

## Heidelberg Catechism 99 – Honor God’s Name

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Many Christians don’t understand this command so they don’t obey it like they should. Other Christians don’t care about obeying this command because they are no immediate penalties for misusing it. I have yet to hear of a case where a church disciplines someone for misusing God’s name, but I can well imagine the hurt that God’s own people cause him when they display ignorance 无知 and/or arrogance 傲慢 in misusing his name. Today you will hear God’s call to obey this 3<sup>rd</sup> command in full.

Our headings are: Prohibitions of Law 3, and 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 that Jesus Christ kept this law for you, and that 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.

答: 就是我们不可以用咒骂、假誓, 或不必要的宣誓, 亵渎并妄称神的名; 也不可缄默和纵容, 以至别人在这些可怕的罪上有份; 总而言之, 我们应当用敬畏的心称呼神的圣名, 以至他能够听到我们正确的承认和敬拜, 并从我们的一切言行得荣耀。

### Prohibitions of Law 3

1. God prohibits you from blaspheming his name – the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

a. “Blaspheme” means to speak wickedly or irreverently 不敬地 about God.

b. “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. Let us first look at some specific actions that are prohibited by Law 3, keeping in mind that though the letter of the law only says you must not blaspheme God’s name, the spirit or intention of the law is broadly applied.

3. God prohibits you from cursing. (This is not speaking of vulgar language. Vulgar language is bad, but that breaks other commands) Cursing means to call down God’s judgment on something or someone. For example, you might hear the term “God damn you.” Or you might hear: “Go to hell.” These statements are actually 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.** In Israel, the violator of this law was put to death.

Leviticus 24: 10 Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and this Israelite woman’s son

and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp. 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. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death.

Further, some often men show little regard for God's name by calling him to curse a hammer, a dog, snow, or even a water sprinkler. Only if you think too much of yourself would you demand that God curse things that you want to curse. But God is judge, not you.

**4. God prohibits you from perjuring yourself** by making lying oaths起假誓. 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.

Proverbs 29:24 Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life; He swears to tell the truth, but reveals nothing.

The man in Proverbs 29, who committed perjury by hiding the truth, could have been put to death for perjury. Whatever the punishment he was trying to put on the falsely accused would have been put on him.

**5. God prohibits you from making unnecessary oaths.** Only important and major 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.)

We will talk more about this next time, but the main point here is that because the Jews wanted to look more religious and better than they were, **they developed various categories of oaths that were not true oaths.** They believed they would be more believable if they made an oath. **They used unnecessary oaths in order to deceive people.**

**6. God prohibits you from making rash 轻率的 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 as a sacrifice to God," and then he was promptly greeted by his daughter-

an only child. Jud 11:30-31.

## **7. God prohibits you from being silent by-standers when God's name is abused 濫用.**

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.

But you have to understand this in context. If you are around those who believe and know better (Christians), you have a responsibility to speak up. You may have to wait to get the person alone, but you would do well to speak up!

If you are limited by the location where you are, like in a political meeting, you are not free to defend the honor of God there. But in your home you are free. And when you are around brothers and sisters you are free.

You must also set an example of how to properly use God's name. Even in a non-Christian environment as your workplace, you can explain why you will not sit with those who misuse God's name regularly. Doing that may give you an opportunity to evangelize for Christ.

Living as a Christian is not a Sunday affair. You have to reflect who you are throughout the week. You have to safeguard the honor of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer.

## **8. What are some specific illustrative examples of how God's name can be misused?**

a. 1Samuel 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 嘲笑 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 that God had failed him because God didn't keep Kennedy to improve the world.

## **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** 敬畏 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. If you must not misuse God name, you must then use it properly – in a holy way. What positive things are then** required by God of his children whom he redeemed through Christ?

**2. As the redeemed of God, you must show reverence 尊敬 when using God's name in your conversations with him and with others.** Look at 2 examples.

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.

**Matthew 10:32** "Therefore wh**oever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.**

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 say 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, you must 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.

**1Timothy 2:8** I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, **lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;**

**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."

**Take note of 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 that the Sneaky Snake might cause you.

**5. As the redeemed of God, you must promote God's greatness and honor.** Remember that "name" represents the person.

- 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 you **encourage Christians to live more sanctified lives.**
- c. When you promote the greatness and honor of God you **help in the establishment of justice** – especially when you use speak in legal situations. This helps to keep civil peace as well, which is a benefit to Christians as well.

**6. As the redeemed of God, you must honor God's name by your life.** Notice how the catechism 要理问答 questions ends: 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.

## **Conclusion:**

God strongly forbids the misusing of his name in any way. It is hurtful to him when you misuse his name by what you say, do and think. 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 for his glory and his goodness. God promises 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 he is and what he has done in order to use his name properly. This means: Teaching and studying the Bible well. Why do you think OMG is so widely used by Christians today?

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 name? Do you really wish that that person go to hell forever? Do you know what hell is like...the place to which you wish someone would go forever? You see, speaking up opens up an opportunity for you to speak the Gospel to them.

3. Let your mind be drawn to God 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?