

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #47, Lord's Day 37

God's Name and the Oath



The John Knox Institute
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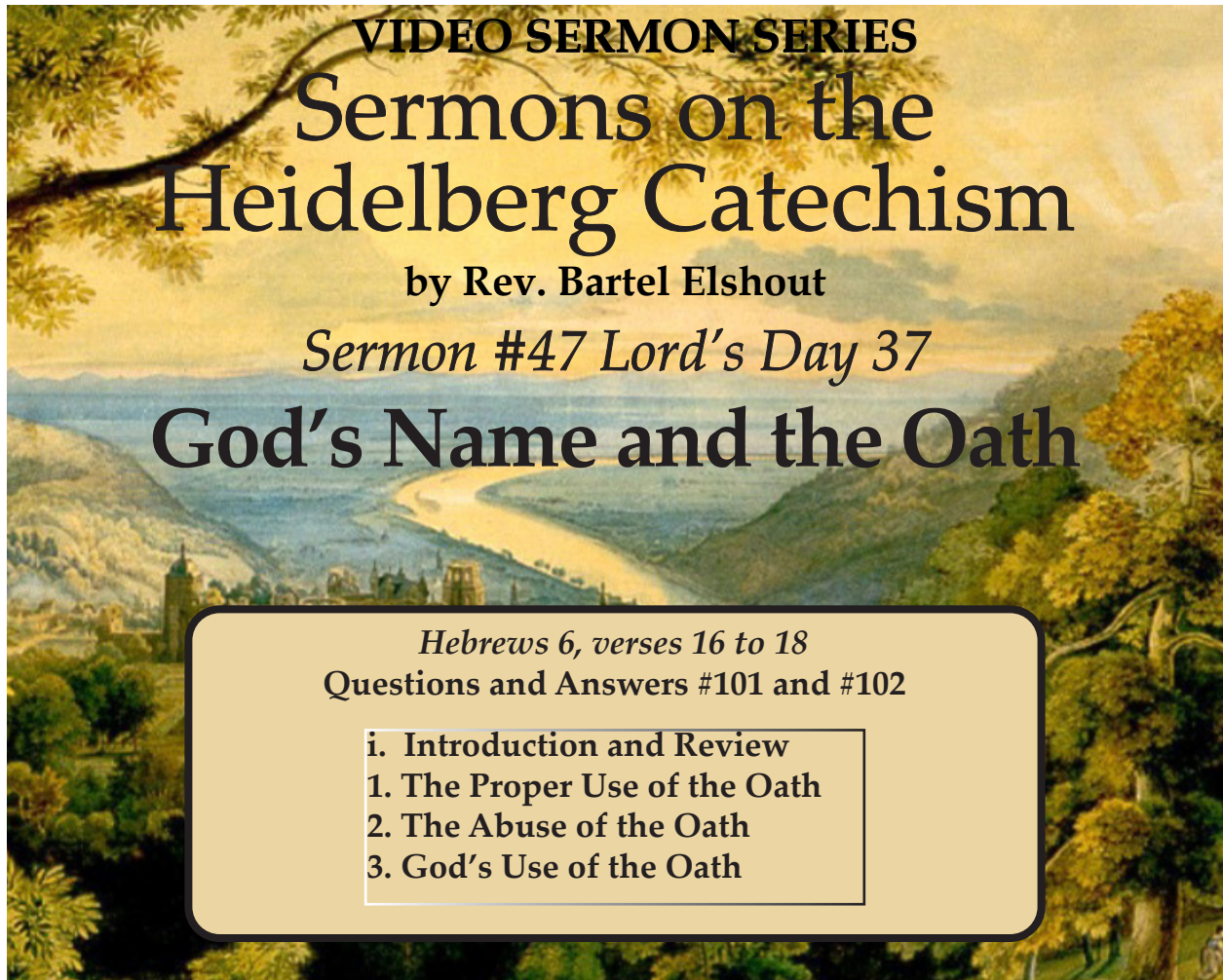
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Sermon #47 Lord's Day 37
God's Name and the Oath

Hebrews 6, verses 16 to 18
Questions and Answers #101 and #102

- i. Introduction and Review**
 - 1. The Proper Use of the Oath**
 - 2. The Abuse of the Oath**
 - 3. God's Use of the Oath**

Introduction and Review

So, congregation, we will continue tonight with the exposition of God's holy law, as it is expounded for us in the Heidelberg Catechism. And thus far, we have considered the First Commandment, which tells us whom we are to worship, that there is but one God: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Secondly, in the Second Commandment, we have been instructed how we are to worship him—not according to our imagination, but according to divine revelation. In other words, God has spelled out very precisely and very specifically in his Word, how he is to be worshipped. Because when we worship a god of our imagination, we will ultimately be worshipping an idol. And thirdly, the disposition with which we are to worship him, namely, with holy reverence, we are to hallow his name. And several weeks ago, we considered the Third Commandment, by way of Lord's Day 36. And Lord's Day 37 is very closely connected to that. Already, in Lord's Day 36, we were already alerted to the fact that the swearing of an oath belongs to this Commandment, and we are to see tonight why that is so.

And so, let us turn to Lord's Day 37 of our Heidelberg Catechism, Questions and Answers #101 and #102.

Question #101: *May we then swear religiously by the name of God?*

And the Answer is: *Yes, either when the magistrates—that means the government—demand it of the subjects or when necessity requires us thereby to confirm fidelity—faithfulness—and truth*

to the glory of God and the safety of our neighbor; for such an oath is founded on God's Word, and therefore was justly used by the saints, both in the Old and New Testament.

Question #102: *May we also swear by saints or any other creatures?*

The Answer is: *No; for a lawful oath is calling upon God as the only one who knows the heart, that He will bear witness to the truth and punish me if I swear falsely; which honor is due to no creature.*

And so, we're going to focus on God's name. Boys and girls, hopefully, you remember that when the Bible talks about God's name, it talks about what he has revealed of himself. In his names, God has made himself known. Every name of God is a unique revelation of the very character of God. So, *God's Name and the Oath*. And we're going to look, first of all, at *The Proper Use of the Oath*, because the Catechism states, and we read it together from Hebrews 6, that such an oath is founded on God's Word. Secondly, *The Abuse of the Oath*, because in Question and Answer #102, it talks about those who swear falsely; in other words, those who are guilty of perjury, who swear an oath, thereby calling on God's name, but are doing it to cover a lie, to cover dishonesty. And thirdly, *God's Use of the Oath*, which is the most remarkable aspect of all of this, that God himself avails himself of the oath to affirm his truth. So, *God's Name and the Oath; The Proper Use of the Oath; The Abuse of the Oath; and, God's Use, the Divine Use of the Oath*.

So you might ask the question, Why is it that the Catechism devotes a special Question and Answer to the oath. And that has, again, everything to do with the historical context in which the Heidelberg Catechism was formulated. Because they were dealing with an aberration of the Reformation known as the Anabaptist movement. And one of the aspects of the beliefs of the Anabaptist is that the swearing of an oath is unlawful. And they would refer to Matthew 5, and the book of James to affirm that it is wrong to swear an oath. But there were such extremes and such excesses in the time of the Reformation that grew out of this whole Anabaptist movement, that the Reformers were rightly, greatly concerned about the damage that the Anabaptist movement was making. And so it is in light of that context that they felt it necessary to address the subject of the oath in connection with the Third Commandment.

1. The Proper Use of the Oath

And that's why we're going to look, first of all, at the Scriptural definition of the use of the oath. And so the Catechism correctly calls an oath a *calling upon God's name*. And why is that? Because, congregation, boys and girls, when we swear an oath, we are literally calling God as a witness. We are appealing to the fact that God is an all-knowing and an all-seeing God, who knows my heart and the secrets within. It is a calling upon God's name, that if I were to lie, if I were to be dishonest, that I would be worthy of his divine judgment. And that's why the swearing of an oath is a very serious matter. It is a calling upon God's name.

It is an acknowledgment that, ultimately, God knows all things; that God knows the heart and the secrets within; that nothing is hid from him; that we can deceive people, we can deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. And later on, we'll come back to this, but let me quickly say here, the reason why the swearing of an oath is necessary in this fallen world, is because, as fallen sinners, we have become liars by nature. We are inclined to be untruthful. And so, in a world populated by liars, populated by human beings, who are inclined to be dishonest, it is necessary to, at the proper occasion, at the proper time, to swear an oath to affirm the truth, at least to attempt to affirm the truth.

And God himself clearly instructed his people that they were to use the oath as a proper means to affirm the truth. We read in Deuteronomy 6, verse 13, "Thou"—that's God speaking—"Thou

shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.” So this is divine direction, God clearly stipulating that there is a time and a place, where such a calling upon God’s name is a necessity. That’s why the Catechism tells us that the saints of Scripture would avail themselves of the oath at critical moments when it was necessary to affirm the truth.

And so, in Genesis 21, verse 24, we read about the encounter between Abraham and Abimelech. In a previous chapter, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, had somewhat innocently taken Sarah to be his wife, not knowing that she was Abraham’s wife, because she had told Abimelech that she was his sister. And then, of course, the Lord spoke to Abimelech and showed him that he could not take this woman to be his wife. Anyway, fast-forward to chapter 21, Abimelech then comes to Abraham, and asks Abraham to enter into an agreement, where Abraham—and actually it was embarrassing for Abraham—for Abimelech asks him, “Please assure me that thou wilt not deal falsely with me” because this is what he had done. And in the light of that, Abraham knew very well why Abimelech said this. And Abraham said, in Genesis 21, verse 24, Abraham said, “I will swear.” So, he was calling God as a witness that he was being truthful to Abimelech.

In 1 Samuel 24, verse 22, then Saul is asking David to swear to him that he will not destroy his sons and his daughters, his seed—this is one of those encounters, where Saul recognized that David had spared his life again. And Saul knew very well that David was meant to be the king of Israel. And then we read, “And David sware unto Saul.” In other words, he called God to be a witness that he would not destroy the seed of Saul.

In Nehemiah 13, verse 25, Nehemiah is confronting the people with the very serious sin, that again, their sons and daughters had begun to marry the sons and daughters of the Gentiles, precisely the sin that had led to the idolatry that had resulted in the exile in Babylon. And so, Nehemiah deals forcefully with it, and he contends with the people. And then it says, “And he made them swear by God that they would cease to engage in that practice.”

In Romans 1, verse 9, the introductory verses of Romans, Paul tells us how he prays for the people in Rome, how he longs to come to them, and to proclaim God’s Word. And then he says—and of course, when he wrote that letter, he had not been there yet—and so, he says, “God is my witness”—that’s another way of swearing—“God is my witness that this is my desire, this is my prayer. I long for that day that I can be among you to bring God’s Word.”

Second Corinthians 1, verse 23—Paul is addressing the issue that there were some in Corinth who were accusing him of duplicity, accusing him of dishonesty. When Paul explained that his plans had changed. He had planned to come to them, and you read the whole context there, and then he says this, “Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul that the reason for my delay was indeed a legitimate one.”

So here are several examples from the Scriptures that God’s people availed themselves of the oath to affirm, the truth. And more importantly, Christ himself repeatedly did so. So, whenever Christ would say, “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” he was impressing upon his audience the utmost solemnity of what he was saying, and he was saying that he was literally calling his Father to be witness that what he was saying was indeed nothing but the truth.

And so, we’ve looked at the Scriptural definition and the use of the oath, and now we’ll focus on the necessity of the oath. As I already stated, and will say here again, the fact that the swearing of an oath is necessary, that, in itself, is a very convicting truth. In 2 Timothy 3, when the Apostle Paul is describing the ungodly, he describes them this way, he says, either they are deceiving or are being deceived (verse 13). So, Paul is saying the ungodly culture, the culture of the ungodly is defined by deceit. The ungodly are either in the process of deceiving someone else, or they are being deceived. And congregation, that’s why it’s actually convicting when you think of it. That’s

why it is so very, very common in our conversation—"I tell you the truth;" "I really mean what I said." Often, we don't even catch ourselves. I remember once calling a brother, a dear brother, I said, "To tell you the truth," and he stopped me. So he said, "Are there times when you are not telling me the truth?" And I was very convicted. And so, in other words, the idea that deceit reigns everywhere is so deeply embedded in our culture, that we actually have to alert people and say, "You can really take this to the bank," "You can really trust me, what I'm saying," "I'm telling you the truth"—deceiving and being deceived.

And that's why the oath is God's gracious provision for a fallen human race. That's why God himself has sanctioned the use of the oath, *to confirm*, as it says here, *fidelity and truth*. So, fidelity, for instance, when someone takes upon himself an office. And so, when, on January 20th, our President will be sworn in, he will be taking The Oath of Office, whereby he publically calls God to witness that he will uphold the Constitution of the United States. In other words, it will be an affirmation, a public affirmation of his fidelity. Or, when truth is required, such as in the courtroom, when people stand before a judge, or when men are summoned before Congressional committees. And when you have those that are being questioned have to swear a public oath that they will speak nothing but the truth. And some of those don't realize it, but whenever that happens, congregation, it is a calling upon the name of God. And that's why the oath is important. And that's why God commanded the proper use of that oath. Because what it affirms is that the entire world is God's domain. The public domain is God's domain. And so, when the oath is used, it is a public recognition, even in the public square and in the public realm, that we have to do with a God before whom all things are open and naked, the God with whom we have to do.

That's why you see in nations that are rejecting the Judeo-Christian worldview—you see this especially in Europe—I think of the Netherlands, it's really sad when you now witness the swearing in of a new government, that at least half of the representatives of the government, they will no longer swear an oath. All they will say is, "I promise." Fortunately, there are those who are still raising their hand, and who are saying, "So help me God Almighty." And so, you can see the manifestation of this wholesale rejection of God and his Word, where men no longer find it necessary to swear an oath, as it obviously is contrary to what they believe. And so, it is God's gracious provision.

We read it together from Hebrews 6, verse 16, "For men verily swear by the greater:"—and here it comes—"and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." And so, still throughout the world, the oath is still respected. And in our nation, there are serious penalties for those who are guilty of perjury, when it's found out that, even though they swore an oath, that they were not being truthful. And so, the hope, of course, is, that if people understand the nature of the oath and its consequences, they will be truthful.

And so, *The Proper Use of the Oath*, the Catechism says, it will be, first of all, *to the glory of God*. Every time an oath is sworn, God's name is hallowed, God is honored, as the all-knowing, all-seeing, everywhere-present God. And, it serves to the welfare *of our neighbor*. It heightens the accountability that he have with other people. And we know from earlier in the Bible how important an oath was. I'm thinking of what happened when the children of Israel came to Canaan, when they had conquered Jericho. And you know, boys and girls, that the Gibeonites, they were fearful that they would be next. And so, they pretended that they had come from afar to honor the Israelites. And what did they do? They entered into a covenant with the Gibeonites, and they swore unto them that they would keep and protect them. Then, of course, they found out; Joshua and the princes found out that they had been deceived. But then listen to what Scripture says, "But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now

therefore we may not touch them” (Joshua 9:19). But there you see that they really honored God, they respected that oath. They knew that they had called upon God’s name, and because they called upon God’s name, they could not act contrary to what they had said.

And so, the circumstances that require the oath—I’ve already alluded to it. First of all, in the public realm, when the government requires it; *when the magistrates*—that’s an old English word—when the government requires it of us. And when the government requires it of us, contrary to what the Anabaptists were teaching, we are duty bound to honor that. And why? Because the government has been appointed by God to govern us, to rule us—Romans 13, verse 1, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” And so, when the government requires me to swear an oath to become a naturalized citizen—as happened to me in 1983—I had to submit to that, because the government required it of me; legitimately required of me that I would affirm my commitment to this nation by oath. The government requires it of us in the courtroom, when we are called upon to testify to the truth.

But it’s so remarkable that Christ himself, he observed this duty at a very, very critical moment for him—very significant. This is when he stood before Caiaphas, and we read in Matthew 26, verses 63 and 64, “And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God”—that’s another way of saying “I ask of you the swearing of an oath”—“I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, and Son of God.” And Christ said, “Thou hast said.” And by that simple answer he swore an oath, and he did it to his own hurt. In Psalm 15, verse 4, we read this about the godly man, about the man of integrity. One of the descriptions of a man of God, of a God-fearing man, is that he will swear to his own hurt, and changes not. In other words, when a godly man has taken an oath, has called upon God’s name, he will not change, regardless of the consequences, and here, we have the ultimate example of it. Christ knew that by agreeing to what the high priest asked of him, who asked him to swear an oath, to swear by God’s name that he was indeed the Christ, and he obliged. And as a result of that oath, he ended up on the cross of Calvary.

But there’s also another area in which an oath is sworn, even though we may not necessarily call it that way, and that is within the realm of the church. That’s why, in the Old Testament, we read so much about vows. We read that God takes the making of vow very seriously. The making of a vow was the equivalent of an oath. And so, whenever we make vows, we are promising something in the very presence of God. And so, let me just mention a few instances of that.

So when young people make a profession of faith, and when they answer the questions, and as you’ve heard me say when I ask the questions, and I do likewise in baptism, I say, “In the presence of God and the congregation.” It’s a public event. So when we say “Yes” to these questions, we are calling God as a witness that, by his grace, we will endeavor to live according what is stipulated by those questions.

Then, there are the marriage vows. What a sacred moment that is, when a man and a woman exchange their vows, when the promise, in the presence of God that they will conduct themselves according to what they have just said. When a husband, before God and all who are present, promises that he will conduct himself as a godly husband; and when a wife, before God and the witnesses promises to conduct herself as a godly wife—a very sacred moment.

And then baptism, when we present our children for baptism, the questions that are asked are very weighty, especially the last one, in which we vow before God and the congregation that we will leave no stone unturned to teach our children the Word of God.

Also, when we, as office-bearers, are installed—elders, deacons, ministers—we also are asked

to make a vow before God and the congregation. And when we say, “Yes,” when we say, “Yes,” we are saying, before God and all who are there, that by the grace of God, we will endeavor to do what we are promising to do.

That’s why vows are very serious. That’s why the Word of God takes the making of vows very seriously.

2. The Abuse of the Oath

But as is true for all biblical practices, there’s also the transgression of it, *The Abuse of the Oath*, that’s our second thought. And sometimes we have examples in Scripture, where oaths are made frivolously, or when they are made inappropriately. Boys and girls, you know the story of David, when he took care of Nabal’s sheep, and when Nabal very, very grievously mistreated his servants, that David became so angry that he swore an oath that he would not leave anyone alive. But you see, that was a sinful oath. That was an oath that was fueled by a desire for vengeance. And God graciously intervened by causing Abigail to cross his pathway (1 Samuel 25). That was a foolish oath.

But then, think of Herod. Herod, who swore to Salome, the daughter of the woman who was not his lawful wife, “That I will give you up to the half of my kingdom. Whatever you ask me, I will give you up to the half of my kingdom.” And then, because of the evil advice of her mother, she asked for the head of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:6–11). And there’s an occasion when Herod should have walked away from that sinful oath. That was an abuse of God’s name. That was taking God’s name in vain. Then we think of the Jews who swore that they would not eat until they would have killed the Apostle Paul.

Then there’s also rash swearing. That’s really what Christ is addressing in Matthew chapter 5, and in the book of James. In other words, also, in the time of the Lord Jesus, the Pharisees would swear for all kinds of reasons, and to avoid transgressing the Third Commandment, they would swear by the temple, they would swear by their hair, they would swear by all kinds of things. And sadly, that still happens. We addressed that already then. And so, we should never do this rashly. We should never, for frivolous reasons say, “I will swear to you,” or “I will swear on a stack of Bibles.” And of course, often, people who frequently lie, and who are known to lie, who are known to be dishonest, will resort to this to try to persuade someone that they are telling the truth. And in that context, Jesus is saying, “So it ought not to be with Christians. For Christians, their “Yes” should be yes, and their “No” should be no (verse 37). We should not have to resort to an oath to do it rashly.

But there’s even an example of an oath that was well meant, and yet had serious consequences. Jephthah, one of the judges, he swore an oath that, if God would bring him home, and he meant well, that the very first thing that would meet him, he would give unto the Lord as a sacrifice. And you know what happened, his daughter met him, his only daughter. And yet, what’s remarkable is that Jephthah knew that he had sworn an oath. He knew that he had called upon God’s name. He knew that he could not cancel what he had said (Judges 11:30–40). And so, of course, what he could not do is what God would not require him to do, and literally, physically sacrifice his daughter. And so, most likely, it meant that his daughter remained single the rest of her days. But what it emphasizes is that this godly man, this servant of God took his vow seriously. He took his oath seriously, and the consequences were accordingly.

And of course, rash swearing can lead to perjury, which is when someone swears and oath, calls upon God’s name, knowing all the while that what they are affirming is not true. And fortunately, our nation still takes that transgression very seriously. And of course, we should realize that perjury

is a very serious transgression of the Third Commandment. If I'm guilty of perjury, that means that I took God's name in vain. I pretended that God was a witness to what I was saying, knowing all the while that what I was saying was not true.

And sadly, in spite of all of the arrangements that have been made in our culture, as well, all the precautions to prevent that, sadly, it still happens. It still happens, where people appear before Congressional committees, where people appear in the courtroom, and brazenly lie, and raise their hand, and say that they are telling the truth and nothing but the truth. And congregation, God is a God who hates lying—the God of truth. And so, perjury is an abomination to him. Perjury is a transgression of the Third Commandment, a taking of God's name in vain.

But now, now it becomes very convicting, because now as we focus on those vows which we make in the religion realm, the vows we make at profession of faith, at marriage, at baptism, office-bearing, and who of us would dare to say that we have lived flawlessly according to what we have vowed. The vows that God has heard, the vows that God knows. And then we see how this really, really cuts very, very deeply, congregation. Because then again, it's so obvious, also, when we consider this, and who of us can say, "I have not sinned"? What husband would dare to say, "I have never behaved myself contrary to what I vowed before God and man? What wife would dare to say that? What parent would dare to say that they have never, never acted contrary to what they publicly vowed for their children? What minister, what office-bearer would dare to say that we have never come short of what we have vowed before God and man?

Then, you can see why it is that Christ was condemned for that transgression; that Christ, because he swore that he was the Son of God, he went to the cross. As we pointed out a few weeks ago, he went to the cross as one who took God's name in vain, because they sanctimoniously rent their clothes, and they accused him of blasphemy, and he was condemned as a blasphemer, and he went to the cross. He went to the cross for sinners like you and me, we who are born as liars, and we, who even after grace, constantly need to examine ourselves whether we are being truthful, truthful before God, and truthful to each other.

So we have seen *The Proper Use of the Oath*, *The Abuse of it*, and the third thing, remarkably,

3. God's Use of the Oath

That is so amazing, congregation, that God himself avails himself of this vehicle, the God of truth himself. If there's anyone who would not have to swear an oath, it is God. But why does God avail himself of that which was instituted because of our fall, because of our fallen nature? It's because of man's unbelief. And what is unbelief? Unbelief means that we treat God as a liar. And so, when God swears and oath, it is as if God says, "Very well, I will stoop to your level. I will stoop to your level, and I will swear by my own name"—amazing—"by my own name."

What does it mean, congregation? It means that God, as it were, holds himself accountable to his very own Word. And he swears and oath, also because he knows how weak our faith can be. And so, to reassure his people, he will swear an oath, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they would turn unto me and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). And so, when God says that, "As I live," he saying, "If that were not true, that I have no pleasure in the death of sinners, then I cease to be God. But as truly as I am God; as truly as I am the I AM THAT I AM (Exodus 3:14), so true it is that I have no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they would turn unto me and live."

And so, let me give you a couple of examples where God avails himself of the oath. First of all, open your Bibles please, and let's look at Genesis 17, verse 7, and then in connection with that, we're going to look at Hebrews 6, verses 13 and 14, which we read in your hearing. So, in Genesis

17, verse 7, that's the chapter where God enters into covenant with Abraham, and where God makes promises to Abraham, that are the equivalent of an oath. And we know this from Scripture. So what do we read in Genesis 17, verse 7? God says, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Well, turn to Hebrews 6, verses 13 and 14, and there we read this, the Holy Spirit's commentary: "For when God made promise to Abraham"—as he did here—"because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely"—surely—"blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." And, of course, this is a summary of that entire chapter. Oh, what beautiful language—because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.

Then let's turn to Isaiah 54, verses 9 and 10, we read this, this beautiful promise: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." And so, dear believer, what God is saying, "As truly as I am God, I swear by my own name that I will never forsake you; that I will never act contrary to my Word; that I will fulfill my Word; that my mercy will not depart from you." Back to Hebrews 6, verses 17 and 18, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability"—unchangeableness—"of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath"—there, you have it—"confirmed it by an oath." Verse 18: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

And so, dear believer, dear child of God, because of our weakness, because of our inclination towards unbelief, God stoops down so low, and he says, "I swear to you by my name, as surely as I am the I AM THAT I AM, as surely as I am God, my promises towards you will not, they cannot fail." Oh, the lovingkindness of God!

When we think about the oath, too, we need to think about the gospel itself. When you think of the words of Genesis 3, verse 15, it's a very foundational promise of the Bible. And so, in light of what we have seen, every promise that God makes is the equivalent of an oath, every promise; and it applies to all of his promises. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." And we know that God has kept his Word.

Ezekiel 33:11, we've quoted that several times, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," that extraordinary statement about the character of God, where God says—let me say it again, for it's so important for us to realize—"That if that's not true, that my desire is that sinners would turn to me and live, that I desire the salvation of sinners, if that's not true, then I cease to be God."—"But as I live, saith the Lord GOD."

Psalms 110, verse 4, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." So here, the Father swears to his own Son. And we read in Psalm 89, "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David." And David, here, is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness"—once have I sworn by who I am—"that I will not lie unto David" (verses 34 and 35). And that's why, dear believer, that's why your salvation is so secure. That's why it cannot fail. That's why God's promises cannot fail. They are yea, and amen. Again, the language of an oath: yea, and amen in Christ.

But there's also some negative statements—Isaiah 45, verse 23, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee

shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.” That will be in the day of judgment, this will be fulfilled. There will not be a single human being that will not bow the knee to Christ. But for many, it will be the first time, and it will be too late. That’s going to happen. God says, “I have sworn by myself.”

Psalm 95, verses 10 through 11, “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” And now, listen to what he says: “Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” Boys and girls, you know what happened with most of the people that left Egypt that were older than twenty years. God kept his word. None of them, except Joshua and Caleb, entered into the promised land, because God swore in his wrath that they would not enter.

And finally, in conclusion, I would like to put it this way, that Christ, who is the living Word of God, is God’s ultimate statement about himself. So, Christ himself, the eternal living Word, in whom all of God’s promises are yea and amen, is our ultimate guaranty that God will keep his Word. That he is indeed the I AM THAT I AM. That’s why what I preached about this morning is a truth that cannot and shall not fail, that those who kiss the Son shall be blessed indeed; because, we can take, reverently speaking, we can take God’s Word to the bank, God’s Word is guaranteed in His Son; it cannot and shall not fail, the God who has no pleasure in the death of sinners. That’s equally true, as we said this morning, that those who reject this Christ and thereby supremely dishonor the name of God, they will experience the wrath of God.

And so, we have considered together the Third Commandment, and all of its ramifications. Thanks be to God that we have a Savior who willingly swore an oath in order to secure your salvation, who knew very well, when Caiaphas adjured him, what the consequences would be, and so it had to be. He could not possibly deny his being. He could not go contrary to himself. That’s why God, to encourage his people, swears by his own name. And so, Christ willingly went to the cross, also for transgressors of the Third Commandment, because we need to look into that mirror. And who of us would dare to say, “I have never taken God’s name in vain; I have never used God’s name frivolously; I have never been untruthful.” But what a wonder that Christ also died for the transgression of this Commandment, that we would know that his precious blood cleanses from all sin. And therefore, my beloved, “Kiss the Son,” lest the Father be angry, and you perish in the way. Blessed are all they that put their trust in this Christ, who is the unchangeable I AM THAT I AM. Amen.

Let’s pray.

Our gracious Father in heaven, we give thee thanks that we could be in thy house today, that thy Word has come to us again, also this Word, a Word that is so convicting as well. For Lord, we have to confess that by nature we are inclined to be liars. Oh, what a blessing it is that by grace, we are transformed, that when we become a people of truth. Oh, could it be said of us what Christ could say of Nathaniel, “Behold, an Israelite in whom there is no guile.” Oh, forgive us our transgressions. And Lord, may we rest alone in this precious Christ, who swore an oath that he is indeed the Christ, and as a result, was nailed to the accursed cross, so that transgressors of the Third Commandment, as we all are, could be reconciled with thee. Go with us into this coming week. Bless the labor of our hands. Bless our children in school. Keep us safely. Protect us, and above all, give us grace to honor thee, and to honor thy name, and to walk in thy ways. Bless the Bible study tonight with our young people; we pray that it will be profitable for them. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.