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“The Perfect Ten #3: What's In a Name?”  
Deuteronomy 5:11 (Ex. 20:7)

What’s in a name, really? Is it just about identification, or is there more to it? Do names carry implications about who people really are?

In an issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dr. Howard Bennett presented a personal study of the various names of people in the medical profession in the United States. In his study he found 22 doctors named Needle, Probe, Lance and Ligate, and another 20 named Drill, Scope, Bolt and Pin. Dr. Bennett also found 19 physicians named Fix, Cure and Heal, and 74 doctors named Brilliant, Able and Best! So far, so good. But imagine the ambivalence caused when you visit a doctor with a name like Klutz or Croak? Apparently, Bennett’s study found a few.

Today we come to the third Commandment: Deu. 5:11 (Exo 20:7) (NKJV) '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.'  
(HCSB) “Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses His name.”

Some think this is not a very important Commandment because it governs words, instead of actions. It seems ridiculous that certain words, used improperly, can make one guilty of sin.

But we will see that not can using words wrongly be sin, but that it extends far beyond the simple misuse of certain words.

This morning consider:

What does God's name mean?

What is the sin here?

What is its alternative? Words of Blessing.

1. What does God's name mean?

God has many names in the Bible that people commonly use "in vain". This is far more than a list of names. It is an unfolding story of God revealing Himself to people He loves.

1. God (Elohim) - the triune Creator. Compound forms include ...
  - El Elyon, the God most high, from Melchizedek, when God enabled Abraham to rescue Lot when Sodom was invaded (Gen. 14:19-20), after which God gave the Covenant of Promise to him.
  - El Roi (Ro-ee), the God who Sees, who appeared to Hagar, when she ran away from

Sarai when Sarai treated her harshly. (Gen. 16:13)

- El Shaddai, the Almighty, All-Sufficient one, given when Abraham is given the promise that Sarah will finally give birth to a son in the next year, renewing the Covenant (Gen. 17:1-2)

2. The LORD - Yahweh: the eternal, personal God of the Covenant. It is derived from "hayah", which means "to be, to become".

At the burning bush, Moses is called to return to Egypt to rescue God's people. Exodus 3:13-15 (HCSB) Then Moses asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them: The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what should I tell them?" God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." God also said to Moses, "Say this to the Israelites: Yahweh, 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; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.

Although the name "Yahweh" appears as early as Gen. 2:4, God was not known by that name until Moses' time: Exodus 6:2-4

(HCSB) "Then God spoke to Moses, telling him, "I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but I did not reveal My name Yahweh to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land they lived in as foreigners."

ESVSB: "Though some modern translations keep "Yahweh" in English, the esv follows the tradition of replacing Yahweh by "the LORD" (with small capital letters). This practice goes back to the first Greek translation in the third century b.c., the Septuagint, which renders Yahweh by kyrios "Lord," a usage that was also quoted extensively in the Greek NT. In this way, translating this term as "the LORD" also shows the links with the NT, which calls Christ "Lord," thereby identifying him with the God of the OT.

- Later, Yahweh is combined w/ other names: e.g. He is the sovereign Lord, the "Almighty"

3. In the New Testament, Christ: Messiah, the Anointed one
4. Jesus: Savior
5. Lord: the Master. God.

God's names mean something: they stand for His character. The Lord's Prayer's 1<sup>st</sup> petition is about God's Name

ILL: If I say the names Willie Pratt or Katheryn Elizabeth Hudson, you may have one image of the person it describes, but how does that change when I tell you they changed them to Boris Karloff and Katy Perry?

God's names in the OT tell an unfolding story:

Yahweh Jireh: Gen 22:14 (Isaac sacrifice) (NKJV) "And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."

Yahweh Shalom: When the Angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, and, doubting he put Him to a test, after it, Judges 6:22-24 (NKJV) "Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face." Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die." So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace."

Yahweh Nissi: Victory: When Joshua defeated the Amalekites through the prayers of Moses, Exo 17:15 "Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner."

Yahweh Mekoddishkem: When told to observe the Sabbaths, Exo. 31:13 (NKJV) "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you [sets you apart]."

Yahweh Raah: David, comforted, led and guarded by God wrote Psalm 23 "The LORD is my shepherd"

Yahweh Tsabaoth: Almighty, "Lord of hosts" used by individuals in 1 Sam., but then often by the Prophets, when the people found themselves powerless amid struggles: Psalm 46:7 (ESV) "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

Yahweh Tsidkenu: Given in the dark days of captivity by the weeping prophet, of a coming Savior, Jer. 23:6 (NKJV) "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: the LORD our righteousness

Yahweh Shammah: Ezekiel's vision of the new city and new temple at its heart, with equal access for all, last verse: 48:35 "And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE.""

2. Now how does one take God's name "in vain?"

When you do something, and it is "all in vain," nothing comes of it. God's reputation is at stake!

ESVSB: "Taking the Lord's name in vain refers primarily to someone taking a deceptive oath in God's name or invoking God's name to sanction an act in which the person is being dishonest. It also bans using God's name in magic, or irreverently, or disrespectfully, To use it with any idle, frivolous, blasphemous or insincere intent."

The basic teaching of it is that God wants to be the Lord of our tongue.

But we break the Commandment in 3 basic ways: Profanity, Frivolity and Hypocrisy.

### 1. Profanity: 3 kinds

a. Filthy language: foul words that refer to matters that should be mentioned only in private.

- This is not strictly profanity, except that it degrades some things God intended as beautiful or at least natural.

b. References to a state of condemnation & hell: Also not strictly profanity

c. Irreverent use of the names of God & Jesus Christ, to spice up daily speech.

### 2. Frivolity:

- Jokes about God.

- "God bless you " w/o meaning it.

- Some say of such things, "It's just a habit of speech. I don't mean anything by it." That is just the point.

- Even "Praise the Lord" can be profanity if it is one "in vain."

- Now do you understand why the Jews came to avoid saying the name of God altogether?

### 3. Hypocrisy.

Professing to be a believer, but living a life that contradicts it, or failing to live as we should.

Lawson Stone: "What it tells us is to not let God's name, and all that it implies, be ineffectual and meaningless in our lives. No doubt, this does relate to our speech! But more important, what is at stake in the third commandment is our stewardship of God's truth as He has revealed it. For the name of God to be ineffectual means that it has become merely a story in the past, a tradition devoid of dynamic power and life-changing impact. This clearly happened in Israel..."

“How many professing Christians, who are stewards of the name and image of Jesus Christ, have allowed His name, His image, and His work in history and in their lives to count for nothing and to appear false to the world? The third commandment is not merely about our TALK – it’s about our WALK”

In the commandment, “take” means “to carry, to bear”. Don’t carry it without effect, so it seems false!

Spurgeon: "An unholy life is an evidence of an unchanged heart, and an unchanged heart is an evidence of an unsaved soul."

Redpath: "It is usually possible to tell how far a message from God's Word has got home by the way a congregation leaves church."

How do You and I leave church?

- Is there an awesome awareness of God's presence and dealing with His people?
- Is there a desire to go home and pray alone or with your family over it?
- Or are You and I busy arranging the day's and week's activities?

Matthew 7:21 (NKJV) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

b. We transgress the 3rd Commandment by unbelief, by praying to God, but not believing He will answer or even hear, and so we dishonor His name.

c. We speak evil of God whenever we complain of His providences.

trans: As you can see, there is much more forbidden here than first meets the eye, but now ...

What reasons are given to enforce the Commandment upon us?

A. The majesty of the one asking: "the LORD your God."

You might easily take lightly the name of a pal, but not that of a king. How much more should we honor God's name?

B. Reason #2: "for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

1. To hold guiltless is to leave unpunished.

This is saying that if you can keep all the other Commandments perfectly, you will not be seen as clean before God without a right attitude toward His name.

## 2. God considers profanity serious.

Once, while Israel wandered in the wilderness, a man was stoned for it: Leviticus 24:10-16.

While this is very severe by our experience, remember that at this point in redemption history, the point is being made that the wages of all sin is death.

## 3. Why is profanity so serious?

Because it causes people to take God for granted, and so miss being saved, for lack of conviction.

It robs God of the fear, reverence, awe and respect due Him.

4. The command also shows us God's particular love for us, in that he is concerned about our everyday speech.

Now in view of all this, we might think that knowing God's name can be a curse, but for every sin, God invites us to an act of obedience, which is a blessing, so consider ...

## 3. What does the third commandment ask of us?

"It requires that God's names, attributes, words and works be reverently used in thought and in word by a holy profession and answerable life to the glory of God and the good of ourselves and others."  
It is a blessing!

We are to use God's names, and mean something, so it will lift us from lostness to Righteousness, joy and peace.

A. ILL: I often hear from new believers how one of the first evidences of Grace was their reaction to profanity, for God's & Jesus' names have come to mean something.

When you hear profanity or are tempted to use it. use God's name meaningfully instead; Pray!  
Psalm 18:3 (NKJV) "I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies."

"But I can't stop !" The only thing that will stop profanity is Faith in Christ as Lord & Savior; you will then stop trying to be your own boss by dragging around & His name: Romans 10:9-10 (ESV) "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

B. Note the good uses and blessings of God's name:

- It brings salvation: Acts 2:21 (NKJV) And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'
- It is used to heal: Acts 3:6 (NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."
- It is the only way of salvation: Acts 4:12 (ESV) And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- It is, of course, not just the saying of the name, but the life that follows: 1 John 1:6-7 (NKJV) "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." AND 1 John 2:4-5 (ESV) "Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him"

Not only can we use God's name meaningfully, we can be blessed by His character described:

- The Mighty Creator
- The Lord who will provide
- The Lord who brings Peace
- The Lord my Banner, my victory
- The Lord who Sanctifies, sets me apart
- The Lord who Shepherds me
- The Lord of hosts, the Almighty Deliverer
- The Lord who is my Righteousness
- The Lord who will always be Present

Conc: What have you done with God's names?

Have you taken them in vain with profanity, frivolity or hypocrisy?

Action: Repent of any sin in the use of His name.

Pray for opportunities to use God's names as a blessing?

Thank God He is willing & able to forgive, and lay our sins upon Christ, and to lead us from being under the judgment of God to being His precious children who love and are blessed by His name.