

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **James 3:8-12**.
- B. We have previously discussed the first and second commandments; “have no other gods before Me,” and “do not make or worship any graven image.”
- C. Our lesson today concerns our use of God’s name.
- D. This morning, the third commandment (Ex. 20:7).
“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.”

I. TAKE CARE WITH THE NAME.

- A. People’s names represent something. God was so concerned about this phenomenon that He actually named people Himself, or changed their names at certain key moments in their lives. When their character changed, He changed their name.
- B. God told Abraham, “No longer shall your name be called Abram [*exalted father*], but your name shall be Abraham [*father of a multitude*]; for I have made you a father of many nations” (Gen. 17:5).
- C. Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter--*a rock*. The Lord was telling Peter that he would be changed from a wishy-washy, unreliable man to someone who was firm and strong and would take a stand.
- D. We live in a day, of course, where the air is blue with profanity. You can hardly watch a movie, pick up a novel, or even listen to the radio without hearing God’s name taken in vain. One of the definitions for the word *profane* speaks of “debasing or defiling that which is holy or worthy of reverence.” It’s an attack against something holy. It’s an attempt to take something exalted or revered and jerk it down from its pedestal. When I profane something, I try to yank it down to my level, so I can reduce it to being nothing more than I am.
- E. What does it mean, then, to profane the Lord God? It is an attempt to pull God down to a common level and make Him equal with me. And that is grave and serious business.

II. THERE IS POWER IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

- A. There is power in the name of our God. There is power in the name of JC. Do you believe that? Do you believe that demons screamed and writhed and tore themselves from their hosts at the mention of His name? Do you believe that in the authority of His voice, and the authority of His name, that the eyes of the blind were opened, that withered legs were made strong, and that dead bodies came up out of the grave.
- B. So why wouldn’t we believe there are consequences to the way we use His name? Good consequences for using it rightly, evil consequences for using it casually or with evil intent. There are consequences to the name of God whenever it’s used.
- C. Think of this: There is eternal salvation in the name (Jn. 20:31; Ac. 4:12).
(Jn 20:31) ...but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.
(Ac 4:12) “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

III. THE REAL PROBLEM.

- A. I believe the real problem with profanity and swearing is not with the tongue, but is actually with the heart. Scripture links what comes out of mouths with our hearts.
- B. Jesus said it again and again (Mt. 12:34; 15:18; Lk. 6:45).
(Mt 12:34) "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.
(Mt 15:18) "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

(Lk 6:45) "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

- C. You cannot say, "Well, she has a vile mouth but a good heart." No, she doesn't! You cannot say, "Well, he's got a problem with bad language, but he really does have a heart of gold." No, he doesn't!
- D. James says it so well in Jas. 3:8-12.
But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. [9] With it we bless *our* Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; [10] from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. [11] Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? [12] Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither *can* salt water produce fresh.
- E. The bitter, hurtful, or profane words that come out of my mouth are a sign to me that something is terribly wrong in my heart. When I says something profane, crude, or bitter, it ought to immediately prompt me that something is wrong with my heart.
- F. Is God concerned with what you say? Yes. Because He knows that there is something greater than what's wrong with your mouth. It's your heart. He knows that it is out of the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks.
- G. *When you acknowledge the holiness of God, it is impossible to be casual again!* When you come to see God for who He is and what He has done, there is no way in the world you could ever treat Him casually again. And there is no way you could profane His name when you consider all that He has done and the great price He paid for our salvation.

IV. HOW WE MISUSE GOD'S NAME.

- A. First, we misuse God's name **as a curse**.
 - 1. This type of profanity is an example of weak people using strong words, and it's one of the most common ways people misuse God's name.
 - 2. We all know someone who gets angry or frustrated and asks God to damn whom- or whatever as he sees as the source of the problem.
 - 3. But did you know that when we ask God to condemn or damn someone we're demand that God do something He's never done? Men condemn themselves! (Jn. 3:17,18).
"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. [18] "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
 - 4. God's name is to be used as a blessings, not a curse.
- B. Second, we misuse God's name when we use it **as an exclamation point**.
 - 1. People often use the names of the Godhead to express reactions of all sorts of emotions.
 - 2. They are using the name of God or Jesus was a synonym for "Oh, you're kidding!" or "I can't believe that!" For too many people, misusing God's name is not a sign of ignorance or disbelief, but a symptom of a lack of emotional control.
 - 3. People of character do not use God's name as a curse or as an exclamation point.
- C. Third, we misuse God's name **as a cliché**.
 - 1. It's such a good way to sound spiritual! We say, "Oh praise the Lord!" with such regularity that we don't even realize what we're saying anymore.
 - 2. God's name should be used or associated only with things of substance and genuineness.
 - 3. We're not to use God's name lightly for our own purposes. God's name is not just some designer label we wear to look good in front of our peers. We don't use it to impress people. When we use God's name lightly, we show that we take God lightly as well.
- D. Fourth, we misuse God's name when we use it **as a weapon**.
 - 1. Another way people in the church misuse the name of God is by using it to intimidate others. For example, brother So-and-so walks up, puts his arm on your shoulder, and says, "Brother, God

told me to tell you....”

2. See how it is a weapon, how are you going to respond to that statement? Can you say, “Well, I don’t think I want to listen to God right now.”
 3. Sometimes we may confuse the Father’s wishes with those of our own. It is an AWESOME thing to use the name of the Lord.
- E. Fifth, we misuse God’s name when we use it **as an endorsement**.
1. Sometimes we try to link our names with the King of kings by using God’s name for our own personal gain. Our society accepts the fact that association with rich, powerful, or popular people lends credibility to what one says or does.
 2. I don’t believe that God wants His name marketed for our selfish purposes. If you are a Xian business person, please behave like one, but I doubt that God wants the Praise the Lord Lumber Co.
 3. We can even do this in our prayers. Invoking the name of Jesus with our request so that we might have our selfish desires (Jas. 4:3).
You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

V. HOW TO USE GOD’S NAME PROPERLY.

- A. First, use God’s name **as a claim to authority**.
1. Jesus began the model prayer with, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name.” Our prayers should recognize God, His name, and praise Him (Psa. 29:2).
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in holy array.
 2. Call on the name of the Lord for salvation (Ac. 4:12; Rom. 10:13; Ac. 22:16).
(Acts 4:12) “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”
(Rom 10:13) ...for “WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”
(Acts 22:16) ‘And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’
- B. Second, use God’s name **as a call to integrity**.
1. When Alexander the Great had a young soldier in his army that was disobedient. When confronted by the general he asked the lad, “What is your name?” The young soldier said, “Alexander.” Surprised, Alexander the Great said, “Either change your name or change your conduct.”
 2. By wearing the name of X, we should feel a sense of living up to that name. It should inspire us to live lives of integrity.
- C. Third, use God’s name **as a call to intimacy**.
1. The Hebrews overreacted to this third commandment and became afraid to even pronounce the name of God. But God’s concern was not our *use* of His name but the *misuse* of it.
 2. Honoring and properly using the name of God will bring greater intimacy in our relationship with God. We will go from haughty to humble, from pompous to poor in spirit, and from rebellious to respectful.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION.

- A. May we learn to respect the name of God and use it properly.
- B. Learning to control the tongue in all aspects of life is very important.
- C. Are you ready to confess the name of Jesus?
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.

