

The 3rd Commandment Honour The Lord's Name

—by Peter Hammond

BLASPHEMERS BEWARE!

I was shocked when I was called up for my military service at how soldiers would brazenly take the Lord's Name in vain. However, I noticed that many would feel awkward when having done so in the presence of a Christian.

They would turn and apologise to us as it hurts and offends a Christian to hear God's Name taken in vain. However, as I often had to remind these individuals: "It's not to me that you need apologise. It is Almighty God, and your Eternal Judge, that you will have to give an account to for every idle word spoken." I was so distressed over this abuse of God's

Lord's Name in vain and some lost their rank. We also saw the Lord deal with blasphemers in the ranks. On one occasion a new convert rebuked a notorious blasphemer for taking the Lord's Name in vain: "The Lord will judge you!" He warned.

TONGUE TIED

The blasphemer cursed again, picked up his coke tin and was stung on his tongue by a bee that he had not noticed sitting on the tin. As his tongue swelled up, the rest of the platoon couldn't help but burst out laughing. This foul-mouthed blasphemer

"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

Name, that I requested to see the Officer Commanding. As I was marched into the Commandant's office he asked me: "Well, rifleman, what is on your mind?"

"Sir," I asked, "Is it against the law to blaspheme the Name of the Lord our God?"

"Yes, son," he answered, "Why do you ask? Is the Lord's Name being blasphemed in this unit?"

"Yes sir. I'm sorry to have to report to you that many corporals and sergeants are blaspheming the Lord's Name daily."

The Commandant's face darkened. "I'm sorry to hear that, son. I will deal with this." He dismissed me. Sure enough, at the very next Battalion Parade on Friday, the Commandant addressed the unit: "The Lord Jesus Christ is the Commander-in-Chief of this army. He is the One who determines whether we live or die. Victory or defeat is in His hands. Your lives are in His hands. Any man that takes the Name of the Lord our God in vain is a traitor and he will be treated as such. I will not tolerate blasphemy in this unit!" Indeed, he did not. Some NCOs were charged for taking the

was not able to speak a word for days.

Another foul-mouthed pagan in our unit was warned by one of our Bible study fellowship that "God will judge the stiff-necked!" Shortly after this, this lance corporal injured his neck so severely in an obstacle course that he had to wear a neck brace for several weeks thereafter.

Wherever he went other pagans were laughing at him, pointing and repeating those words that God had judged the "stiff-necked!" In the Book of Acts we read how God struck Ananias and Sapphira dead for lying to the Holy Spirit and dishonouring God's Name. "So great fear came upon all the Church and upon all who heard these things." Acts 5:1-11

GOD'S GARBAGE DUMP

'The Westminster Catechism' teaches us that 'the chief end of man is to glorify God.' If we profane His Name we are violating the very purpose of our existence. If some electronic item fails to work, where does it end up? On the trash heap. The Lord Jesus »



Words are very important. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

God's people in the Old Testament understood what it meant to show reverence to God by honouring His Name. The scribes who copied the Scriptures by hand had many complex rules that enabled them to copy the Scriptures very carefully and accurately.

They had word counts and letter counts at the end of each page to ensure that they

had not added, or left out, anything that they were responsible to copy. Whenever a scribe came to one of the secondary Names of God such as Elohim, or El-Shaddai, they stopped and put down their pens. They took up new pens and carefully wrote That Name.

WRITING GOD'S NAME

However, when they came to the principal Name that God had used to reveal Himself in the Burning Bush to Moses, *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*, for which they used the four letters *JHWH*,

they were to rise from their seats, go and wash themselves, and clothe themselves with new, clean garments, dedicated for this purpose. Then they were to pray and confess their sins, take up a new pen, and fresh ink, in order to write those four letters *JHWH* – for *Yahweh*.

People do not do that today. However, in our mission we ensure that every word referring to the Lord is capitalised, including the personal pronoun Him, or His, when referring to the Lord, Saviour, Gospel, Bible, or His Word.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

The Bible teaches that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 111:10. Evidently many people lack wisdom. What was once illegal and unthinkable is now broadcast on television, on the radio, in films, printed in news media and magazines. We are being literally bombarded by profanity. "...the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain." Exodus 20:7



described eternal hell as *Gehenna*, the burning rubbish heap of Jerusalem. Just as the smoke continually ascended from the ongoing fire burning the rubbish of the city, the Lord described Eternal Judgement as God's rubbish heap. Those who do not

in worship, love and prayer. We dare not use such a great Name lightly. Do we pray or praise God in such a way that His Name registers no meaning to our souls? In all our singing, praying and preaching we must be sincere, wholehearted and enthusiastic.

their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed You are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear Your Words, but they do not do them." Ezekiel 33:31-32

Hypocrisy in worship is frequently the result of refusing to obey the Lord's commands. *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord', and not do the things which I say?"* Luke 6:46

When we fall into cold and indifferent worship, we are breaking the Third Commandment. Do we pray or praise God in such a way that His Name registers no meaning?

glorify God will not enjoy Him forever, they will end up separated from Him forever on the burning rubbish heap of hell.

When the existence of the Life-Giver is held in contempt, then the lives of people are also held in contempt. If God is degraded, we, His creatures, become worthless.

"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'these people draw near to Me with their mouths, and honour Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.

And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:7-9

WORSHIP IN YOUR WORK PLACE

When the great architect, Sir Christopher Wren, was building St. Paul's Cathedral in London, he ordered signs to be placed throughout the construction site declaring: "Due to the heinous custom of labourers taking the Name of the Lord God in vain, each person is hereby placed on notice that it shall be sufficient cause for immediate dismissal if the Name of God is heard taken in vain in this place."

WORLDLY WORSHIP

Meaningless worship is the inevitable result of a worldly spirit. In many church buildings people can be seen lounging in a lazy manner, peering around, sizing up other people, whispering to one another, and making no apparent effort to focus heart and mind on worshipping the Lord. There are some who do not even attempt to try to sing the hymns/worship songs.

Many ministers encourage this half-hearted entertainment mentality by their over-casual dress and use of flippant, shallow language and inappropriate jokes. None of this helps encourage a sense of awe and reverence in worshipping the Lord in the beauty of His Holiness.

PRAYING AND SINGING IN VAIN

Perhaps you may never consider breaking the Third Commandment directly, but do you sometimes pray prayers or sing Hymns using the Name of God in a thoughtless or mechanical way? When we fall into cold and indifferent worship, we are actually breaking the Third Commandment. Through His Name we may approach God

"So they come to you as people do, they sit before You as My people, and they hear Your words, but they do not do them, for with their mouth they show much love, but

WHOLEHEARTED WORSHIP

To say the Name of the Lord with real meaning and sincerity must include wholehearted love and obedience. Those who spurn the Bible and the foundational doctrines of Christianity cannot possibly be serious when they use the Lord's Name, for they have no respect for God's authority.

Such are laws unto themselves, picking and choosing what portions of God's Word they will accept and mingling them with the philosophies and politics of men. *"In vain do they worship Me..."*

The Third Commandment forbids all insincerity, thoughtlessness and shallowness in our worship. It condemns hypocrisy, rebellion and disobedience by those who claim to serve the Lord.

The positive virtues required by the Third Commandment are thoughtfulness, sincerity and wholehearted devotion to the attributes of our Lord and Saviour.

The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."* Matthew 12:34

Let us remember *"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name..."* ■

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