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E-votional 128

### **You Shall Not Take The Name Of The Lord In Vain**

Exodus 20:7 (ESV),

*“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*

You know, I don't know why I didn't think about it sooner, but I was reflecting on this scripture and as I was a story came to mind. That story was from the book of Ruth. And if you're not familiar with it, I would encourage you to go back and read it and be refreshed in it. It truly is a remarkable story.

The story of Ruth as it goes for a quick context is that Ruth was married to a husband whose mother was Naomi. Naomi's husband and her sons died and there were left two daughters that had married Naomi's sons. Since there were no sons left for these two to marry Naomi said to them, *“Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.”* (Ruth 1:8)

These two women were Gentile women. They were not Hebrews. They were not of the Covenant of Promise. They were not of the oracles of God. They were not the Jewish people and so Naomi was saying, go back to your people and I'm going to go back to my people and one of the daughters named Orpah did. Orpah went back, but Ruth did not. Ruth said something that I would like to highlight that kind of inspired me in this understanding of Exodus 20:7. She said,

*But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”* (Ruth 1:16-17)

It hit me. Ruth was taking the name of God upon her life by making that type of

vow and that type of declaration. She basically was saying that she was not going to leave Naomi's side in this time of her need. But will leave her people (Gentiles) and become as Naomi's people (Hebrews) and her God will be Ruth's God.

Today, many of us think of taking the name of the Lord in vain as something that we merely say much like a curse word or something of that nature While that's true that those are not good things, and we should not be flippantly throwing around the name of God. I think it's deeper than that, brothers and sisters.

As I continued to reflect on Ruth, and her story it brought more illustration to what I believe that deeper meaning was. In many ways, this is something that I touched on very briefly when I taught a few weeks ago on the church in Sardis from the book of Revelation. To quickly recap, Jesus was saying to those believers in Sardis that they have a name that they are alive, but are in fact dead. So they had the name of Christian. They had the name of being believers in the way, but they were not alive in Christ. And so brothers and sisters taking the name of the Lord in vain is so much more than just speaking His name in vain or as a curse word.

It means to literally embody the character of God in our life. When we say that we have made the good confession, when we believe in our heart and confess with our mouth and speak out loud that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior and that God raised Him from the dead, we are taking the name of God on our life. I am going to add some commentary on this passage of Scripture for further support and clarification from Benson (1857) taken from, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/exodus/20-7.htm>

*"Supposing that, having taken Jehovah for their God, they would make mention of his name, this command gives a caution not to mention it in vain, and it is still as needful as ever. We take God's name in vain, 1st, By hypocrisy, making profession of God's name, but not living up to that profession. 2nd, By covenant-breaking. If we make promises to God, and perform not to the Lord our vows, we take his name in vain. 3rd, By rash swearing, mentioning the name of God, or any of his attributes, in the form of an oath, without any just occasion for it, to no good purpose, or to no good. 4th, By false swearing, which some think is chiefly intended in the letter of the commandment. 5th, By using the name of God lightly and carelessly. The profanation of the form of devotion is forbidden, as well as the profanation of the forms of swearing; as also, the profanation of any of those things whereby God makes himself known."*

God called His people the Israelites to live separate from the world around them

and from the Pagan cultures that were going to be around them after they were delivered from Egypt and when God made a covenant with them in the wilderness. Paul also speaks of this concept in the New Testament, one, in particular, is Romans 12:1-2 (ESV),

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

You know we have some weird sayings/jokes in our church culture today that are kind of in some ways almost defiant of this biblical concept we are studying today. There is one we say when we talk to someone that does not attend church because they believe the church is full of hypocrites and our response being, 'well, come in then because we could always use another one.' We say this jokingly, but yet with some truth added in. The reason behind this is that many believe of themselves even as believers in Jesus Christ that we are all just hypocrites and sinners saved by grace. And yes, this concept is biblical that we have been called and saved from our sins and hypocrisy by grace through faith. It is not, however, an excuse to continue living in that same fashion. So no, the church is not supposed to be a group of all hypocrites. If we have gleaned anything from this teaching we can see scripturally that this half-joke/half-truth we just discussed is actually not acceptable or in alignment with biblical truth. In fact, we should be living up to a higher standard by the power of God through Jesus Christ. After all, Jesus Himself never dealt kindly with hypocrites in Scripture, did He?

I think these are weird nuances that we created through time and based on our experiences of how a great many people today that claim to be believers continuously backslide. So we form these ideas in our church groups that are actually contradictory because we can't find solutions for why this is so. Yet Scripture teaches us in other places that, '*many are called and few chosen.*' That is to say, that true believers are actually always going to be a minority. In saying that, even though a great many people profess Christianity, a lot are actually living by the name but are taking the name of the Lord in vain.

From a pastoral perspective, it is a mind-boggling thing for teachers of God's Word to witness a lot of people start out on fire for the Lord to end backslidden. And then when we evaluate our own lives in light of God's Word and see how we also backslide often. This causes me personally to see a contradiction with the way I live with what is required of me from what is clearly written in Scripture.

In light of all of this, we see hypocrisy as a norm in the church with believers today and because of this, we are all much more relaxed in our own walks. But as we learned here, this is not the case. So what am I to do with this?

Well, I see that it is far easier to fall away from God than it is to stay on fire and continue walking in His truth. Because of this, I know that I mustn't take the name of the Lord in vain in my life with how I walk and further realize that I cannot do it apart from Him. So, in summary, I will pray and grow therein. I will abide in Christ and learn to stay. I will hunger for His Word and stir my desire for it. And I will never be satisfied to live a moment apart from His Presence.

How about you? How might you make this lesson something that can change your life and cause you to walk in a truer more pure form of godliness?

Brothers and Sisters, it is our prayer and desire that you would not only want this for yourself but prioritize your life in such a way to make this a reality in it. Grace, mercy, and peace in abundance and overflowing to you through Jesus Christ, the only Lord of all. Amen.

#### References

Benson, Joseph (1857) Commentary of the old and new testaments, New York, NY: T. Carlton & J. Porter

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