

# Evening sermon: 2nd January

## (Sermon Summary)

### Taking care how we speak: Deuteronomy 5:11

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”

Both the second and third commandments stem from the first, as they are concerned with the ways in which we think about, and speak about, the one true God. In our speech we should hallow His name and hold Him in high regard. We must speak about Him with authenticity and sincerity.

To **‘take’** a name means to draw attention to it. We must be careful as we do this. The **‘name’** means the revelation of who God is; powerful and glorious.

To **‘take in vain’** means to treat a name as rubbish, making it empty and desolate. It is possible to speak about God in a way that drains His name of the glory and respect it deserves. This sermon looks at ways in which people break the third commandment.

### Casual blasphemy

We have all heard young people unintentionally blaspheming the Lord’s name to express surprise, shock or wonder. They don’t intend to offend us - they are speaking out of ignorance and thoughtlessness.

### False teaching and hypocrisy

There are professing Christians who want to be seen to be taking God’s name seriously, but something else is at work draining away the respect that God’s name deserves.

1. False teaching. This misrepresents God. Heresy denies Christ’s divinity. Error imputes to God actions that He would not do, such as inspiring bizarre behaviour that makes the church an object of ridicule. Christ’s name is dishonoured by false teaching which denies that His work of salvation is complete.
2. False motives. Some teachers may be doctrinally correct but are speaking about God from bad motives such as self-glorification, money or the desire for

power and influence (Titus 1:10-11, 2 Peter 2:1-3). The Lord will declare that He never knew these people. The apostle Paul, in contrast, commended himself to others by his integrity (2 Cor.4:1-2).

3. Speaking as if from God. False prophets claim that their (often ludicrous) statements come from God. Similarly, false experiences are attributed to the Holy Spirit.

## **The sad fact**

Who can truly keep this commandment? Every time we use God's name in preaching, prayer, witnessing or worship we are guilty of breaking the third commandment, because we can't bring to our words all of the love and wholeheartedness that He deserves. For example, we sing without sufficient conviction, faith and love; in prayer we are frequently distracted. We have to accept and confess this, without sinking into despair (as in Romans 7).

This doesn't mean that we should never speak of Him again - in fact we are commanded to speak of Him, praise Him and pray! Instead, we lean on the Lord who kept the whole of the law perfectly. Everything He said and did was with sufficient faith, love, power and authority. We can be glad that He has made good all our failures and defects.

We have the Commandments - but "don't try them on your own"! Instead, do it with Him. As we trust in Him, the grace and power of the Spirit will help us to be more sincere and zealous, bringing our words nearer to what they should be when we speak of this great God.