

The Second Commandment

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

1. This and all following explanations begin with "We should fear and love God so that..." When we break the 2nd, 3rd, etc. commandment, what is the root of the problem? How do we begin to keep all the commandments? From where does this come? *Rom 10:17*.
2. For what purpose has God given his name to us? *Exodus 34:5-8; Psalm 50:14-15; Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:24-39; Philippians 2:1-11*.
3. Does this commandment refer to "bad words" or to good words used wrongly or cheaply? Which should be a bigger deal? Why? *Rom 2:17-24*.
4. The first commandment had to do with the faith of the heart. The second involves what is said, which involves also our hearers. What do our neighbors learn about our God by what we say? *Matt 10:26-40*.

From Luther's Large Catechism (I: Ten Commandments)

⁵⁰ As the First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught [the basis of] faith, so this commandment leads us forth and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first objects that spring from the heart and manifest themselves are words. Now, as I have taught above how to answer the question, what it is to have a god, so you must learn to comprehend simply the meaning of this and all the commandments, and to apply it to yourself...

⁵² For God's name cannot be misused worse than for the support of falsehood and deceit. Let this remain the exact German and simplest meaning of this commandment...

⁵⁴ But, the greatest abuse occurs in spiritual matters, which pertain to the conscience, when false preachers rise up and offer their lying vanities as God's Word...

⁶³⁻⁶⁴ Besides this you must also know how to use the name [of God] aright. For when saying: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain, He gives us to understand at the same time that it is to be used properly. For it has been revealed and given to us for the very purpose that it may be of constant use and profit. Hence it is a natural inference, since using the holy name for falsehood or wickedness is here forbidden, that we are, on the other hand, commanded to employ it for truth and for all good, as when one swears truly where there is need and it is demanded. So also when there is right teaching, and when the name is invoked in trouble or praised and thanked in prosperity, etc.; all of which is comprehended summarily and commanded in the passage Ps 50:15: Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.