First Century Fellowship Ministry

A Biblical Church of God

The Third Commandment

(Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11)
You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

The first commandment showed us that we are to worship our Creator God. We are to worship Him, revere Him, glorify Him and obey Him. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

The second commandment showed us the way we are to worship. We cannot use any manmade creation to aide us in our worship. We are not to use pictures, statues or any object created by man to worship or remind us of our Creator.

The third commandment deals with the name, or more accurately, the names of God. It deals with His position as our Creator God and the ruler of the universe and it deals with our attitudes, speech and behavior towards Him.

When we read the third commandment our first thought is this commandment only deals with swearing and cursing using God's name. We may ask God to damn someone. Something He would not do unless a person completely turned their back on Him and rejected His laws and a chance for eternal salvation. As we will see, that is only one of many ways we can break this commandment. It certainly is the most obvious way, using God's name in a vulgar and abusive manner. It can also mean not showing God the respect He deserves from us. How many times have you heard someone, or, have you said, "Oh my God!"

Unless you are using it as part of a prayer this misuse of God's name is breaking the third commandment. We also need to be careful in our everyday speech that we do not carelessly use God's name.

How do we express respect and honor Him in front of others? Many feel they know God and have a good relationship with Him. They may reason, 'He knows my heart and what I really mean. It's all good.' Is it? What do you portray to others by the apparent demeaning language toward God? Do you really know God or do you know of God? Are you like Job? "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5-6). Your language may reveal to all who hear that respect for God is not all that important to you. We all must reevaluate our attitude and relationship with God. Misusing His name in any way will spiritually defile us in His eyes.

Have you noticed as you read the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, how people's names have specific meaning. They show the person's character, name or authority. A few examples would be, Eve's name meant mother of all the living, (Gen 3:20). Abram's name was changed to Abraham, the father of many nations (Gen 17:5). Abraham's wife, Sarai, was changed to Sarah, a mother of nations, (Gen 17:16). Jacob's name was changed to Israel because he had striven (struggled or contended) with God and men, (Gen 32:28).

God's name(s) are no different. In the Bible references to God reveal attributes of His divine character. The entire Bible reveals Him. His mind, His Power and authority, His plan for us and the relationship He wants to have with His children.

God names Himself by what He is or wants to portray at a particular time or instance. It could describe His characteristics, His titles or position, power or authority. Many show that He has always existed and always will. He has been called, Lord, The Ancient of Days, The Most High, our Father, the Creator God, 'the

Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last', (Revelation 22:13), 'the everlasting God', (Genesis 21:33).

In the first chapter of the Bible God reveals Himself by the Hebrew name Elohim. "And Elohim said, let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness;" (Genesis 1:26). John tells us that God the Father created all things through the Word Who was with Him and was God. The Word was Jesus Christ. (John 1:1-14; also see Ephesians 3:9).

YHWH or Yehwah, translated Lord-the redemptive name of God, was used to distinguish the true God from the false gods used in other nations. Some translations use Jehovah.

In Exodus 6: 2-3, "And God said to Moses, I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty [El-Shaddai], but My name the Lord [Yahweh] I did not make myself known to them."

David, who knew God's names described His character and attributes uses a number of them in Psalm 18. He acknowledged the many ways God affected and influenced his life. "'I love You, O Lord, my strength.' The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold; I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies." (Psalm 18:1-3).

God demands we acknowledge, worship and respect Him for who and what He is. We need to be concerned with the meaning of His name(s). We must remember, everything we have that is important to us is a gift from God. If we do anything that shows disrespect to the true meaning of His name or His character, we are breaking the third commandment. We need to be careful in our everyday speech that we treat God's name with proper reverence and respect. Our faith should be based on what God is, His character and nature. We can experience this by seeking Him and living His way. "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You." (Psalm 9:10). As the faithful, we are to put our trust in Him.

During the Exodus the children of Israel, all 12 tribes, witnessed firsthand the majesty and might of God. They saw His compassion for them as He guided, fed and protected them. They rebelled at Mt. Sinai and suffered the loss of about 3000 people as a direct result of their disobedience and disrespect for God by worshipping a golden calf. (Exodus 32:21-28). With their witness of the glory of God it is almost unbelievable they could fall that far that soon.

It was a pattern Israel would end up following. After they entered the Promised Land and had success because of their allegiance to God, they fell off. They sinned and profaned God's name among the nations. God allowed their enemies to conquer them, remove them from their land and enslave them. "But I had pity for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they were exiled. Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy names sake, which you have profaned among the nations where you went." (Ezekiel 36:21-22). God takes the disrespect and the defiling of His name seriously. Remember, since our baptism we bear His name, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you;" (Matthew 28:19-20) We have a duty to uphold all that His name implies and represents and to teach others. We are in the family of God and must live up to all that it means. To do less would be profaning our Godly family name.

We need to fully understand the implications for such actions. Look at the second half of the commandment, ", for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." We need to understand what He requires of us and why. We need to be respectful and in awe of the power He has. Our very existence depends on Him. We must honor Him with our thoughts and deeds. We should be giving Him glory for all we have and receive. He wants to have a truthful and meaningful relationship with us.

He wants us to love and respect Him. We need to take time to speak to Him in prayer each day giving Him meaningful thanks and praise.

Prayer to God without obedience to His commandments is vain and may be blasphemy. "Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Many so called Christians leaders can talk the talk but have a hard time when it comes to walking the walk. They do not obey His words or His laws and are guilty of a greater sin than others. "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19). These people may preach with eloquence and make their parishioners feel "great" but when they then break any, the least, of God's commandments they blaspheme when they pray. "…Rightly did Isaiah prophecy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' (Mark 7:6-7; also Isaiah 29:13). They fail to realize, or are blinded by the god of this world that their actions make their worship in vain. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." (Matthew 7:21)

It is only through Jesus Christ that we receive salvation. As the Son of God, He is our Lord and Savior and King. "… I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). Acts 4:12 tells us, "And there is no salvation in any other, for neither is there another name under heaven which has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (See also, Matthew 1:21; Acts 10:43; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Paul told Timothy, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands firm, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and "Let everyone who calls upon the name of Christ depart from

unrighteousness." (2 Timothy 2:19; also see, Nahum 1:7 and John 10:14).

In addition to being the perfect sacrifice for our sins, God the Father sent Jesus to be the perfect example of all that He is. Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9). He was also the perfect example of how we are to conduct ourselves. By His example we may see what His Heavenly Father is like. The best view or glimpse of God we have is through Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of God to man. We also see what He expects of us. Jesus has opened to us the way to eternal life. "Jesus spoke these words, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your own Son, so that Your Son may also glorify You; Since You have given Him authority over all flesh, in order that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. For this eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send.'" (John 17: 1-3). "Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him a name which is above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, And every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2: 9-11). Through these passages we should be able to see just how highly exalted the name of not only God the Father is but how highly He regards the name of His Son. Jesus reflects this glory of God: "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell; And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on earth or the things in heaven." (Colossians 1:19-20).

We also have to be careful with the titles we use. Only our spiritual Father and our human parent (as we will see in the fifth commandment) are to be called Father. "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." (Matthew 23:9). Many Christian denominations wrongly use these titles.

Are we living up to and upholding the name we were baptized into? Are we able to bear this name and all that it implies and carries with it? We have seen how God will go to great lengths to preserve His name, for His name's sake.

The third commandment deals with the quality of our personal relationship with our Creator God. We are responsible for maintaining the integrity, honor and respect this name implies. Solomon said, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." (Proverbs 22:1). Your good name should be your most treasured and valued asset. Being baptized into God's family and receiving His name should be even more revered by us. We have been given so many great gifts from our God and the greatest name anyone could have. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is." (1 John 3:2). Keeping this third commandment means we must know the truth about our God and maintain a quality relationship with Him. Our faith is based on what God is. Remember, we will hallow or profane God's name through our conduct.