

Heidelberg Catechism LORD'S DAY 36

Q99. What is the aim of the third commandment?

A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing, perjury,¹ or unnecessary oaths,² nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders. In summary, we should use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe,³ so that we may properly confess God,⁴ pray to God,⁵ and glorify God in all our words and works.⁶

1. Lev. 24:11[–16] – “The Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the Name in a curse. And they brought him to Moses—now his mother’s name was Shelomith daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.”

Lev. 19:12 – “And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.”

2. Matt. 5:37 – “Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

James 5:12 – “Above all, brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “Yes” be yes and your “No” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.”

3. Isa. 45:23 – “By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.’

4. Matt. 10:32 – “Everyone, therefore, who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven,”

5. 1 Tim. 2:8 – “I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument,”

6. Rom. 2:24 – “For, as it is written, ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you.’”

1 Tim. 6:1 – “Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed.”

Col. 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.”

Q100. Is blasphemy of God’s name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent and forbid it?

A. Yes, indeed.¹ No sin is greater or provokes God’s wrath more than blaspheming his name. That is why God commanded it to be punished with death.²

1. Lev. 5:1 – “When any of you sin in that you have heard a public adjuration to testify and, although able to testify as one who has seen or learned of the matter, do not speak up, you are subject to punishment.”

2. Lev. 24:15–16 – “And speak to the Israelites, saying: Anyone who curses God shall incur guilt. One who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as the native-born, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death.”