

Text: Exod. 20:7

Title: "Do not consider God's name worthless"

Time: 5/2/2021 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: The last name of the second baseman for the New York Yankees baseball team is spelled O-d-o-r. Rougned Odor is from Venezuela, where they do not speak English, so for him it has been no problem to bear a last name that is pronounced and spelled "odor" here.

Recently, the New York Yankees went to Cleveland and won three out of a four game series with my team, the Cleveland Indians. Rougned Odor was the hero of the series for the Yankees, and my son Brandon is a huge Yankees fan. So, frustrated after that third loss in a row to our nemesis, I texted my son some sour grapes. My message to him said, "The Yankees wins over the Tribe were full of a bad Odor." Brandon called that one of the "daddest dad jokes" he had ever heard.

So joking about a man's last name is not a very nice thing to do, and I would not want Rougned to know that I sent that text. But I could joke about this player's name because I do not know him, and he does not know me. What his name is or means is a worthless factoid in relation to my life.

The Third Commandment tells us about a name that must never become a worthless factoid in relation to our lives, the name of the Lord. The reason for this is that in Scripture, God's name refers to His personal presence and His unique nature. We must know God by name, reverencing both His personal presence and His unique nature.

As His personal presence, God's name dwells in certain places (Exod. 20:24, "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record

my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”; in Matt. 18:20 the Lord describes the local church assembly, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”; Rev. 3:12, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”). I found 66 verses in the Bible that speak about the places God’s name has dwelt.

As His unique nature, God’s name describes who He is and what He is like (last week we noted Exod. 34:14, “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”; Prov. 30:4, “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?”; Dan. 2:20, “Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:”; Rev. 19:16, “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King Of Kings, and Lord Of Lords.”). I found 33 verses in the Bible where God’s name tells us who He is and what He is like.

Taking God’s name in vain is mentioned four times in our English KJV Bible. Here and in Deut. 5:11, we have the Third Commandment. The other two passages are Ps. 139:20, “For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain” (here *name* is italicized); and Prov. 30:8-9, “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

From those verses we see that breaking the Third Commandment can be done by wicked speech, but also it can be done by

stealing due to poverty. The importance of the Third Commandment is as far reaching as the importance of the name of God in our lives as believers. So how important is God's name in Scripture, and why is it so important?

Illustration: One of my favorite OT commentary sets are the volumes by Keil and Delitzsch. I did not purchase my set of Keil and Delitzsch commentaries. I found them in the modular building shortly after I became pastor here. I will not get away with calling them mine even today, because the former pastor who left them behind took the time to put his name in each of the volumes. This commentary set has this man's name on them because they belonged to him.

In the same way, the God of the Bible has told us that He has put His name on some things because they belong to Him in a special way. So when He tells us in the Third Commandment that we must not take His name in vain or consider His name worthless, He is really telling us that we must not consider any of those things that He has put His name on as worthless. When we treat something that He has put His name on as worthless, we are breaking the Third Commandment, and the Lord promises not to hold us guiltless when we do so.

I think we can list the things God has put His name on with the help of three categories. God has put His name on His work of salvation, on His people, and on our prayers to Him. I would like us to think about the Third Commandment in relation to each of these. We will take them in reverse order.

I. God has put His name on our prayers, so do not consider prayer to Him worthless.

Application: The first mention of God's name in Scripture is a reference to men beginning to pray (Gen. 4:26, "And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.>").

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, spoke often of the importance of prayer to the temple of God he had just built, where God's name would dwell in a special way (1 Kings 8:29, "That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.").

The Psalms are filled with the privilege of prayer in God's name (Ps. 20:1, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee."; Ps. 20:7, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."; Ps. 99:6, "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them.").

The Lord Jesus taught His disciples the importance of God's name to their prayers (Matt. 6:9, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."; John 14:13, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.").

But sadly, prayer in God's name has often been an exception rather than the rule for God's people (Isa. 64:7, "And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."). In terms of the Third Commandment, we take God's name in vain when we view praying in the name of the Lord as a worthless thing, not worthy of our time and effort. How often have we broken this commandment? Remember the song, "Did you think to pray?"

II. God has put His name on us, His people, so do not consider our unique blessings and responsibilities worthless.

Illustration: In 1982 the Texas Rangers baseball team found themselves off to a terrible start in last place with an 11-26

record. To declare how embarrassed they were to be on the team, two players – Larry Parrish and Doc Medich, put grocery bags over their heads with cutouts for their eyes and nose. Fans had done that before, but things had gotten so bad that two players for the first time did not want anyone to know they bore the Texas Rangers team name.

God has put His name on His people, and we as believers must not bring shame to God’s name by believing that the unique blessings and responsibilities that belong to His people are worthless. For us as God’s people, our blessings are connected to our responsibilities. They are often one in the same. Let me note a few of these:

1. It is our blessing and responsibility to keep our commitments, because we make them in God’s name (Deut. 10:20, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.”).
2. It is our blessing and responsibility to live holy lives, for they are a reflection of God’s name (Col. 3:17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”; 2 Tim. 2:19, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”).
3. It is our blessing and responsibility to reverence the ministry of God’s Word, because it is spoken in God’s name (1 Cor. 1:10, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”).
4. It is our blessing and responsibility to witness for Christ, because it is a witness in God’s name (Acts 9:15, “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me,

to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”).

5. It is our blessing and responsibility to be baptized, because it is a baptism that honors God’s name (Matt. 28:19, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”).

6. It is our blessing and responsibility to worship, because we worship to honor and glorify God’s name (1 Chron. 16:10, “Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.”; Ps. 44:8, “In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.”; Rom. 15:9, “And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.”).

When God put His name on us as His people, He gave us blessings and responsibilities in His name that we must not view as worthless. When we view the things bearing God’s name as not worth much, we take God’s name in vain. How often have we broken this commandment? Remember the song, “Take My Life, and Let It Be.”

III. God has put His name on our salvation from sin, so do not consider the gift of forgiveness and eternal life worthless.

Illustration: There is perhaps no quicker way to let someone know that we are a Christian than to react poorly to an unbeliever’s use of God’s name as an expletive. We hear the “Oh my God” exclamation or the “Thank God” sarcasm or the “God damn” adjective of disapproval or the “Jesus Christ” curse of anger, and we immediately feel the Holy Spirit’s lament in our hearts, expressed in Ps. 74:10, “O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever?” We sense that this is the language of the adversary and the enemy. We look forward to another day de-

scribed by Rev. 15:4, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Application: What power can change a sinner who disrespects God's name into a saint who fears the Lord and glorifies His name? The power of God's name can. There is power to save in God's name.

God's name tells us who our Savior must be (Isa. 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."); Isa. 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."; Isa. 47:4, "As for our redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel."; Matt. 1:21, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."; Matt. 1:23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."; Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."). Do you know who your Savior must be?

God's name tells us how Jesus becomes our Savior (John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.; Rom. 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."). Have you called on the name of the Lord to be saved?

God's name saves powerfully when Jesus becomes our Savior (1 Cor. 6:1, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the

Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”; 1 John 2:12, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.”). Have you been washed? Sanctified? Justified? Are your sins forgiven for His name’s sake?

Or have you taken His name in vain many times by rejecting its truth that He is the Savior, that He alone must save you?

Conclusion: And so the Third Commandment condemns us as guilty just as the first two did, but then it also points us to the name of the One who can save us. Jesus never took in vain His Father’s name or anything His Father put His name on. He never once considered anything like that worthless. And yet He died on the cross for the multitude of times you and I have done so. By grace, He offers us His righteousness and life. God chose to hold Jesus guilty for your violation of this commandment. Have you received this saving grace by faith, or do you find it all to be quite worthless and vain? “The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.”

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*