

CONFIRMATION; JANUARY 21, 2018.  
LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM.  
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: COMMANDMENT 2

You Are Not to Take the Name of God in Vain.

Old Testament Background.

The Ten Commandments are found in the book of Exodus, chapter 20. Moses was leading the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt to the land that had been promised to them by God through the patriarch Abraham. (Genesis 12) While they were on this journey through the Sinai desert, God called Moses to the top of Mount Sinai to give him the laws that would serve as the basis of their relationship (covenant) with God. The Ten Commandments were the most important of these laws, although over time, there would be other laws as well relating to ceremonies such as offering sacrifices, dietary rules, worship practices, etc. According to Luther, the ceremonial laws do not apply to Christians. They were given to the people of Israel only. However, the Ten Commandments apply to everyone. Luther pointed out that all people observe most of these laws whether they have been taught the Ten Commandments or not. That is, we know by nature that it's wrong to murder, steal, bear false witness, commit adultery, etc. Therefore, he called these laws "Natural Law."

The Ten Commandments are divided-up into two sections: the first table (commandments 1-3), and the second table (commandments 4-10). The first table are laws regulating our relationship with God. The second table are laws regulating our relationship with one another. According to Jesus, all these laws can be summed-up in two commandments; "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." In other words, if we love God and one another, we would not do anything that the commandments forbid. Luther rightly taught that this means we will not only refrain from doing what is wrong, we will also actively promote doing what is right. So, whenever he interprets the meaning of a commandment, he not only teaches us what is forbidden, he also teaches what is encouraged.

Before looking at what Luther says about the second commandment, it would be helpful to know what the Hebrew people believed about names. First, names signified something about a person's identity. For example, Jesus means "God saves." In Hebrew, there are several words used in the Bible that refer to God, such as "Elohim," but only one word is used exclusively for the God who revealed himself in the law and prophets. This name was given to Moses when God called him to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt to the promised land. Exodus 3 records this encounter. God talked to Moses from a burning bush. During this conversation, Moses asked God what his name was. God replied using the word "Yahweh," which means "I am who I am." This name suggests several things, such as the fact that we can't limit God with any human definition. It also means that we will know God only as God reveals who God is. (ie. the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: the God who freed them from slavery: the God who spoke through the prophets: the God who became human in Jesus Christ) So important is this name to the Jewish people that to this day, they do not even say the name to make sure they don't misuse it.

The second commandment was given in order to make sure that this name, which is holy and sacred, was never misused. To misuse God's name would suggest that we don't hold God in the highest regard. God is holy, and his name therefore is above all names. Luther's interpretation of this commandment includes specific ways that God's name is misused, and specific ways we can use God's name properly.

In the Large Catechism, Luther observed that the first commandment "instructs the heart and teaches faith." The second commandment "leads us outward and directs the lips and tongue into a right

relationship with God." For him, this observation is important because the first things that come out from the heart are \_\_\_\_\_.

The simplest explanation of this commandment is that it forbids using God's name to support \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ of any kind.

The worst example of this is when we teach things about God that contradict God's \_\_\_\_\_.

However, Luther lists several other specific ways in which God's name is misused. These include \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_.

On the other hand, this commandment not only forbids the misuse of God's name, it encourages us to \_\_\_\_\_ God's name.

Thus, first the heart honors God by \_\_\_\_\_, and then the lips by \_\_\_\_\_.

According to the Small catechism, when should we call upon God's name?

Luther lists three ways in which it is good to use God's name. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

When might it be helpful and comforting to pray?

When should we praise God?

When should we thank God?

In the Large Catechism, Luther writes that it is very helpful to get in the habit of commending ourselves and our families to God each day for \_\_\_\_\_ against every conceivable \_\_\_\_\_.

Also, should something frightening happen, it is a good use of God's name to call out to God for \_\_\_\_\_.

Likewise, should we experience something very positive, it is helpful to \_\_\_\_\_ God.

Before explaining what each of the commandments mean, Luther begins by saying "...we should \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ God so that..."

In the Large Catechism, Luther concludes his discussion of this commandment with the observation that the right use of God's name is taught not only by what we \_\_\_\_\_, but also in the way we \_\_\_\_\_.

Is saying or writing OMG a good use of God's name?

What are some other ways in which people commonly use God's name today?