “Either change your name or change your conduct.”
2. Such is good advice for Christians – to bear the name of Christ (Christian) means having and developing qualities that reflect the meaning of that name...
3. Colossians 3:7 “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*”

C. Use His Name as a Cry for Fellowship

1. God’s concern is not our *use* of His name but the *misuse* of it
2. God wants us to use and wear His name because doing so is part of the sanctification process.  
- fellowship is key to our sanctification...
3. Honoring His name results in humble not haughty people; poor in spirit and not pompous people...
4. His name is a cry to each other for the kind of fellowship that will keep us doing good works because we are already saved!

**Conclusion:** Merv Griffin once interviewed Charlton Heston about Heston’s experience in playing Moses in the movie “The Ten Commandments.” Griffin asked, “Charlton, has making a religious movie impacted your spiritual outlook?” Heston looked at Griffin and said, “You can’t walk barefoot down Mount Sinai and be the same person you were when you went up.”

God is calling each of us to the summit. But remove your shoes, for you and I are standing on holy ground. His name is Wonderful – too wonderful to use for swearing; too wonderful to use thoughtlessly or flippantly. “I Swear, You Swore!” NO! How urgent to keep praying: “Hallowed be Your Name” until the day every knee will bow and every tongue confess the name which is above every name!