

## REVERENCE GOD'S NAME

"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." Exodus 20:7.

It is to God that our reverence is due. This text requires us to honor God's name, which is the same as honoring God Himself. One cannot separate God's name from His person. All of us recognize the propriety of honoring the names of those who have distinguished themselves in working for human progress. Those who have wrought unselfishly for the public good are remembered gratefully. Their names are inscribed on the pages of history and cherished by those who profited from their labors. Monuments have been erected, often at public expense, to perpetuate the memory of their deeds and kindle the spirit of emulation. The names of Washington and Lincoln will be cherished as long as this nation stands.

How much more ought the name of God to be remembered. It ought to inspire each of us to all that is holiest and best. None of us reverence God's name as fully as we ought. Many forget and neglect. Many others use it only to dishonor it.

God's name not only signifies all His various titles, but it also signifies His nature, His attributes, His character, His authority, His purposes, His methods, His providences, His words, His truths, in short, all that God is, all that God says, and all that God does.

### I. The Divine Prohibition.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The presupposition behind this prohibition is that God's name is sacred. But who is this God that His name should be sacred to us? Everything that has been created in the whole universe was made by Him Who is the great Creator. If you speak of power, His is the greatest conceivable. If you speak of wisdom His transcends the loftiest comprehension of man. If you think of truth, He is the ultimate Reality upon which all else depends. If you think of beauty, He is the Author of all that is lovely. If you think of goodness, His character is the ultimate standing. All that we have, and all that we are, we owe to Him. We are dependent upon Him for our very lives; we cannot exist apart from Him. If, therefore in our hearts there is the least spark of gratitude, and in our souls there is any appreciation of what is fine, true, and right, this appreciation and gratitude must express themselves in reverence for God. And we cannot speak lightly of the things that we revere.

The Hebrew word for "in vain" is ambiguous: it may either mean falsely, insincerely, deceitfully, or it may mean emptily, frivolously or profanely. Therefore, we shall not go astray if we study this prohibition in the light of both these meanings.

What are some of the ways in which we may take God's name in vain?

1. When we speak irreverently of it.
2. When we profess His name, but do not live answerably to it. Some profess Christ in words, but in works they deny Him.
3. When we use God's name in idle discourse.  
God is not to be spoken of except with a holy awe upon our hearts. To bring His name in at every turn is taking it in vain.
4. When we worship Him with our lips, but not with our hearts.

It is the heart which God calls for. "My son give me thine heart" Proverbs 23:26. The heart is the chief thing; it draws the will and affections after it.

5. When we use it hypocritically.

Christ despises the sin of religious insincerity, hypocritically honoring God with the lips while the heart is far from Him.

6. When we swear by His name.

Many seldom use God's name except in oaths. Profanity flavors much of the ordinary conversation today and seems to be a vital part of much literature. But in spite of its popularity it is at once coarse, silly, foolish, senseless, vulgar, unnecessary, useless, injurious, wrong, sinful and futile. Those who swear have no need for any intelligence in doing so. In so doing they are using the same vocabulary that is used by the lowest grade morons, thugs, criminals, and prostitutes. Profanity is a symptom of an inner sickness. It is a stream that flows only from a poison and vitiated fountain.

II. The Divine Reason.

"For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." God will not hold any person innocent who takes His name in vain and He will punish Him for his sin. People may look upon profanity as a trivial matter, but God looks upon it as a great sin. Profanity is an unmistakable evidence of innate coarseness of character. Good manners ought to keep people from cursing even though they are not Christians.