

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 56. What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?

A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgement.

Scripture References: Deut. 28:58, 59. Ps. 139:20. Ps. 83:18. Zech 5:3.

Questions:

1. Why is it that breakers of this commandment might escape punishment from men?

The breakers of this commandment might escape punishment from men because so many times those in authority are just as guilty as those who break the commandment. It is so many times a case of the natural man dealing with the natural man and the things of God are bypassed.

2. Who are they that take the Lord's name in vain?

The Bible teaches that those who take His name in vain are his avowed enemies. (Ps. 139:20).

3. What should be one of the greatest motivators to hinder us from taking His name in vain?

As believers simply the words "the Lord our God" in this question should motivate us toward recognizing His glory and this should fill us with reverence and a godly fear. It should burden our hearts with guilt if we should break this commandment.

4. Will those who take the name of the Lord in vain escape judgement?

Those who break this commandment will not escape judgement, because God is righteous and has promised that they will be punished.

5. Would you call His promise a threat?

Yes, it could be called a threat in that divine vengeance is aimed against the person breaking the commandment.

6. When will those who break this commandment be punished?

There are two times the breakers of this commandment could be punished. Sometimes they are punished in this life as is seen in Deut. 28:58, 59. Sometimes the punishment will not be given until the hereafter. However, it is certain they will be punished.

A WATCH ON OUR LIPS

"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." (Ps. 141:3). This verse is an excellent prayer, as we consider this particular commandment of the Lord. When the Bible says, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless", regarding taking His name in vain, we should all take heed and seek to honor the Lord with our lips at all times.

The question is: Are we afraid of speaking anything that might dishonor our Lord? Certainly we should be, for this is one way in which God's glory is defiled, and as believers our responsibility here is apparent. In an old Presbyterian Prayer Book is found the following prayer:

"Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we confess to Thee, that in many times and ways, by thought, word, and deed, we have exceedingly sinned against Thee; And are no more worthy to be called Thy children. But we humbly beseech Thee, O holy and loving Father, of Thy great mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord, to forgive us our offences, and henceforth grant us true repentance and newness of life, to the honor and glory of Thy Name. Amen."

Making this a daily prayer would be good for us all. And yet, there is danger involved in the speech of the believer. The Bible states the danger very well: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me." (Isa. 29:13). The danger is ever present that we talk a good religion, but because our hearts are not right before the Lord we neglect to follow His ways. We are eager to be heard by others who love the Lord, but inwardly we are saying "No!" to Him as He deals with self inside our hearts. Indeed, our prayer should be for Him to set a watch before our mouths, and for the Holy Spirit to increasingly minister to our hearts.

The third commandment makes it plain that we will pay for dishonoring Him with our lips. The payment will be in this life or in the next. We know full well that the unbeliever will be punished, but sometimes we forget that we too will have to suffer. May God help us that our words may ever glorify Him, words lifting high the Lord Jesus Christ to a wicked and perverse generation! (Ps. 19:14).

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