

Walking with Jesus Through Sinai:
 Seeking Moral Clarity in an Age of Chaos with the 10 Commandments
 CPC Adult Sunday Studies Fall 2024
 11 - Third Commandment, part 2

On God's Name and Our Speech, continued

Review - from worshipping God as God has commanded in the 2nd C., and avoiding, as one example, the sin of vainglory by worshipping other images, we move now to treating God's name as it is due. This broadens, once again, the application of the 1st C. beyond God as God to God's glory, works, reputation, and witness.

Exodus 20:7 - *"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."* (ESV)

Jesus on Oaths and Speech

1. **In Speech** - *"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil."* (Matt. 5.33-37)
 1. **Say what you mean!** It's as if everything we say, we say "in the name of the Lord" so that it can all be believed and is trustworthy. Jesus calls us to such integrity that we don't need to take special oaths, because everything we say or do is done in light of the Lord's name.
 1. This has many implications! It's as if, when witnesses swear on a Bible in a trial court, that's a picture of how our speech should always be considered! We can't pretend as if God is not present or is not witness to what we are doing or saying, and only becomes relevant when we name him.
 2. *Does this contradict all the other oaths in the Bible (old and new testaments), as some anabaptists would argue?*

1. Deut. 6.13 - *“It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.”* (Cf. Deut. 10.20, Exod. 22.10-11)
2. Rom. 1.9 - *“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers...”* - and 2Cor. 1.23 - *“But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth”* are examples of Paul making an oath to God.
3. Confession of Faith 22 -
 1. I. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth, or promiseth, and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.
 2. VI. It is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want, whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties...
 3. VII. No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance whereof he hath no promise of ability from God.
 1. There’s **liberation** here in not feeling burdened to make a promise to God that he hasn’t made clear you should, or given you the ability to keep. The reformers had monastic vows in mind, and some of us do this casually now.
 2. What’s wrong with saying to God, “I promise, I will never be greedy again”?
 4. Note that this also has ramifications for our **views of civil authority**. If you can never take an oath of any sort, then you can never serve in public office, join the military, etc. If those authorities are lawfully set up by God, then they have the right to ask for an oath.

3. *On Speech, in general*

1. *“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth*

speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
(Matt. 12.33-37)

2. Our speech betrays our heart!

Sins Forbidden

WLC 113 - “What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God’s name as is required; and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works, by blasphemy, perjury; all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful; and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful; murmuring and quarreling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God’s decrees and providences; misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices; the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any wise opposing of God’s truth, grace, and ways; making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by unconformable, unwise, unfruitful and offensive walking, or backsliding from it.”

(Mal. 2:2; Acts 17:23; Prov. 30:9; Mal. 1:6-7, 12; Mal. 3:14; 1 Sam. 4:3-5; Jer. 7:4, 9-10, 14, 31; Col. 2:20-22; 2 Kings 18:30, 35; Ex. 5:2; Ps. 139:20; Ps. 1:16-17; Isa. 5:12; 2 Kings 19:22; Lev. 24:11; Zech. 5:4; Zech. 8:17; 1 Sam. 17:43; 2 Sam. 16:5; Jer. 5:7; Jer. 23:10; Deut. 23:18; Acts 23:12, 14; Esther 3:7; Esther 9:24; Ps. 22:18; Ps. 24:4; Ezek. 17:16, 18-19; Mark 6:26; 1 Sam. 25:22, 32-34; Rom. 9:14, 19-20; Deut. 29:29; Rom. 3:5, 7; Rom. 6:1-2; Ecc. 8:11; Ecc. 9:3; Ps. 39:1-13; Matt. 5:21-28; Ezek. 13:22; 2 Pet. 3:16; Matt. 22:24-31; Isa. 22:13; Jer. 23:34, 36, 38; 1 Tim. 1:4, 6-7; 1 Tim. 6:4-5, 20; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Rom. 13:13-14; 1 Kings 21:9-10; Jude 1:4; Acts 13:45; 1 John 3:12; Ps. 1:1; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:4; Acts 13:45-46, 50; Acts 4:18; Acts 19:9; 1 Thess. 2:16; Heb. 10:29; 2 Tim. 3:5; Matt. 23:14; Matt. 6:1-2, 5, 16; Mark 8:38; Ps. 73:14-15; 1 Cor. 6:5-6; Eph. 5:15-17; Isa. 5:4; 2 Pet. 1:8-9; Rom. 2:23-24; Gal. 3:1, 3; Heb. 6:6; 2 Tim. 2:14; Titus 3:9; Deut. 18:10-14; Acts 19:13.)

- ***Not as God’s name requires*** - bestowing his name upon us, God calls us to live in light of who he is, so this covers a lot!
- ***Abuse of his “his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works”*** - again, very expansive. Remember, this is all about treating seriously who God is and how he has revealed himself to us.

- *Fulfilling unlawful oaths and violating lawful oaths* - notice how they're both about what God has declared clearly in his word, so the liberty of conscience is underneath this. In other words, only God can bind your conscience, and even you swear an oath, you're not bound by it if God hasn't. At the same time, it places a very high bar on oaths that are lawful since you call God as witness and testimony to what you promise.
- *Murmuring and quarreling . . . false doctrines* - doing any of these things implies that you are not receiving God's word as God's word or as God intended it.

Some of the same themes will return when we consider "bearing false witness," where we'll consider slander, social media, etc.