

More Than a Name

Exodus 20:7

Introduction

In his book, "How to Win Friends and Influence People", Dale Carnegie identifies what he believes to be the most important sound in the world. Carnegie says, "Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language".

A person's name embodies personality, character, and expectations. When you hear a name you don't think of letters on a page, you remember their face, their sense of humor, experiences you have shared with them. This is why people are so insulted when they feel that their name is being misrepresented, or that someone is talking about them in a way that doesn't reflect who they actually are.

Think about the name of your husband, wife, sibling, parent, or best friend and how much you care about how they are talked about. Think about how upset you would be if people were throwing their name around in ways that polluted what you knew to be true about them.

Today we are taking a look at the Third Commandment which deals with how God's people are to treat His name. As we look at this passage we will focus on this message in the text:

We are all guilty of misusing the name of God, but by his grace, we are set free through Christ to proclaim the greatness of his name.

Prayer

Passage

The Name of God

In our study of the book of Exodus we have spent a great deal of time talking about names. It is in Chapter 3 where we first hear God disclose his name to Moses.

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Exodus 3:13-15)

Here God introduces himself to his people and the world. God speaks His name to Moses to reveal his person and his purpose throughout all generations.

The name of God reveals who God is: the sum of his person, identity, and character. The name of God bears the full weight of his glory, majesty, and covenant keeping love.

As God sets in motion his plans of redemption, He wants his people to know him and respond to him with worship. Over the last two weeks we have looked at the first two commandments. The first deals with worshipping false God and the second with worshipping God falsely. In both we see how God is restoring his people to be worshippers in the way he originally created them to be. In thinking about worship, we must think about the name that God gave them to call upon.

Look with me at a few examples of how that name of God is described throughout scripture:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. (Psalm 8:1 ESV)

Holy- Isaiah 57:15

Everlasting- Isaiah 63:12

Glorious- Isaiah 63:14

His presence- Deuteronomy 12:5

Good- Psalm 54:6

To be feared- Psalm 61:5

*Refuge- Zephaniah 3:12 *Families in Newtown, CT.*

To be praised from sunrise to sunset- Psalm 113:3

Help- Psalm 124:8

Esteemed- Malachi 3:16

Pleasant- Psalm 135:3

Exalted above all things- Psalm 138:2

“For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. (Isaiah 48:9-11 ESV)

The name of the Lord is to be praised. Throughout scripture, the name of God is interchangeable with the person, presence, and promise of God. If the name of God was said to dwell in a place, it meant the presence of God was there with them. If God promised something according to his name, it would be done. If they were saved by the name of the Lord, it was the person of God who set them free.

God’s name is central to who he is. This is why God established the Third Commandment, because he is passionate about his name being proclaimed in all of its glory and power. As he revealed his name to Moses on the mountainside, he wants the knowledge of his name to cover the earth as waters cover the sea.

The Name of God Misused

However, the reason this command exists is because God knew his people would be continually tempted to misuse his precious name. Since his name carries the weight of who he is, ***the name of God is misused when it is emptied of glory by the words and actions of sinful people.***

Many of you probably grew up in a church where this commandment meant that you shouldn’t say “God” out loud when you stub your toe or get a frustrating email at work. While this commandment would apply in that situation, that is only a fraction of its intended application.

So what does the passage really mean when it says “misuse the name of God”? First, I’d like to share an overall statement and the 5 specific ways the name of God is misused.

Put simply: Using it for careless, wicked, for deceptive purposes. Emptying of worth, glory, and honor.

1. Blaspheming or cursing (Leviticus 24:16) - God warns against using his name in an insulting and irreverent manner.
2. Oaths (Hosea 10:4) - God warns against using his name as a guarantee in an oath that one makes with an empty promise or for ill gain. These oaths are said to be “poisonous weeds in a plowed field.”
3. Prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:20, Jeremiah 14:14) - God warns against invoking his name in a prophecy that is false, evil, and contrary to his character.
And the LORD said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. (Jeremiah 14:14 ESV)
4. The universal stamp of approval/trump card (God told me to marry you, break up with you, do this, be abusive, oppress people, etc.)- Related to the above, God warns against using his name as the universal justification for all that you do. In doing so you drag God’s name into situations that dishonor his name and lie about who he is.
5. Magic/Sorcery (Acts 19:13-20) (2 Chronicles 33) – In regards to original context, this is the primary consideration of this passage. Since God’s people just left Egypt where magic and sorcery was rampant, he warns against using his name in spells, incantations, and pagan festivals. Magicians would typically try to use the names of spirits or demons to try and manipulate them into doing their will. It was a way to conjure up authority and bend things to the will of the sorcerer. We saw this during the plagues in Egypt. Pharaoh summoned his sorcerers to try to replicate the miracles of Moses. Clearly this is something that God doesn’t want his people to do.

For example, look with me to Acts 19:13-20, page 928.

13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” 16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. 18 Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. 19 And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. Acts 19:13-20

Here God opposes those who would seek to manipulate his name and authority. As John Calvin states,

“We must not rashly and preposterously pervert his sacred word and adorable mysteries to purposes of ambition, or avarice (greed), or amusement, but, according as they bear the impress of his dignity, must always maintain them in due honor and esteem.” John Calvin

So what does all of this mean for our heart? We take the name of God in vain in our words because he is empty to us in our hearts. We have emptied his name of glory because we have placed weight on other

things. Rather than proclaiming what is said in Psalm 115, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory”, we want the glory to go to our name. So, we twist, pervert, and seek to manipulate God’s name to further our agenda, appease our anger, and advance our glory.

The cost of misusing the name of God is incredibly high. The passage says that God will not hold him guiltless who misuses his name. This is because his name is perfect and precious and our trespass offends his holiness.

The crime of one being despising and casting contempt on another, is proportionably more or less heinous, as he was under greater or less obligations to obey him. And therefore if there be any being that we are under infinite obligation to love, and honor, and obey, the contrary towards him must be infinitely faulty. Jonathan Edwards

If you are trying to calculate a way to keep this commandment and always honor the name of God, don’t waste your time. This commandment is impossible for you to keep. This doesn’t surprise God. He knew it all along. In accordance with the perfection of his name he ordained long ago that he would send his son Jesus to be the one to fulfill this commandment. As Jesus has been doing for all eternity with the community of the Trinity, God sent him to earth to uphold the glory of his name through his life, death, and resurrection.

The Name of God Exalted by the Son of God

As we continue the celebration of Advent, we join in the expectation of the coming of Christ. In Isaiah 9, God speaks to Isaiah about one who would come to make the name of God known to the ends of the earth.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:6-7

In Christ, God was sending one whom would bear the full weight of the person, presence, promise of God and would in every way seek to glorify God the father. ***The name of God is perfectly honored by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.***

We see this in a few simple ways:

1. Prayers of Jesus: Lord’s Prayer- Hallowed be your name
2. Obedience of Jesus: Phil 2- Name above all names. All for the Glory of God the Father.
3. Name of Jesus: Romans 10 & Acts 4:12- Confess his name to be saved

We are all guilty of misusing the name of God, but by his grace, we are set free through Christ to proclaim the greatness of his name. In our sin we care more about making much of our name than God’s. We have condemned ourselves with our empty words, promises, and actions that seek to use God’s name for our own glory. Christ rescues us from this disease of self and sets our hearts to desire the name and renown of God. In Ezekiel 36, God says that it is for the sake of his name that he would redeem his people and cleanse them from their idols. This would be a display for the nations, so they would know that the Lord accomplished it, and therefore praise his name.

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:22-28 ESV)

The Name of God Made Known by the People of God

While this passage deals significantly with not misusing the name of God, it is not the final word. The implication of this passage is that we would use the name of God in accordance with all of his glory. This is because God’s goal is that ***the name of God is to be proclaimed unto the ends of the earth by his ransomed people.***

Once you become a Christian, you join in the global mission of proclaiming the name of Jesus to the uttermost parts of the earth. It is by his name that the hearts of men are saved, so it is his name that we must preach, sing, and pray over every distant land and territory on earth.

Hear the words of Jesus in Luke 24

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”(Luke 24:44-49 ESV)

“God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshipers for Himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of His name among the nations. Therefore, let us bring our affections into line with His, and, for the sake of His name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts and join His global purpose.” John Piper

As we believe that salvation is found in repentance and faith in Jesus, we take this as our anthem. The purpose of your life is now to have as your chief desire the name and renown of Jesus. It is the name above all names. It is the name by which we are saved. Praise the name of Jesus! Praise the name of Jesus! Praise the name of Jesus!

Conclusion

Karis, may we be a people that have lives marked by the passionate proclamation of the glorious name of Jesus.

Supper & Prayer