

HC 99 – Worship God with Reverence 29, 86

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: What is the 3rd law? 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. (Exodus 20:7)

Many don't understand this 3rd command so they don't obey it like they should. **Others don't care about obeying this command because they do not see immediate penalties from God for abusing it.** Have you ever heard of a church that disciplined someone for consistently misusing God's name? Probably not! But imagine the hurt God's own people cause him when they misuse his name!

So hear today God's teaching on the 3rd law. Next time, Lord willing, we will deal with a specific issue regarding this command.

Our headings are:

Prohibitions of Law 3

Prescriptions of Law 3

Our goals are: That you will **learn what is prohibited and what is prescribed by the law**, that you will **be thankful Jesus kept this law for you**, and you **will teach this law to your children** and those under your care.

99 Q. WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR US IN THE THIRD COMMANDMENT?

A. That we neither **blaspheme** nor misuse the **name** of God by **cursing, perjury,** or **unnecessary oaths,** nor share in such horrible sins by **being silent bystanders.** In a word, it requires that we **use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe,** so that we may properly confess him, pray to him, and praise him in everything we do and say.

Prohibitions of Law 3

1. God prohibits blaspheming his name – the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – at any time!

"Blaspheme" means to speak wickedly or irreverently about God.

"Name" represents the person. So "don't misuse God's name" means don't be irreverent to any aspect of God's name and nature.

2. God prohibits you in Law 3 from cursing others.

This is not speaking of vulgar language. Vulgar language is bad, but that breaks other commands – like the 6th and 7th. Rather, cursing means to use God's name to call down God's judgment on something or someone. So the terms "God damn you," or "go to hell" are curses-the worst curses possible. Those who curse in these ways should be afraid because **they are acting like God, pronouncing judgment.** But no individual has that right.

Violators of this law were put to death.

Leviticus 24:11 And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.) 12 Then they put him in custody, that the mind of the LORD might be shown to them. 13 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 14 "Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. 15 "Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: **Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin.** 16 'And **whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death.** All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land...

Further, some show little regard for **God's name by calling him to curse a hammer, a dog, snow, or even a car tire.** **Only if you think too much of yourself would you demand God curse things you want to curse.**

3. God prohibits you in Law 3 from perjuring yourself.

Perjury is lying under oath, usually in a civil matter, as in a court.

Leviticus 19: 12 'And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

A man even commits perjury by hiding the truth (Proverbs 29), and could have been put to death for perjury. Whatever the punishment he was trying to put on the falsely accused man, God required that the court put it on him.

4. God prohibits you in Law 3 from making unnecessary oaths.

Only important things require oath taking.

Matthew 5: 33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 "nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 "Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

(See James 5:12 also.) The Jews corrupted oath taking (swearing) in 2 ways, and both were done so they would look good. **The Jews took oaths for doing minor things (like agreeing to a meeting)– not just for important things like marriage or ministerial vows.** But because they were taking oaths, the people thought more highly of them.

The Jews took oaths by the temple, or the gold in the temple; they did not take oaths using God’s name as they should. But because they were taking oaths, the people thought more highly of them.

5. God prohibits you in Law 3 from making rash oaths.

These oaths might include those who **rush into marriage without giving it much thought, or like those who desire the office of the church without thinking of the responsibilities, or** like Jephthah who rashly promised to give “whatever met him first on his return home from war as a sacrifice to God,” and then he was greeted by his daughter -an only child. Judges 11.

6. God prohibits you in Law 3 from being silent by-standers when God’s name is abused.

Leviticus 5:1 ‘If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter —if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.

If you are around those who believe (Christians), you have a responsibility to speak up if they misuse God’s name.

If you are in your home, you must speak up.

If you are limited by your location, like in a political meeting, you are not free to defend the honor of God name there. You will have to be quiet.

Personally set a good example of how to properly use God’s name. Even in a non-Christian environment as your workplace, explain why you will not sit with those who misuse God’s name! Or people might observe that you don’t misuse God’s name. Doing that may give you an opportunity to share the Gospel. Living as a Christian is not a Sunday affair.

7. What are some specific illustrative examples of how God’s name can be misused?

a. 1 Samuel 17 – **Goliath laughed at the thought of God name.**...God’s ability to save Israel.

b. Isaiah 36 – **The Rabshakeh, ambassador for the Assyrian King...mocked God’s ability to protect Israel** during Hezekiah’s days as king of Judah.

c. **Jackie Kennedy, wife of assassinated US President John F. Kennedy, said God had failed him** because God didn’t keep him to improve the world. She thought too highly of President Kennedy. She thought too little of God.

Prescriptions of Law 3

99 Q. WHAT IS GOD’S WILL FOR US IN THE THIRD COMMANDMENT?

A. In a word, it requires that we **use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe** so that we may properly **confess** him, **pray to him**, and **praise him** in everything we **do and say**.

1. When one thing is forbidden, the opposite is required, so you must use God name, as the redeemed of God through Christ, properly – in a holy way.

2. As the redeemed of God, you must show reverence when using God’s name in your conversations with him (worship) and with others (work).

Psalm 99:1 The LORD reigns; Let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; Let the earth be moved! **2 The LORD is great in Zion, And He is high above all the peoples.** **3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name—He is holy.**

4 The King’s strength also loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. **5 Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at His footstool—He is holy.**

Think of God’s name when you use it. Don’t be afraid to use God’s name as the Jews, which caused them to forget how to pronounce it. Rather, use God’s name with proper care and reverence.

Jeremiah 4:2 **And you shall swear, 'The LORD lives,' In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;** The nations shall bless themselves in Him, And in Him they shall glory."

3. As the redeemed of God, use his name reverently in prayer.

God is holy and worthy of honor by all, but his children are the only ones able to do it. Only they have access to him.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks** to God the Father through Him.

4. As the redeemed of God you must praise holy God in a reverent way.

Psalms 50:14 Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High. 15 **Call upon Me in the day of trouble;** I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

Note the promise that is attached to the command here: if you reverently use God's name you can expect that, as his child, he will deliver you from your troubles the Sneaky Snake might cause you.

5. As the redeemed of God, you must promote God's greatness and honor.

a. When you promote the greatness and honor of God – **you open the world to be evangelized.**

b. When you promote God's greatness and honor of God you **encourage Christians to live more sanctified lives.**

c. When you promote the greatness and honor of God you **help to establish justice** – especially when you speak in legal situations. This helps to keep civil peace, which is a benefit to Christians as well.

6. As the redeemed of God, you must honor God's name by your life.

Catechism: You are to praise God by what you "do and say." The Christian life is more than talk. You show regard for God's name and person by how you live in front of all men.

7. You will notice from these prescriptions you are unable to fulfill them, but you will remember Jesus Christ kept this law for you.

He was accused of blasphemy, but he never blasphemed his Father. His obedience is credited as yours.

Conclusion:

God strongly forbids the misusing of his name in any way. It is hurtful to him when you misuse his name! He threatens judgment on those who misuse his name. On the other hand, **God wants you to use his name with proper awe and respect, which brings glory and worship to him.** God promises heavenly blessings on those who properly use his name.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: It is not easy to use God's name reverently.

1. You have to know who God is and what he has done in order to use his name properly. So study and teach the Bible well. **Why do you think OMG and GDY are so widely used by Christians today? It is from a lack of knowledge.** Christians aren't that wicked, but we are that ignorant.

2. You also have to correct the misuse of God's name. Challenge those around you. You might have to say: Did you really mean to call on God's judgment? Do you really wish that that person be damned in the tortures of hell forever? Do you know what hell is like? Speaking-up opens up an opportunity to share the Gospel.

3. Let your mind be drawn to God, his greatness and his goodness, when you worship him. Let him fill you with his awesomeness and his full love. Then you can truly worship him and use his name with appropriate reverence.

Finally, God is not some generic grandfather, or someone whose name you call when you stump your toe. He is the holy one of heaven and earth...the one with your death sentence recorded in his book because you are a

sinner by birth and by actions. This just God is also gracious. He opens to you the way back to him and offers his substituted Son to take your punishment. Won't you ask for this freedom from sin?