

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Everyday driving to and from Vandalia is a question: will I make it or will the road be flooded, or will one of the bridges wash out from under me? Every Sunday we pray that God will prevent failure of harvest, which entails that the waters currently flooding the fields will go down so that there will be a crop from them. Today and yesterday have been hot and humid, so here's hoping that the Lord is answering our prayers favorably! In the meantime, we'll turn to His Word and its explanation from Luther which we never have to question.

The Name of God

Last month we began to look at Luther's discussion of the Second Commandment. We only went so far as the "first things that burst forth (BoC, p.392)" from our hearts. Today we'll hear from Luther how we might reply if asked about this command. "If you are asked, 'What does the Second Commandment mean?' or, 'What does it mean to take the name of God in vain or to misuse it?' you should answer briefly: 'It is a misuse of God's name if we call upon the Lord God in any way whatsoever to support falsehood or wrong of any kind (BoC, p.393).'"

This command may seem simple enough, but it is more complex than what we might first think. Our first impression might be that we should not lie in court, and, granted, Luther does mention that as an example ("for example, when taking oaths in court and one party lies about the other (BoC, p.393)"). But this command "forbids...appealing to God's name falsely (at any time) or taking his name upon our lips when our heart knows or should know that the facts are otherwise (BoC, p.393)."

In other words, *any time* we speak and call upon God to be our witness, in court or out, we are held to speak the truth in its fullness. God does not take it lightly when He is called upon to witness a

matter, and He will not be pleased if called upon in a matter in which lying is occurring. This includes when we “should know that the facts are otherwise.” One should be wary of calling God to bear witness to anything one says to begin with, as it is nearly impossible to know anything for certain outside of the Scriptures. What is more, you will not be excused for simply not knowing better because when you call upon God to bear witness, you are saying that you know the full truth of the situation. It falls under the category of a sin of omission if you call upon God without first knowing the facts as well as you should.

“From this all people can figure out for themselves when and in how many ways God’s name is abused, although it is impossible to enumerate all its misuses (BoC, p.393).” If you are reading this and realize that you have called upon God to witness a falsehood, or an unwitting falsehood, hear what Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew: “Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come (Matthew 12:31-32).” Even sins of calling on the name of God can be forgiven, and have been, by Jesus’ sin-covering death on the cross. But as Jesus told the woman caught in sin, “go, and from now on sin no more (John 8:11b).” Instead, call upon the name of God in joy and love and praise, speaking the truth as you have been called—especially that Truth of the Gospel, that you and I have been saved, and so has everyone we will ever meet! In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh