

**THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 4**  
**The Name of the LORD our God**  
**Dr. Derek Morris**

Preaching passage: Exodus 20:7  
Subject: Why we should be careful how we use God's name  
Complement: Because He will hold us accountable if we misuse His name.  
Exegetical idea: We should not misuse the name of the LORD because he will hold us accountable if we misuse His name.  
Homiletical idea: **Bless the name of the LORD!**  
Purpose: To remind my hearers that we should not only not misuse the name of the LORD but we should call upon the name of the LORD and trust in the name of the LORD and praise the name of the LORD!

Introduction

My wife and I were walking through a little store in Mount Dora, Florida, some weeks ago and we saw a country version of the 10 commandments. The wording of the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment caught my attention. Two words: NO CUSSIN'. That's American slang for NO SWEARING. NO PROFANE LANGUAGE.

That's probably what most 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians think about when they read the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment. These words were spoken by the LORD God on Mount Sinai and written with His finger on tables of precious stone. The words of the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment are recorded in Exodus 20:7. Most of us have heard this commandment in the King James Version: "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in VAIN."

I want to suggest to you today that the country version of the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment is right! This 3<sup>rd</sup> saying that God gave on Mount Sinai is a warning against careless speech, but it is so much more than that! The Hebrew word translated "in vain" in the KJV literally means "for unreality," "for nothingness," "to no purpose." The same Hebrew word is used in Exodus 23:1 where it says, "Do not spread false reports." And the verb "take", as in "You shall not TAKE the

name of the LORD your God in vain,” –the verb “take” literally means “to lift up” or “to carry.” You shall not lift up the name of the LORD your God falsely. You shall not carry the name of the LORD your God for nothingness.

The translators of the NIV use these words to translate Exodus 20:7: “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.” Clearly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment is a warning against a false use of the name of the LORD our God.

I want to suggest that a person can misuse the name of the LORD our God in two ways: careless speech and careless living. Let’s first consider what it means to take the name of the LORD our God in vain through careless speech. Have you noticed how careless people are with their use of the name of the LORD? When I was a young college student, I worked for a summer for a trucking company. Having just completed my first year at a Christian college campus, I was not prepared for the profanities that I would be subjected to from day to day. It seemed that almost every other word was corrupt. And many times the name of the LORD, the name of God, and the name of Jesus were thrown into the profane conversation.

What a contrast with the way that the Jewish scribes honored the name of the LORD. When the scribes were copying the sacred Scriptures, and they came to one of the secondary names of God, like El Shaddai, God Almighty, they would stop, put down their old pen, and take a brand new pen to write this name of God. But when they came to the sacred name, YHWH, the personal name of the LORD God, they would stop, go and bathe themselves, confess their sins, and then take a new pen to write the sacred name of the LORD.

What a contrast with how so many in our generation use the name of the LORD! Today, people frequently use the name of God, the LORD, and Jesus Christ as a part of profane speech.

Unfortunately, even some of those who claim to honor God are guilty of careless speech. The apostle Paul encourages us to “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths” (Eph 4:29), and that would certainly include not speaking the name of the LORD profanely. When you challenge someone about such profanity, you’ll often hear, “Oh, I didn’t mean anything by saying that! It’s just a figure of speech.” But the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment warns that God holds a person accountable who takes His name in vain.

But this commandment is warning against more than just careless speech. It is also a warning against careless living. You shall not carry the name of the LORD your God falsely. When we carry the name of the LORD our God, when we claim to be a follower of the LORD our God, and we live carelessly, this is a second way that we take His name in vain. The Old Testament speaks very strongly about making a promise in the name of the LORD, or making a promise as one who carries the name of the LORD, and then failing to keep that promise. That careless living dishonors the name of the LORD our God.

Jesus also rebuked those who carry the name of the LORD but live carelessly. In Luke 6:46 we read, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things that I say?” If we carry the name of the LORD and then live carelessly, we are taking His name in vain and we are guilty of transgressing the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment.

We have heard too many stories in recent years of those who have taken the name of the LORD in vain by careless living. A Christian evangelist claims to be following the Word of God and preaches about moral living, only to be arrested trying to solicit a prostitute. A Christian radio broadcaster hosts a program on family values, only to be released from his position due to marital infidelity.

Careless living by those who claim to be Christians not only damages their reputation and hurts their family; it publically dishonors the name of the LORD our God. Tell me, why does God feel so strongly about His name? Because His name is a reflection of His character. Listen to the testimony of Moses about the name of the LORD. Exodus 33:19 and Exodus 34:5-7a. “And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” “Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.’”

The name of the LORD is a reflection of His character of love and mercy. The Psalmist was right when he described the name of the LORD as a “great and awesome name!” Psalm 99:3. We ought to be very careful not to misuse the name of the LORD by careless speech or careless living. The LORD will hold those accountable who misuse His name.

So far in this message we have been focusing on what NOT to do. Don’t misuse the name of the LORD our God by careless speech or a careless life. But now I want us also to focus on the positive. I did a Bible search on the phrase “the name of the LORD,” and I found 109 references in the Bible: 88 references in the Hebrew Scriptures and 21 references in the New Testament. Of those 109 references, only a handful focus on the negative...warning against a misuse of the name of the LORD our God. The vast majority focus on the positive, appropriate ways to lift up the name of the LORD our God.

Call upon the name of the LORD. Trust in the name of the LORD. Praise the name of the LORD. Bless the name of the LORD. Serve in the name of the LORD. I want focus on 3 appropriate ways that we can lift up the name of the LORD! First, we can call upon the name of the LORD. The apostle Peter quoted the words of the prophet Joel on the day of Pentecost when he said, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved!” Acts 2:21 That good news! What do you say? Everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD will be saved. That is a positive use of the name of the LORD. Luke records that a dying thief hanging on a cross next to Jesus called upon the name of the LORD and he was saved. And you can also be saved if you call upon the name of the LORD.

The Word of God also encourages us to TRUST in the name of the LORD our God. That’s a second appropriate way of lifting up His name. One of my favorite words of Scripture is found in Psalm 20—a psalm of David. In Psalm 20:7, we read, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” Amen! That’s what young David did when he faced the Philistine giant, Goliath. He said, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” At that moment, Goliath should have known that he was in serious trouble. Young David wasn’t trusting in his expertise with a slingshot. David was trusting in the name of the LORD our God!

And David’s son, King Solomon declared in Proverbs 18:10, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.” And that trusting in the name of the LORD our God is not a one time decision. It’s a moment by moment commitment. The prophet Micah puts it this way, in Micah 4:5: “All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk

in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.”

A third appropriate way to lift up the name of the LORD is to PRAISE the name of the LORD. We hear this appeal repeated over and over in the Word of God. Listen to this exhortation in Psalm 113:1-3. “Praise the Lord. Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.”

And again in Psalm 135:3, we read, “Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.” And that is exactly what David did. Listen to his testimony in Psalm 7:17. “I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High.” And in Psalm 145:1-2, “I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.” Read all of these psalms at the close of the book of psalms and you’ll hear one message over and over again: PRAISE the name of the LORD!

And Job taught us that we shouldn’t just praise the name of the LORD when things are going well. We should praise the name of the LORD even in the midst of adversity. Even after Job had lost all of his possessions and all of his children, he declared, ““Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.””

We can praise the name of the LORD our God even in difficult times because He is our great and awesome God! He is our Rock and our Salvation. He is the LORD our God who brought us out of bondage. He is the LORD our God who loves us so much that He sent His own Son to save us from sin and death. So let us praise the name of the LORD and give Him

glory!

That's the positive message that I want us to take away from this study of the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment, the 3<sup>rd</sup> saying of the LORD our God, written with His finger on tables of precious stone. Not only should we not misuse the name of the LORD our God by careless speech and careless living, but we should lift up the name of the LORD our God in appropriate ways by calling upon the name of the LORD our God and trusting in the name of the LORD our God and praising the name of the LORD our God!

This past week, I had the opportunity to meet a woman of God who has experienced the joy of calling on the name of the LORD, trusting in the name of the LORD, and day by day is praising the name of the LORD! I have asked Stephanie Holbrook to share part of her story with us today.

-Stephanie, when did you first call upon the name of the LORD?

- You shared with me this past week about a recent experience of trusting in the name of the LORD. What was going on in your life?

-What are some things that have happened that have caused you to praise the name of the LORD?

Thank you, Stephanie, for sharing your testimony with us today. This message on the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment has been divided into two parts. First, the negative. (Pick up frowning face) Don't misuse the name of the LORD our God by careless speech or careless living. And that's important. Isn't it? God will hold a person accountable who misuses His name. But we've also

noted the positive. We have been encouraged to lift up the name of the LORD our God in appropriate ways by calling on the name of the LORD, and trusting in the name of the LORD and praising the name of the LORD.

From the rising of the sun, to the place where it sets, may the name of the LORD be praised! As we leave this place, may our words and our actions send a clear message to those around us: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!