

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 37 (HCLD 37)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: Q113: What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

Answer: The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God's name as is required;[1] and the abuse of it in an ignorant,[2] vain,[3] irreverent, profane,[4] superstitious,[5] or wicked mentioning, or otherwise using his titles, attributes,[6] ordinances,[7] or works,[8] by blasphemy,[9] perjury;[10] all sinful cursings,[11] oaths,[12] vows,[13] and lots;[14] violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful;[15] and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful;[16] murmuring and quarreling at,[17] curious prying into,[18] and misapplying of God's decrees [19] and providences;[20] misinterpreting,[21] misapplying,[22] or any way perverting the word, or any part of it,[23] to profane jests,[24] curious or unprofitable Questions.[25] vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines;[26] abusing it, the creatures, or anything contained under the name of God, to charms,[27] or sinful lusts and practices;[28] the maligning,[29] scorning,[30] reviling,[31] or any wise opposing of God's truth, grace, and ways;[32] making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends;[33] being ashamed of it,[34] or a shame to it, by unconformable,[35] unwise,[36] unfruitful,[37] and offensive walking,[38] or backsliding from it.[39]²

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 37

Q101: But may we swear reverently by the name of God?

A101: Yes, when the magistrate requires it, or when it may be needful otherwise, to maintain and promote fidelity and truth to the glory of God and our neighbor's good; for such an oath is grounded in God's Word,[a] and therefore was rightly used by the saints in the Old and New Testaments.[b]

a. Deut. 10:20; Isa. 48:1; Heb. 6:16

b. Gen. 21:24; 31:53-54; Josh. 9:15, 19; I Sam. 24:22; I Kings 1:29; Rom. 1:9

Q102: May we swear by "the saints" or by any other creatures?

A102: No, for a lawful oath is a calling upon God, that He, as the only searcher of hearts, may bear witness to the truth and punish me if I swear falsely;[a] which honor is due to no creature.[b]

1. II Cor. 1:23

2. Matt. 5:34-36; Jer. 5:7; Isa. 65:16

² 1. Mal. 2:2 2. Acts 17:23 3. Prov. 30:9 4. Mal. 1:6-7, 12; 3:14 5. I Sam. 4:3-5; Jer. 7:4, 9-10, 14, 31; Col. 2:20-22 6. II Kings 18:30, 35; Exod. 5:2; Psa. 139:20 7. Psa. 50:16-17 8. Psa. 1:16-17 9. Isa. 5:12 10. II Kings 19:22; Lev. 24:11 11. Zech. 5:4; 8:17 12. I Sam. 17:43; II Sam. 16:5 13. Jer. 5:7; 23:10 14. Deut. 23:18; Acts 23:12, 14 15. Esth. 3:7; 9:24; Psa. 22:18 16. Psa. 24:4, Ezek. 17:16, 18-19 17. Mark 6:26; I Sam. 25:22, 32-34 18. Rom. 9:14, 19-20 19. Deut. 29:29 20. Rom. 3:5, 7; 6:1-2 21. Eccl. 8:11; 9:3; Psa. ch. 39 22. Matt. 5:21-48 23. Ezek 13:22 24. II Peter 3:16; Matt. 22:24-31 25. Isa. 22:18; Jer. 23:34, 36, 38 26. I Tim. 1:4, 6-7; 6:4-5, 20; II Tim. 2:14; Titus. 3:9 27. Deut. 18:10-14; Acts 19:13 28. II Tim. 4:3-4; Rom. 13:13-14; I Kings 21:9-10; Jude 1:4 29. Acts 13:45; I John 3:12 30. Psa. 1:1; II Peter 3:3 31. I Peter 4:4 32. Acts 4:18; 13:45-46, 50; 19:9; I Thess 2:16; Heb. 10:29 33. II Tim. 3:5; Matt. 6:1-2, 5, 16; 23:14 34. Mark 8:38 35. Psa. 73:14-15 36. I Cor. 6:5-6; Eph. 5:15-17 37. Isa. 5:4; II Peter 1:8-9 38. Rom. 2:23-24 39. Gal. 3:1, 3; Heb. 6:6

As we read this long list of forbidden things, and prayerfully consider the Scriptures the Westminster Divines offer as the proof texts, is there any who can stand? Nay I say, for any but those so called by God into the washing of the blood of the lamb would surely faint at the mere exposure to such an awesome responsibility. The very elect would falter and turn aside separated from the assurance of the constant presence and help of the Holy Spirit in the face of such an onslaught.

Can it be otherwise than the evil one looks at this awesome list and smiles to himself in glee at the inability of the like of fallen man to ever hope to ascend the holy mountain under this load? But, he fails to reckon with the powerful Word of God and the personal invitation of our Lord whereby we read, *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matt. 11:28-30). So it is that carnal man will never understand how the Westminster Divines could consider such an awesome responsibility as grace bestowed. In the most marvelous display of love the universe has ever known, from the moment of creation God has lovingly provided everything that He would require of man. So it is with the countenance of Christ ever before us, that indeed we find the truth of the Sacred Word, that in Christ we can do all things. To admit to less is but to call the powerful God of creation a liar and turn our back on the offered grace. Yet apart from the provision of this grace in the gift of faith, turning away is the natural instinct of the brute beast that man apart from God's indwelling Spirit is by nature. A slimy creature from the pits of darkness, with no desire to have his vile self revealed in the light, who rather know darkness than the glorious light of the Son. Yet, for the child of God, this light of the Son is ever present, that he stumble not under any load, and the awesome laundry list of sin revealed in the forbidden things of the second commandment is but a feather in the sack, empowered as he is by the Spirit of the living God.

Let us note then from this list from the gates of hell, that ignorance is no excuse for such misuse of God's name. I don't know that we will ever fully understand the word of Paul in Romans where we read *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head; so that they are without excuse*" (Romans 1:19-20). Nonetheless, it is not from ignorance we can flee the responsibility here given. By the previous invitation of Christ we can neither hide under the weight of carrying this load. We then as with Paul in Scripture, can only declare our failure as being without excuse and humbly bow to the Father of all.

We must be careful here too in that we do not enter back into the legalism of the Pharisee, and make our bondage more sore than without the knowledge of God and the grace He has given. Remember who our mediator is, remember the covenant He has fulfilled in our behalf, the grace bestowed is more than sufficient than our needs. While we will be held responsible for keeping God's commandments, it is not as a cruel task master, but as a loving parent God watches over us. The commands are not to be grievous to bear, but rather as with our own children are for training in the right way to

live. We guide, and discipline our children when they wander from the safety of our protection, so it is with God and those whom He loves He chastens when they move outside His established boundaries and enter into the dangerous presence of the world and the evil prince thereof. Our God is merciful, and longsuffering, as He *shows* us the way of life through the Holy Spirit whom He has given into the heart of His own.

When was the last time you considered the word blasphemy and what it meant? From a secular dictionary, "Impious utterance or action concerning God or sacred things." To speak the name of God was to the Jew blasphemy, much less the use of this name above all names in any irreverent application. At times I long for God to show forth His power anew, that the world would cease its constant blasphemy. That their day of final judgment will come is of little consolation at the time, as the new guru of the hour assumes that which is reserved to God. However then I realize my own impious thought and bow before Him in repentance and prayer for mercy to these who by the light of nature alone, know better, but do these things anyway.

It is only proper at this point we make mention of so-called minced oaths. These are the acronyms and other words used to utter an explicative without involving the name of God. Can we not understand that the thought is as important as the deed and God is concerned with the purity of heart and soul, not what issues forth manifest in the flesh only. To devise some word, even a non-word to make an oath falls into this same category and violates the Third Commandment as surely as if the very name of God was used. Let us spare even rendering these minced words of blasphemy for we all know what pet phrase we have devised to engage in this forbidden activity.

How silly then to deny the first petal in light of the history and current actions of man in denial of, nay defiance of the God of creation. As I have stated over and over, how naturally the petals flow one from another no matter where in the circle we begin. That any could look at this statement of the Westminster Divines, and deny that apart from unconditional election any can be saved seems pure foolishness. As we read God's Word concerning redemptive history, the truth of the third petal springs forth eternally. From our own experience alone we can know that by nature we will not keep the things of God and are as guilty as the one destined for the center of hell, and would never of our own volition turned from that place of doom. Thereby petal four and irresistible grace stand true in God's garden. How thankful then we should be, for as we could no more enter into this work of our own will, neither could we sustain the responsibility before God, much less persevere unto the end. With praise and thanksgivings, let us bow to the God who calls, sustains and finally deliveries His children from the gates and teeth of hell. Were I a poet, or a composer perhaps I could begin to do a work that would properly show forth the glowing beauty of this flower from heaven. But only perhaps, for I believe like John's attempt to show the beauty of Heaven, I would find human words fail. Surely the radiance of the angels in heaven are no brighter than that of this TULIP from the pages of God's own testimony.

I invite you to return often to this section of the catechism. It is only when we begin to grasp the magnitude of our failure to God in the first table that we might hope to turn to the failure to our family in Christ, and of sharing the blood of the lamb with a dark and hurting world. Here we see ourselves in the mirror of God's law, and apart from God's grace, shown to us in the gift of the Son would know utter despair at the vileness

that is in the flesh. However with this gift of faith, washed in the blood of Christ, we don't faint, but may be refreshed and lifted up to fight yet another day in the Lord's army, on our knees, praying in the harvest, knowing that those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.

The definition of sin in the Catechism is, "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God" (1 John 3:4)(WSC XIV). Here we see the depth and breadth of sin, and maybe can understand that it has never been possible for mankind to save himself by the obedience of the law. God never intended the law to be used as a heavenly vehicle to lift man across the gulf that lies between heaven and earth. Rather as noted before it is the schoolmaster by whom sin is revealed. It is hard to draw analogies that fit here. Try and think of what would be the most repulsive person you can imagine to yourself. Consider the vast difference between this person and yourself. What would bring you to call this person friend? What could bridge the gap that exists between what you are and who they are? Now multiply that by thousands and you will have just begun the revulsion of a holy God toward sin. Yet His love is so great He found the covering needed to not only bring us into His presence, but to call us His children. Thus, while all sin is awesome when we consider the affront to the nostrils of God. It is also a truth that no matter how vile our sin, God can and will forgive us, that though we be as crimson, in the blood of His Son we become to Him as the purest of snow.

It is important for us to carefully consider this listing of sins. For example how often have you heard someone say that a particular situation must be their cross to bear? Did you realize God says this is sin? Read the proof texts appended to this question. How often do you hear Christians say they are sad or depressed? Is this sin in light of this question with its Scripture references? I believe it is! Real Philippians, and know we are to rejoice always! God says so, therefore it is a truth we can do this very thing.

I believe if you will take the time to study each point revealed to you by this question you too will begin to understand how vile we are without Christ, and yet how complete we are in Christ. With this understanding we can move beyond sin, and know the more abundant life promised by Christ. I believe that abundant life is for today; it will not be needed in the resurrection body reserved for us on the last day.

Suggested Sermon Outline

See lesson 36 and attached sermon outline on HCLD 36