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**The Canadian *Lord's Day* Association**  
**Advanced Bible Correspondence Course**  
**Lesson 36: The Law of God – Third Commandment**

**LORD'S DAY 36**

**Q.99. WHAT IS REQUIRED IN THE THIRD COMMANDMENT?**

**ANSWER: THAT WE, NOT ONLY BY CURSING (A) OR PERJURE (B), BUT ALSO BY RASH SWEARING (C), MUST NOT PROFANE OR ABUSE THE NAME OF GOD; NOR BY SILENCE OR CONNIVANCE BE PARTAKERS OF THESE HORRIBLE SINS IN OTHERS (D); AND, BRIEFLY, THAT WE USE THE HOLY NAME OF GOD NO OTHERWISE THAN WITH FEAR AND REVERENCE (E), SO THAT HE MAY BE RIGHTLY CONFESSED (F) AND WORSHIPPED (G) BY US, AND BE GLORIFIED IN ALL OUR WORDS AND WORKS (H).**

**(A)LEVITICUS 24:15&16; (B)LEVITICUS 19:12; (C)MATTHEW 5:37, JAMES 5:12;  
(D)LEVITICUS 5:1, PROVERBS 29:24; (E)JEREMIAH 4:2, ISAIAH 45:23;  
(F)MATTHEW 10:32, ROMANS 10:9&10; (G)PSALM 50:15, I TIMOTHY 2:8;  
(H)COLOSSIANS 3:17, ROMANS 2:24, I TIMOTHY 6:1**

**The hallowing of God's name**

The third commandment deals with the use of God's holy name. It may only be used with holy reverence.

Earlier, in ancient times and also in Israel, names had a meaning. This is still true among some people today, for example, in Africa. However, most people, in the Western European and American society, for example, are given a name at random. They could as well have been named differently from what their parents named them. Their name does not relate anything about them; it does not say what they are, think, or feel. In fact, their name has no meaning. It is merely a name. However, God's name is full of meaning. His name is not to be separated from His Being. His name tells us who He is. His name reveals His characteristics. Thus His name LORD (in the Hebrew JAHWEH) signifies that He is the unchangeable God, the God of the covenant, who will always keep His promises: the I AM THAT I AM (Exodus 3:14).

Thus God's name is not "merely a name", but is something of His Being. By His name He reveals Himself to us and is known by us. Since God's name and God

Himself are not to be separated, we may not misuse God's name. When we use His name, we must always realize of Whom we are speaking: the high and holy God, who always sees and hears us. God is holy, but also His name is holy. His name is unique: *"See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me"* (Deuteronomy 32:39). *"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD"* (Deuteronomy 6:4). For this reason, God will punish any misuse of it.

### **The misuse of God's name: cursing and the mild oath**

There is in the first place the deliberate misuse, the intentional, mocking misuse of His name. That is blasphemy. This occurs even now, openly or in a veiled form, in conversations, newspapers, in much modern literature, in radio and television broadcasts, and in other media.

There is also cursing, at times consciously and sometimes unconsciously, namely, the use of God's name as a swear word. This is actually the opposite of a prayer for preservation; it is a prayer for eternal condemnation, for eternal destruction. It is true that most often it is not meant to directly provoke God, but, for example, is to express anger or aggression, or general dissatisfaction. How many people there are who at times cannot even talk for three minutes without the use of a curse word. Some have become so accustomed to it that they do not even hear it of themselves anymore. Much literature is offensive, because it is polluted by this dreadful sin. Is it then so bad, this thoughtless and unintentional misuse of God's name? Yes, it is very bad, for then men give evidence that they do not have the least respect for God's holy name, and therefore not for God Himself. By doing this they dishonour God.

We must shudder every time we hear or read such a curse. If we really love God, it must be painful for us. In addition, there are the often used mild-oaths, such as shortened versions of the name of God or of Jesus, or just a part of a dreadful curse. Such a mild-oath is often used only as "filler", without the person realizing what he is saying. This use is also a serious sin. If love toward and reverence for God truly lives in our heart, then we will not want to dishonour Him in our use of words, in idle and vain using of His Name or part of it without thinking and without a realization of the holiness of His Name. Does He not desire to be praised in *all* our words and works?

### **Perjury or rash swearing**

Finally, there is the misuse of God's holy Name by perjury or rash swearing. When using an oath, we call upon the all-knowing *and* almighty God as our witness, that we speak the truth or mean what we promise. We ask Him to help us to be able to faithfully fulfill our promises. (I swear that I .... So help me God). If such an oath

is insincerely pronounced, we insult the all-knowing God. Then we misuse His holy Name in a very unholy manner.

However, it is also a misuse of His Name, if we without necessity use the wording of the oath, as if we ask God for help or punishment (“May God help/ punish me”, “This or that may happen to me, if I do not do this or that ...” etc.). For does not this also give evidence of lack of holy reverence for Him? Often we do not even *think* of Him when we use such expressions.

**Q. 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 ENDEAVOUR, AS MUCH AS IN THEM LIES, TO PREVENT AND FORBID SUCH CURSING AND SWEARING?**

**ANSWER: IT UNDOUBTEDLY IS (A), 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 (B).**

**(A) ECCLESIASTES 29:24, LEVITICUS 5:1; (B) LEVITICUS 24:16**

### **Combating cursing**

In the Old Testament time, blasphemy had to be punished by death. Think of the half-Egyptian, half-Israelite youth, who quarreled with a man of Israel, taunted him by mockingly using the name of his God. That young man had to be stoned. (Lev. 24:10-23). This shows us *how* serious the misuse of God’s holy Name is.

But also perjury and rash swearing are serious sins, for which God will punish us in time or in eternity. For this is also blasphemy, a dishonouring of His Name, thus of Himself.

God even reckons this sin so evil, that we also are subject to His wrath if we do not rebuke or forbid the cursing of others as much as possible. In His Word, He says: *“And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.”* (Lev. 5:1). We can forbid this sin by demanding from our children, students, employees, or subordinates that they not swear. We must explain to them in love that swearing is a terrible sin. It is not only a matter of us being grievously offended by it, but that God’s honour is injured by it.

It is bad when we, because of cowardliness or from fear of being laughed at or of disrupting a good relationship, are silent when others swear. On the other hand, the admonition should be done with tact, meekness, and love. It is often better to take the person aside who swore in order to admonish him or her, instead of reproving them in the presence of others, because the latter can sometimes lead to still greater swearing. Sometimes, however, an admonition in public can also be necessary for instructing others or keeping others from swearing.

***Questions:***

1. *What is the subject of the third commandment?*

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2. *Give some ways in which the Name of God can be misused.*

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*Evaluator:* \_\_\_\_\_

Meditation: “Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32

Gracious promise! It is a great joy to me to confess my Lord. Whatever my faults may be, I am not ashamed of Jesus, nor do I fear to declare the doctrines of His cross. O Lord, I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart. Sweet is the prospect which the text sets before me! Friends forsake and enemies exult, but the Lord does not disown His servant. Doubtless my Lord will own me even here, and give me new tokens of His favourable regard. But there comes a day when I must stand before the great Father. What bliss to think that Jesus will confess me then! He will say, “This man truly trusted me, and was willing to be reproached for my name’s sake; and therefore I acknowledge him as Mine.” The other day a great man was made a knight and the Queen handed him a jeweled garter; but what of that? It will be an honour beyond all honours for the Lord Jesus to confess us in the presence of the divine Majesty in the heavens. Never let me be ashamed to own my Lord. Never let me indulge a cowardly silence, or allow a fainthearted compromise. Shall I blush to own Him Who promises to own me?

*Taken from “The Cheque-book of the Bank of Faith” by C.H. Spurgeon*