

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 36 (HCLD 36)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 2.

Question: What is required in the third commandment?

Answer: The third commandment requires, That the name of God, his titles, attributes,[1] ordinances,[2] the word,[3] sacraments,[4] prayer,[5] oaths,[6] vows,[7] lots,[8] his works,[9] and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought,[10] meditation,[11] word,[12] and writing;[13] by an holy profession,[14] and Answerable conversation,[15] to the glory of God,[16] and the good of ourselves,[17] and others.[18]²

The Westminster Shorter Catechism reduces this list, but contains the heart and intent I see set out in the Larger Catechism:

Q54: What is required in the Third Commandment?

A54: The Third Commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works. I believe of all the commandments this is the one almost every saint is guilty of breaking many times over each day. Yet with the most meager of efforts, and thought before utterance it should be the easiest kept. It definitely belongs high upon the list of priorities we set before us as watch words for the day because of the fear the appended reason for enforcement should invoke in our hearts. "... for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 36

Q99: What is required in the third Commandment?

A99: That we must not by cursing,[a] or by false swearing,[b] nor yet by unnecessary oaths,[c] profane or abuse the name of God; nor even by our silence and connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others; and in summary, that we use the holy name of God in no other way than with fear and reverence,[d] so that He may be rightly confessed [e] and worshiped [f] by us, and be glorified in all our words and works.[g]

- a. Lev. 24:10-16
- b. Lev. 19:12
- c. Matt. 5:37; James 5:12
- d. Isa. 45:23
- e. Matt. 10:32
- f. I Tim. 2:8
- g. Rom. 2:24; I Tim. 6:1; Col. 3:16-17; I Peter 3:15

Q100: Is the profaning of God's name, by swearing and cursing, so grievous a sin that His wrath is kindled against those also who do not help as much as they can to hinder and forbid it?

A100: Yes, truly,[h] for no sin is greater and more provoking to God than the profaning of His name; wherefore He even commanded it to be punished with death.[i]

- h. Lev. 5:1
- i. Lev. 19:12; 24:15-16; Prov. 29:24-25

² 1. Matt. 6:9; Deut. 28:58; Psa. 29:2; 68:4; Rev. 15:3-4 2. Mal. 1:14; Eccl. 5:1 3. Psa. 138:2 4. I Cor. 11:24-25, 28-29 5. I Tim. 2:8 6. Jer. 4:2 7. Eccl. 5:2, 4-6 8. Acts 1:24, 26 9. Job 36:24 10. Mal. 3:16 11. Psa. 8:1, 3-4, 9 12. Col. 3:17; Psa. 105:2, 5 13. Psa. 102:18 14. I Peter 3:15; Micah 4:5 15. Phil. 1:27 16. I Cor. 10:31 17. Jer. 32:39 18. I Peter 2:12

How you ask do we so trample this commandment underfoot? By not understanding that all the things listed by the Westminster Divines as duties are a part of the commandment

In my younger days, of a past generation, and from a more base neighborhood, you could toss names at others with almost total immunity, except make no use of that phrase which cast doubts about what species a fellow's mother came from. Even the more gentle wordings which described his mother's kennel rather than an overt use the forbidden phrase, resulted in immediate and violent response from the one so offended. So should any use of words that assault the holiness of God cause the most violent reaction of conscience of all saints. So much so the cry for forgiveness and sincere repentance should follow so closely on the heels of such loose usage, that the last of the vile echoes should not have faded before knee met earth.

How many times do we hear the given name of our Lord used alone as an explicative, or cry of surprise; or of His holy title, Christ? How often do Christians say I am praying for you, when indeed this is not true thus linking the name of God with a lie? A holy and most awesome God, who demands worship from His people, does not take such things lightly.

I am sure if the brothers of the Assembly at Westminster were present they would quickly explain that while proper worship is commanded, and indeed these are commandments too, they are of grace, and it is from a heart of thanksgiving, filled with the immeasurable love of God such obedience is rendered. I don't think our modern concepts of psychology and politically correct language were in sight, but this trait of that age is most conducive to bringing a willing and more perfect obedience to God. As men we do strain under the control of another, even God. Thus the proper understanding of grace, and seeing even the dire warnings appended to some of the commandments, the Divines would have called these of grace, seeing these commands from God as yet another means where they were offered freely another way to please Him whom they loved with all their heart, soul, body, and mind. It is for this reason they were careful to include answerable conversation to the list. This has nothing to do with verbal communication, but deals with the life they lived before others, thus could be read as way of life.

Modern man for the most part looks at the word Puritan more as a derogatory description of some fanatic than as a member of the church during one of her most pure times in history. These men seemed to have had a closeness with God that is sadly lacking in the modern church. First Calvin, then all who have followed in creating works of systematic theology began with knowledge of God. So, it would seem that after almost 500 years of reformation and enlightened thinking the church would be more like the first church and her purity would have been increased in proportion. In my opinion the reverse of this is true and this belief moved me to prayer and investigation of what had gone wrong. It is my humble opinion that we have redefined, or cast aside three words that were an integral part of Puritan thinking. Of the three (Piety, Providence, Prudence) the first has come to be almost derogatory and used to describe a mean spirited, self-righteous, or fundamentalist fanatic. It doesn't appear to me to be an adjective most of us are striving to have connected to our name. Yet I would submit that without piety we cannot attain the knowledge of God declared mandatory for us to understand God or self. The second, (providence) we hear spoken of (primarily in prayer, in church, or from the pulpit) but it carries no weight with the average church member. The final word is actually the evidence of the presence of the first two and without it we rapidly run aground or sink into the darkness from whence we came.

(PIETY) Consists in a firm belief and in right conceptions of the being; perfections, and providence of God. (PROVIDENCE) The superintendence and care, which God exercises over creation. The arguments for the providence of God are generally drawn from the light of nature; the being of a God; the creation of the world the wonderfully disposing and controlling the affairs and actions of men; from the absolute necessity of it; from the various blessings enjoyed by His creatures; the awful judgments that have been inflicted; and from the astonishing preservation of the Bible and the church through every age, notwithstanding the attempts of earth and hell against them. (PRUDENCE) Is the act of suiting words and actions according to the circumstances of things, or rules of right reason. Cicero defines it as, "The knowledge of what is desired or avoided." Grove says,

"Prudence is an ability of judging what is the best choice both of ends and means." Mason speaks thus, " Prudence is a conformity to the rules of reason, truth, and decency, at all times, and in all circumstances. It differs from wisdom only in degree; wisdom being nothing but a more consummate habit of prudence; and prudence a lower degree or weaker habit of wisdom." (Definitions from - Charles Buck, "Theological Dictionary," Joseph Woodward, Philadelphia 1826)

This is the definition then of the word Puritan to me, and this word was coined just for the men of the age from which the Westminster Divines were chosen. Perhaps with this understanding of their frame of mind we can better grasp their intentions when they create such a list of seemingly impossible duties then proceed to consider them but grace and a means to please God, graciously provided for them by God. The Puritans, as we should, took seriously then the warning, and eagerly embraced the grace offered in being careful of thought, word, deed, and living in such a way that all pleased God. As a rule we like to trace our history to Scotland, Geneva, or Dordt; perhaps Ireland, or France, but ever so few claim to belong directly to the Church of England outside the Anglican churches. There was a small Scots element and some see that they had an influence far beyond their number on the final words penned by the Westminster Divines, but for the most part the men were ministers in the Church of England holding to many varied beliefs, but almost all held to the Puritan principles and worked through their diversities to give to us this great work so long ignored by the church. For grace, beauty, and completeness of Puritan thought, drink often of this well and the study of the Bible in this light will open before your eyes as never before.

Let us then strive to achieve this personal piety that leads to the correct understanding of grace, and the acceptance of all God's commands as gifts from God to provide the means of so living before Him here, our heavenly reward is assured. I speak not of salvation here, but of that reward that awaits the saint who has labored in word and deed, in humble obedience to God.

Can we consider such as this without the opening statements of the Lord, in the sermon on the mount, which we call the Beatitudes not so burning within, we cannot but fall prostrate before a holy God, whose name we dare do ought but praise and worship? Can we dwell here more than a moment without the light of the first petal so illumining our own depravity that we repent in sack-cloth and ashes? From this fallen condition do not the rays of the second petal bring warmth and hope to a fallen soul? In the radiance of these first two petals can we help but see even more as the third petal joins this heavenly light show and sing out in praise and thanksgiving at the grace of God in saving a wretch such as I? How dare any bathed in this glorious light not see they would not so bow before a holy God were the light of the fourth petal as glorious and pure as its three sister before? How can any having been so graciously called and cared for by God not see that in His sovereign grace we rest, assured then by the complete light of the rainbow throne of heaven here we shall be for all eternity? Where or where then does the vile use of such a glorious name spring but from hell itself? Friend, such should never touch the thought, word, or deed of God's own elect.

We have looked at the importance of a name before. God has revealed His name to us. The Hebrew people knew it as a name so sacred they dared not reduce it to writing. What a contrast to the trinket happy world we live in where the name of Jesus (GOD) and emblems making inference to the same abound in the most ungodly places. We have lost respect, reverence for the name of God and in the process lost respect for those created in His image, and finally self. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom!

Suggested Sermon Outline

Silent Consent

What is required in the third commandments?

That we must not profane or abuse the name of God by cursing, by perjury, or by unnecessary oaths. Nor are we to participate in such horrible sins by keeping quiet and thus giving silent consent. In a word, we must not use the holy name of God except with fear and reverence so that He may be rightly confessed and addressed by us and glorified in all our words and works.

Is it, therefore, so great a sin to blaspheme God's name by cursing and swearing that God is also angry with those who do not try to prevent or forbid it as much as they can?

Yes, indeed, for no sin is greater or provokes His wrath more than the profaning of His name. That is why He commanded it to be punished with death.

I. God Demands Respect for Words

A. God treats blasphemy as a capital offense. And the Israelitish woman's *son blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed*. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:) (LEVITICUS 24:11) And *the LORD spake* unto Moses, saying, (LEVITICUS 24:13) And *he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him*: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death. (LEVITICUS 24:16)

B. God forbade improper use of His name. And *ye shall not swear by my name falsely*, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD. (LEVITICUS 19:12)

To profane is to make common, defile, pollute, or to dishonour and the characteristic description for one who practices a profession or skill he has not mastered.

II. Silence Can Be a Form of False Witness

A. Not acting as a witness when it is appropriate makes one an accomplice to the crime. *And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.* (LEVITICUS 5:1)

B. Partnership in crime is self-destructive and that applies even in what contemporaries consider to be victimless crimes. *Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.* (PROVERBS 29:24)

C. Excuses may seem prudent at the time, but they will be evaluated by God. *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?* (PROVERBS 24:11-12)

D. God knows actual motivations. *For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.* (PROVERBS 5:21)

E. Don't expect God to believe the lies you tell yourself. *Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.* (PROVERBS 21:2)

F. Even the stranger was held liable for truth. *And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.* (LEVITICUS 24:15-16)

III. Believers Will Account for Guilty Silence

A. Jesus will evaluate all the heart secrets at the end of time. *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.* (ROMANS 2:16)

B. Christ will reward people individually when He returns. *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.* (MATTHEW 16:27) *Who will render to every man according to his deeds:* (ROMANS 2:6)

C. Examine the standard Jesus preached. *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.* Then shall they also answer him, saying, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?* Then shall he answer them, saying, *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* (MATTHEW 25:40-46)

D. Are you content to bring your conscience to the judgment throne? *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* (2 CORINTHIANS 5:10)