

Q. 58: Which is the third commandment?

A. The third commandment is, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

1. What the 3rd Commandment Forbids

Q. 60: What is forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment forbids all profaning and abusing of any thing whereby God makes himself known.

- To "take" (*nasa*) God's name, is to bear or lift up God's name. Hagar "lifted up" (*nasa*) her voice and wept (Gen. 21:16). Floods "lift up" (*nasa*) their voice as they roar (Ps. 93:3).
- To take "in vain" (*shawe*) means to take/lift up in a useless or false manner, as if his name mean's nothing. One can spread a false (*shawe*) report (Ex. 23:1), or labor in vain (*shawe*) referring to uselessness (Ps. 127:1-2).
- To take God's name in vain means "to speak about God's names, attributes, works, or presence as if he were nothing, distant, powerless, or dead."¹
- Godless men and women don't fear God, and as a result speak flippantly of him as if he were distant, worthless, powerless, or non-existent. We sin when we take God's name in an oath, with no intention of keeping it.
- Pray that God makes you a person who *loves his name* (Ps 5:11; 69:36; Is. 56:6).
- What are common ways that men and women, Christian or non-Christian, profane and abuse God's name in our day?
- Taking God's name in vain would include: *Blaspheming* and cursing God (Lev. 24:10-16). Blasphemy is "speaking about God in a manner that mocks and insults him (Isa. 37:4-6, 23)."² When the Egyptian man's son blasphemed and cursed God in the camp, God commanded Israel to put him to death (Lev 24:10-16). Irresponsible and needless oaths (Mt. 5:33-37; 23:16-22). Oaths are permitted, but only in God's name alone (Deut. 6:13) and a true commitment to follow through (Lev. 19:12).
- "[W]e ought to be so disposed in mind and speech that we neither think nor say anything concerning God and his mysteries, without reverence and much soberness; that in estimating his works we conceive nothing but what is honorable to him."³
- What effect does irreverent speech about God's names, titles, attributes, word and works, have on other Christians? On non-Christians?

¹ Beeke & Smalley, *RST*, 3.893.

² Beeke & Smalley, 3.895.

³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.22.

2. What the 3rd Commandment Requires

Q. 59: What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works.

- **Holy and Reverent use of God's *names*.** God's name is called "the glorious and awesome name" (Deut. 28:58).
- **Reverent use of God's *attributes*.** God tells Moses he will pass before him proclaiming his name (Ex. 33:9), and when he proclaims his name, he proclaims his attributes (34:5-7). While men are composed of parts and attributes, God *is* his attributes. We, therefore should revere his attributes in our hearts, minds, and words.
- **Reverent use of God's *works*.** God raised up the plagues against Egypt (a work), so that God's "name" would esteemed (See Ex. 9:13-16, esp. 16).
- How do we *use* God's name? It encompasses our *speech*. To "take" (nasa') God's name, is to bear or lift up God's name. Hagar "lifted up" (nasa') her voice and wept (Gen. 21:16). Floods "lift up" (nasa') their voice as they roar (Ps. 93:3). Taking God's name encompasses invoking or swearing by God's name (Deut. 6:13; 10:20), and we should not swear by it falsely (Lev. 19:12).
- A *holy and reverent* use of God's name is honoring, esteeming... this includes: telling of God's wonders to our children (Psalms. 78:4), praising him in the congregation of the saints (Psalm. 35:18; 111:1), singing songs to God in public worship with sincerity and affections suitable for what is sung, and declaring his mighty deeds among unbelievers (Psalm. 96:3). We should freely acknowledge God's goodness before men.
- "[W]hatever our mind conceives of God, whatever our tongue utters, should savor of his excellence, match the loftiness of his sacred name, and lastly, serve to glorify his greatness."⁴
- What effect does reverent speech about God have on others? Jesus had a zeal for the glory and honor of God's name. How was this displayed in his life?

3. Reasons we should keep the 3rd Commandment

Q. 57: What are the reasons annexed to the third commandment?

A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.

God will punish those who violate this commandment.

Christian fear of God and love for God are inseparable. "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but *to fear* the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, *to love* him" (Deut. 10:12). The fear that God wants us to have is not a dread of punishment, but a reverent delight in the righteousness and majesty of all that he is, and on our lips, his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works stand in the place of his being.

⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.22.