

The Second Commandment: You Shall Not Take the Lord's Name in Vain

A Sermon by Rev. Steven P. Gunther
5 October 2025

Lessons: **Exodus 20:7; Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 18:9-14; True Christian Religion 297-300**
(portions)

Introduction

- This year's church theme—studying the Ten Commandments, one each month.
- Today's focus: the **Second Commandment** “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”(Exodus 20:7).
- Childhood perception: “This one was easy—just don't say ‘Oh my God.’”
- But: there must be **more** to it than speech; it's about how we hold and use the Lord's name in life.

1. The Lord's Name

- Question: *Which name* are we not to take in vain?
 - Jehovah, Elohim, Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, etc.
 - **Answer:** All of them—every way we refer to the Divine.
- From *True Christian Religion*:
 - A name holds a person's **qualities and character**, not just a label.
 - “The Lord's name” spiritually means “**the whole of the church's teaching taken from the Word, and through which the Lord is invoked and worshipped.**”
 - Worship - not just going to church, listening to sermons, etc. But true internal worship is a life of charity (AE 325)
- So, the Lord's name = **all that comes from Him** that helps us live a heavenly life—His truths, His goodness, His inspiration.
- Therefore: taking the Lord's name in vain isn't just about speech—it's about **how we treat His teachings** and what they mean in our hearts.

2. Taking It in Vain

- What does “vain” mean?
 - Empty, hollow, meaningless, or even false.
- So to take the Lord’s name in vain =
 - To **invoke His truth or goodness in empty or false ways.**
 - To **use spiritual things without sincerity or integrity.**
- Scripture reference: *Matthew 7:21–23*
 - “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”
 - It’s not about *saying* the name, but about *doing* the Father’s will.
 - “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’
- Why?
 - To understand this, let’s look at our reading from the Gospel of Luke:

3. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14)

- The Pharisee:
 - “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.”
 - Outwardly obedient, but inwardly proud.
- The Tax Collector:
 - Stands far off, cannot look toward heaven, beats his chest and says, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!”
 - Goes home *justified*.
- Application:
 - The Pharisee uses religion to **elevate himself**.
 - The Tax Collector uses it to **humble himself and seek mercy**.
- When we think,

- “I go to church every week; I read the Word every day,”
- or when we sit in these pews and think “I know who needs to hear this message”
- We may be taking the Lord’s name in vain.
- The Lord’s Word is meant to be **a mirror, not a weapon.**

4. “The Lord Will Not Hold Him Guiltless”

- Unique: This commandment alone adds a warning clause.
 - Why such weight?
- Not that the Lord *refuses to forgive*—He always forgives.
- But when we twist His truth for pride or judgment,
 - We **lose our capacity to be forgiven**, because we no longer reflect inwardly.
 - We use what was meant to lead us to heaven as a tool of self-justification.
 - We turn the ***lighthouse*** that should guide us into a *tool of self-righteousness*.
- The danger isn’t divine anger—it’s **spiritual blindness**.

5. Conclusion

- This “thou shalt not” commandment is also an **invitation**:
 - To call on the Lord’s name sincerely, humbly, and personally.
 - To use His Word for **self-examination and growth**, not comparison.
- The tax collector’s humility is our model: “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.”
- Real peace and happiness come not from superiority, but from ongoing repentance and connection.
- Spiritual Goal:
 - Watch for moments this week when we feel “better than others.”
 - Turn them into opportunities for **humility and self-reflection**.
- Then, we truly **honor the Lord’s name**, keeping it holy,
 - And His Word remains a **light in the darkness**, leading us toward heaven, joy, and peace.