

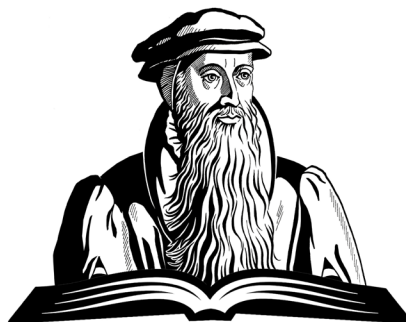
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #46, Lord's Day 36

God's Commandment Concerning His Name



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Sermon #46 Lord's Day 36

God Commandment
Concerning His Name

Exodus 2, verse 7

Questions and Answers #99 and #100

i. Introduction

1. The Vain Use of His Name Forbidden

2. The Proper Use of His Name Commanded

3. The Sacred Use of His Name Vindicated

Introduction

Congregation, please turn with me to Lord's Day 36 of our Heidelberg Catechism.

Question #99: *What is required in the third commandment?*

And let me just read the Third Commandment:

“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 and Deuteronomy 5:11).

So, what is required by that commandment?

The Answer is: *That we, not only by cursing or perjury, but also by rash swearing, must not profane or abuse the name of God; nor by silence or connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others; and, briefly, that we use the holy name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence, so that He may be rightly confessed and worshipped by us, and be glorified in all our words and works.*

Question #100: *Is then the profaning of God's name by swearing and cursing so heinous a sin that His wrath is kindled against those who do not endeavor, as much as in them lies, to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing?*

The Answer is: *It undoubtedly is, for there is no sin greater or more provoking to God than the profaning of His name; and therefore He has commanded this sin to be punished with death.*

Thus far, Lord's Day 36.

And so, we're going to deal with *God's Commandment Concerning His Name*. First of all, we're going to consider *The Vain, or empty, Use of His Name, which is Forbidden*. Secondly, *The Proper Use of His Name Commanded*. In every Commandment, there is a negative and a positive command. And thirdly, *The Sacred Use of His Name Vindicated*. In Question #100, the Catechism underscores once more what a grievous and heinous sin it is to take the name of God in vain. So, *God's Commandment Concerning His Name; The Vain Use of His Name Forbidden; The Proper Use of His Name Commanded; and, The Sacred Use of His Name Vindicated*.

And so, congregation, boys and girls, we're focusing tonight on the third of the first four Commandments, which we refer to as "the first table of God's law." And so, there are two tables to God's Law. There are two basic Commandments to the law of God. And Christ expressed this clearly in Matthew 22, verses 37 through 40, where he gives us the very essence of God's law, which requires of man that we love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. And the Lord Jesus then declares that "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (verse 40). And as we've explained before, we know, what the law of God essentially requires of man is that with every fiber of our being, we love and serve the God who created us, and that we love our neighbor, who has been created in the very image of God. But on Mount Sinai, when God gave the law to the people of Israel, he gave that law in Ten Commandments, and he gave that law in a form that was consistent with the fact that he was now giving his law to a sinful people; giving his law to a people who were now inclined to disobey his precepts. And as you know, that very quickly manifested itself in the fact that, in Moses' absence, they made a golden calf, and then grievously transgressed the Second Commandment by worshipping God by way of a vain image.

But when we take the first four Commandments, ultimately, in those four Commandments, God spells out for us what it means to love him with heart, soul, and mind. And so, let me just very briefly highlight those four Commandments and the primary purpose of each Commandment.

So we could say that in the First Commandment, God shows us the object of worship: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

In the Second Commandment, he stipulates the focus of our worship, namely, that we are to worship him as he has revealed himself in his only begotten Son, who is the only legitimate image of God the Father.

And now, in the Third Commandment, the focus is on the nature of that worship. In other words, considering who God is in his Son, we may never be casual in our worship. We may never be vain in our worship. Our worship must be spiritual.

And then, in the Fourth Commandment, we have the day of worship, the day in which we worship the Triune God.

So let me repeat that: the First Commandment—the object of worship; the Second Commandment—the focus of worship; the Third Commandment—the nature of worship; and the Fourth Commandment—the day of worship.

1. The Vain Use of His Name Forbidden

And so, we have arrived at the Third Commandment, in which God forbids us to take his name in vain; in which he forbids us to use his name in a superficial and frivolous manner, to dishonor that name, to be disrespectful to the name of God. And congregation, boys and girls, why is that Commandment so very, very important? And why is God so supremely offended when we, as sinners, take his name in vain? So we need to, for a moment, reflect on the fact that the theme of God's name is very prominent throughout the Word of God. And so what does that mean?

So, first of all, boys and girls, you know that you have a name. You have a name that uniquely belongs to you. You are known by your name. And the reason we need names is so that we can differentiate between human beings. Our name somehow expresses our very unique identity. Now, God does not have to differentiate himself from other gods, for there are no other gods. Then why is the name of God so very prominent in the Word of God? And why is the name so very important, that God forbids us to use his name in vain?

Now we know, congregation, that by means of his names, God reveals himself to us. By means of his names, God communicates who he is. And so, we could say that in each of God's names, we have a revelation of God's character, and we have a revelation of his being. So the names of God in Scripture are the self-revelation of God. And it tells us a great deal about God and about his character. Because, what it tells us, congregation, is that God is a God whose desire and good pleasure it is to reveal himself. It is God's desire to make himself known. It is God's desire to communicate to the children of men who he is. And he does it in a very unique way, by means of his name. And actually, you could say that we could put an equal sign between the names of God and between the Word of God. Ultimately, the Bible, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, is an unveiling of who God is; an unveiling of his very being; and an unveiling of his character. And of course, specifically, that means that the names of God are intimately connected to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why the Word of God says that the Father has given him a name above every other name. Because, ultimately, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, is the fullest revelation of who God is. That's why Jesus said to Philip, when he asked him, "Shew us the Father and it will suffice us," he said, Philip, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father (John 14:8-9). So, in his only begotten Son, God has fully unveiled himself to us.

That was already true in the Old Testament. And so, we read in Exodus 23, verses 20 and 21, where God says, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee"—Angel with a capital "A"—"to keep thee in the way..."—and listen carefully to what it says—"for my name is in him"—my name is in him. In John 17, verse 26, Christ himself, in his High Priestly Prayer, he says this: "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." It's very important for us to understand the vital connection between God's name and his only begotten Son. Because then we begin to understand why God is so supremely offended when his name is taken in vain. Because, as you know, congregation, all of God's dealings with man are always in and through his only begotten Son. It is in his Son that God is knowable. It is in his Son that God draws near to man. It is in his Son that God communicates to us who he is. And that's why the Bible refers to him, as you know, as "the Word of God." That's why the Gospel of John begins so very profoundly by saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). That means that God's Son is the revelation of who the Father is. God's Son is the unveiling of the glory and the beauty of God. That's why, whenever we read the Word of God, whenever we read about the names of God, we must always make the connection to the Son of God. Because, as you know, and I often repeat, the written Word, the written revelation of God, the written communication of God to us, the written Word is about the living Word. And then we begin to understand why the name of God is so very near to him.

That's why it's such a miracle that God continues to communicate to us by means of his names. When God created us in Adam, Adam and Eve, they knew their Maker. They lived in fellowship with their Maker. God communed with them day by day. That's his very character. His very being is that he is a communicating God who desires to make himself known. And so, he created us in his image. How special were those early days before sin entered. And every day, morning and evening,

God would declare his name to Adam and Eve; God would reveal himself to Adam and Eve; God would communicate; God would open up his heart to this man and woman, whom he had created in his image. And what a miracle it is that in spite of the fall, God still is pleased to make himself known. That's why he's given us his precious Word. That's why we have the ministry of God's Word today. Oh, that ministry functions, not because in the first place we need to hear the gospel, but the ministry of the gospel functions because it is God's desire to commune with the children of men. It is God's desire to make himself known. It is God's desire to draw near to us. And he does that through his Word, and especially in his only begotten Son. Calvin¹ comments as follows, when he speaks of this amazing wonder that God continues to reveal himself to fallen sinners as we are. He said, "Is it not an inestimable goodness that our God so stoops towards us and permits us to use his name. He wants so much to accommodate himself toward us that our shamefulness is even greater if we profane the name of God."

That's why, in the perfect prayer that Christ taught his disciples, that name is the very first component of that prayer. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, as we will see in a few weeks, the very first petition is "Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9). And that's why true prayer is our response to that revelation. So, in other words, true prayer is an honoring of God's name. True prayer is a response to what God reveals to us in his Word through his only begotten Son.

And it's against that background that we have to consider the transgression of this Commandment. Because the grievousness and the wickedness of our fall in Adam is that, by nature, we have no use for that name. We have no use for our Maker. By nature, we disregard our Maker. We dishonor him, and we despise his precious name. What a miracle it, therefore, is that in spite of that wretched reality that characterizes our fallen world, we can say that most of our world, most of our globe today lives in constant transgression of this Commandment; that throughout this world, God's name is blatantly taken in vain in various ways.

And so, it ought not to be, however, in the family of God. Because, remember, we are considering those Commandments within the context of sanctification. As you know that the Heidelberg Catechism wisely reserves the exposition of the Ten Commandments for the segment of Gratitude. It briefly mentions it in connection with Lord's Day 2—how do we know our sins?—by means of the law, of course. That's the mirror in which we see ourselves, in which the Holy Spirit will show us who we are in the sight of God. But God's redeemed people, as we have pointed out in the past, God's redeemed people express their gratitude by living an obedient life.

That's why Christ, the Lawgiver, became the Law-keeper, and was condemned as a law-breaker, so that law-breakers could be reconciled with God and become law-keepers again. And so, holiness is defined by God's law, and so the sacred obligation of God's redeemed people is to order their lives according to God's precepts. And so, the mark of a godly person, the mark of a person who, by the grace of God, has embraced the living Word of God as their Savior, they should manifest the love they have for that Redeemer by honoring his written Word, and specifically within the framework of the Ten Commandments.

And so, it is the special calling of God's redeemed people to hallow and to honor the name of God. And how convicting it is that, even to God's redeemed people, it needs to be said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD *thy God*"—that's the language—"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD *thy God*"—the God who has redeemed you—thou shalt not take the name of that God in vain.

¹ John Calvin, or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) – was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and leading Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

And it mentions various ways in which that name can be taken in vain. It mentions cursing. Now, that should be obvious, but that should be far, far from one who professes the name of Christ—cursing, which is wishing evil upon God or man. And how much of that cursing goes on in our culture. Some of you work in work environments where God’s name is taken in vain on a regular basis, often very, very brazenly. How many, in North America, in our nation that at one time was so profoundly influenced by Christianity, how many are there now, who take the name of Jesus Christ in vain over, and over again? How many are there now, who actually are praying for their own damnation? How many are there now, who frivolously and repeatedly refer to hell—“the hell with this” and “the hell with that”, taking God’s name in vain? And of course, such brazen taking of God’s name in vain should be far from us. It also mentions here perjury and swearing rashly, but I will not address that tonight because Lord’s Day 37 speaks specifically of the swearing of an oath as a specific application of this Commandment.

But it also mentions, here, and this is where it comes very close to home: *nor by silence or connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others*. Listen to the Word of God from Leviticus 5, verse 1: “And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it then he shall bear his iniquity.” This is solemn, congregation. And who of us would dare to say tonight that we have never been guilty of silence when we should have spoken, when we have been silent when God’s name was taken in vain. And I realize that some of the situations in which you find yourself can be very, very sensitive. But the question is, when you hear God’s name taken in vain, when you profess to be a Christian, and when that name should be so very, very precious to you, what is it that holds us back? What is it, and I include myself, what is it that so often makes us cowards? And we remain silent when the name of God is taken in vain. And I realize we need to be wise when we communicate with our fellow man, and yet, we should have the courage to speak up, knowing that we may very well be rejected and maligned because we did. But there is very much at stake. God’s honor is at stake. The Catechism says, and Leviticus says, if we hear the taking of God’s name in vain, if we hear the dishonoring of God’s name, the slandering of God’s name, and if we remain silent, we are guilty of allowing God’s name to be taken in vain.

But then, of course, there is also the religious transgression of this Commandment. And that’s especially a transgression that happens within the church community, when we speak and think of the things of God in a superficial way; when our reference to God is casual, without respect. And how much that happens also in our culture today. How many people do you not hear say, “Oh, my God”? How many of you have heard that, a superficial use of the name of God? And even when we hear ungodly politicians end their speech by saying, “God bless America”—it is my desire that God would bless America, but often it is used casually, it is used frivolously, it is used in a way, in a context which supremely dishonors the name of God.

Oh, God forbid that we would ever use God’s name flippantly. God forbid that we would ever use God’s name thoughtlessly. And we do that sometimes, even when our religious exercises, our religious activity become a matter of form rather than a matter of substance. When we engage in the reading of Scripture, when we pray, when we gather for worship, as we are now, and when our whole involvement is casual. When we do not take the name of God seriously. When we use God’s name thoughtlessly, also, in our prayers, we’re taking the name of God in vain. Or, even worse, when we are in the house of God, and we totally disconnect, and we’re just warming our seat. What a dishonoring thing that is to God. Because here especially, here, within the house of God, that name needs to be honored. We are here because it pleases God to reveal that name to us in the gospel and in his only begotten Son. And how shameful it is when we are only there physically,

when we completely disconnect, and do not even engage with that which is being proclaimed to us.

There's another way in which we take God's name in vain. This morning, we talked about hypocrisy. Hypocrisy—when our religious activity is but an act. It's but a veneer that covers up a sinful life. In other words, when what we profess to be is not how we live. When there is this grievous discrepancy with what we profess with our mouth and how we live, and how we conduct ourselves.

Oh, congregation, who of us would dare to say that we are never guilty of taking God's name in vain? What need we have to examine ourselves, and again, as I said this morning, pray that prayer also in connection with this Commandment, "Search my heart, and see if there be any wicked way within me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23–24).

2. The Proper Use of His Name Commanded

Secondly, this Lord's Day talks about the proper use of that name. *And briefly, it says, that we use the holy name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence, so that He may be rightly confessed and worshiped by us, and be glorified in all our words and works.* And so, I want to focus here for a moment, again, on the positive. This is the positive commandment, the proper and correct and reverent and respectful use of the name of God. And so, we are called. The Catechism beautifully summarizes this. That means that the sacred calling of the people of God who profess his name are to rightly confess that name, to worship that name, and to glorify that name by all our words and works.

And so, we go back again to the way God created us. God created us specifically in his image, with the capability of knowing his name, with the capability of responding to the revelation of his name. As you know, I've point out on several occasions, that when God created us in his image, he created us with three unique faculties that would enable us to have this intimate love relationship with our Maker. He bestowed upon us the faculty of knowledge, of intellect; the faculty of affections or emotions; and the faculty of a will. Or to put it very simply, as I've said before, he created us with the capacity to know our Maker, to love our Maker, and to serve our Maker, in that order. And so, if we connect that here to the name of God, God created us with the capacity to know that name, to comprehend what God reveals to us in that name; secondly, with the ability to love that name, to love what God reveals of himself; and thirdly, to honor that name by living a life that honors what God reveals of himself. And so, boys and girls, to keep it very simply for you, God created us with the ability to know him, and to love him, and to serve him.

Whenever I say this, I realize that, by saying that, I am immediately impressing upon you, hopefully, the need to examine yourself to see if that's true in your life. Because, even though we are fallen sinners, yet we know that, by the grace of God, when we are regenerated, when we become a new creature in Christ, that we begin to function again as God originally created us in Adam. And so, the mark of a believer, the mark of a child of God today, is that they again desire to know God, and to love him, and to serve him, especially as it relates to his name. And that's what made our fall so wretched. Because when Adam and Even believed Satan's lie, they despised God's name. When they believed Satan's lie, they despised what God had revealed of himself. And now, fallen man, as a fallen creature, has no use for God's name. As fallen creatures, we only care about ourselves. We only love ourselves, and we only desire to serve ourselves. But the Christian, the child of God, the true believer, the one wrought upon by God's Spirit, God has given you that capacity again. By grace, you have become a new creature in Christ. And by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, those faculties of your soul have been regenerated, have been restored, and begin to function again, so that we can rightly confess his name.

I have to be very brief here—*rightly confess his name*, that means confess his name in conformity to what he has revealed of himself. That’s why it’s so important for a believer, for God’s children, to be such diligent students of the Word of God. Because the only way that we will rightly confess God is by knowing who he is, as he has revealed himself in his Word. And so, our whole worship must be informed by that Word. And so, that’s why we need to rightly confess him, and not confess a god of our imagination. That’s why, in the Second Commandment, God forbids us to worship him according to our own ideas, to worship him according to our imagination, to our way of thinking rather than according to revelation. And so, it’s very important to confess him rightly. That means we, who confess the name of Christ, what an obligation we have to be diligent and prayerful students of the Word of God, to read the Scriptures prayerfully always, beseeching the Holy Spirit to shed light upon his own Word, so that we may know God rightly, and so that we may confess him rightly, in conformity with his precious Word.

And so, the worship of his name is intimately connected to that. So what is worship? So, the key word in “worship” is “worthy”. So, worship is rendering honor to someone who is worthy of that honor. And God alone is the sole and proper object of worship. And so, our sacred calling is to be worshippers of the God we know. That’s why there’s such a close connection with confessing him rightly. Because, if we’re going to worship him rightly, we have to confess him rightly. Because our worship, the honor of his name, our worship of his name must be informed by what is recorded in the Scriptures, by what God has revealed of himself. That’s why this worship has to be a reflection of what we know of him. And it should, therefore, be with fear, with awe, with respect, and with reverence. And we see examples of that in Scripture.

I think of Genesis 18, verse 7, where we read that, “Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.” There’s a man who understood who God was, and who realized, in light of that, who he was. He said, “I am but dust and ashes.” “I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord.” There’s a man who took his proper place before God.

Exodus 15, verse 11—after God miraculously delivered Israel, by making a way in the Red Sea, delivering them from Pharaoh and his host, and on the other end, on the other side of the Red sea, they worshipped the God who has delivered them. So we read this, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” If only they had stayed that way. But at that moment, they were so overwhelmed by the glory of God, they were so overwhelmed by what they had just witnessed, that they could not but worship him. They worshipped him in light of what they knew about him. God had dramatically revealed himself to his people by delivering them from Pharaoh, by leading them through the Red Sea.

Revelation 4, verse 11—now we go to the end of the Bible, and there we find the twenty-four elders, they are engaged in worship. And their worship is informed by what they know. It is informed by what God revealed to them. And so, how did they worship the Lamb? They said, “Thou art worthy”—there you have that word “worthy”—“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

And so, congregation, especially as the people of God, what an obligation we have to be a people who confess him rightly, who worship God in accordance with that which we confess, and thirdly, it says here, *and be glorified in all our words and our works*. So, in other words, these three things, they connect with what I said before: rightly confess the God we know; worship the God we love; and glorify in our words and works the God whom we desire to serve. There, you see that same connection.

What an obligation we therefore have, if we profess the name of God, to conduct ourselves in a manner that is consistent with what we know, consistent with what God has revealed of himself in his Word. And so when we fail, and we do, when as the people of God, we fail; when we sin; when conduct ourselves contrary to what we profess, then we bring dishonor upon the name of God. That's why Paul says, in 2 Timothy 2, verse 19, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." That's why Nathan, when he came to David, he said to him, because of what you have done you have brought great dishonor upon the name of God, because David professed himself to be the servant of God (2 Samuel chapter 12). And when he sinned with Bathsheba, how grievously his behavior contradicted what he professed, and thereby he brought great dishonor.

And that's why we, who profess the name of God in Christ have to be so careful in how we walk, and how we live, and that begins at home, that begins in our marriage, that begins in our family, that begins in the workplace. Those who know us, they should be able to observe in us, by our very walk, by our very demeanor, that we truly know and love this God, and that we desire to serve him, so that our walk is consistent with what we profess. And how much dishonor we bring upon Christ and upon the name of God when we behave ourselves contrary to what we profess.

And so, the life of the Christian, the life of the Christian should be an act of worship. We not only worship him with our tongue, and we worship him in the house of God, but our very life should be an act of worship. Our very life should be ordered according to the Word of God. By our very life we should demonstrate that we know and love the God whose name we profess. And so, when we don't, we transgress the Third Commandment, and we cause the name of God to be taken in vain.

3. The Sacred Use of His Name Vindicated

And finally, Question #100: *Is then the profaning of God's name by swearing and cursing so heinous a sin that His wrath is kindled against those who do not endeavor, as much as in them lies, to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing?*

And so, obviously, the authors of the Catechism wanted to underscore once more how important this Commandment is. And they're saying here in this Question that the profaning of God's name, that the dishonoring of God's name—the dishonoring of his revelation of himself in his Word and in his Son—by swearing and cursing, is *so heinous a sin*. And the word "heinous" here means that which is shockingly evil—shockingly evil. That's why it's so important for us that, in some measure, we would begin to understand who this God is, this God who is infinite in greatness, and majesty, and power, and holiness; this God, in whose presence the sinless angels covered their faces—when we profane his name. You may have experienced it when someone has taken your name in vain, when someone has slandered you, when someone has misrepresented you, you know how exceedingly offensive that is, and how painful that is. But that doesn't even begin to compare when God's name is profaned. When God's name is dishonored, it is a shockingly evil sin, *that his wrath is kindled against those who do not endeavor, as much as in them lies, to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing*. So what this simply underscores, for the people of God—because remember, we're dealing with what are the obligations of the redeemed people of God; how are we to honor this Commandment—the Catechism is saying this is so offensive to God that we must do everything our power to prevent it and to forbid it.

Congregation, who of us could go home tonight and say, "I have not transgressed the Third Commandment." So there's one more form I need to mention briefly, the worst form of the transgression of the Third Commandment is *unbelief*. And if you are not a believer tonight, that unbelief is your damning sin. Because, you know what unbelief is? Unbelief is making God a

liar—that’s the Word of God—by not believing the record that he has given of his Son. And there is no more grievous offense imaginable than to treat the God of heaven and earth, to treat him as a liar. But as long as we live in sin, as long as we continue in sin, and as long as we ignore the Word of God, as long as we refuse to repent, we are treating God as if he doesn’t exist. We are ignoring him. We’re turning our backs upon him. We’re turning a deaf ear to what he has to say. And worst of all, we’re treating him as a liar. That’s what makes unbelief such a very grievous sin. And so, the unbelief of a hearer of the gospel, the unbelief of someone like you who sits here and hears the Word of God, is the ultimate act of disdain for the name of God. Because in the gospel, God so wonderfully unveils his name as a gracious God who delights in mercy, and who has no pleasure in your death. But as you would turn unto him and live, in the gospel, God unveils himself as the God who gave his only begotten Son as a sacrifice for sin. In the gospel God unveils himself as a God who will pardon you, if you trust in his only begotten Son. And to turn your back on that God, to turn a deaf ear to that God, to treat that God as a liar, is the sin of all sins. That’s why, if you would perish, you will be damned because of that sin. Those that reject me, Christ says, “If any man will reject me, I will not judge him, but he will be judged by the very words that I have spoken.” That’s why the Bible says that it will be a fearful thing for the unbeliever. And then, I’m talking about the unbeliever who has lived under the gospel, to fall into the hands of the living God. Because you cannot offend God more than by not believing in his only begotten Son. That is the offense of all offenses. And so, then it applies what we read in Leviticus 24:16, “And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death.”

But thanks be to God that Christ came into the world to save transgressors of the Third Commandment. He came and gave himself. As you know, he was condemned because he professed the name of God. They called it blasphemy because he called himself the Son of God, and so, he was condemned as a blasphemer. They said to Pilate, “According to our law, he has to die.” But what Pilate did not know, and what they did not know, is that he had to die. He had to die because he was going to that cross as Mediator, as substitute. He was going to the cross to pay the penalty for an innumerable multitude of sinners who, by nature, are transgressors of the Third Commandment. And so, he allowed himself to be condemned as a blasphemer, to be the Savior of transgressors of the Third Commandment. Oh, the amazing truths of the cross. And even then, in that hour of darkness, he honored his Father’s name, “My God, my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). And the answer is, so that transgressors of the Third Commandment could be reconciled to God and be restored in his favor.

Oh, my dear congregation, do you realize tonight that your only hope is in Christ. Only in him can you be reconciled with God. Only in him can your sins be blotted out. And that’s the wonder of the gospel, that this God, whose name we, by nature, blaspheme; that this God draws near to us even tonight; that this God unveils himself to us; that this God speaks to us and proclaims his Word to us; that this God draws so near to us, and says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). And so, there is forgiveness for transgressors of the Third Commandment, because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Amen.

Let’s pray.

Great and eternal God, hallowed be thy name. And we confess with shame and sorrow that we are guilty of transgressing the Third Commandment, even as believers, far more than we realize. Oh, that this word would convict us and bring us to our knees, and realize what a sacred obligation we have to confess thy name rightly, to worship thee with fear and reverence, and to order our

conversation in such a way that it will bring honor to thy name. Forgive us all the ways in which we fail. And Lord, should there be those among us who have never turned to thee in truth, oh, that thou wouldst awaken them, that they would no longer hide themselves behind thy decree, or even behind our wretched inability, but we would recognize that unbelief is our damning sin, that so we would seek thee while thou art yet to be found. Oh, the wonder that thou art willing to pardon transgressors also of the Third Commandment. And so, remember us with our children, that thy Word bear fruit in our hearts and lives. May we carry it with us in the week before us. And enable us by grace to conduct ourselves at home, in our marriages, in the workplace in such a manner that it will bring honor to thy name. Go with us now, bring us home safely, and hear us for Christ's sake alone. Amen.