

**COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4**  
**The Ten Commandments**  
**Dr. George O. Wood**

Exodus 20. We're in a five Sunday night series on the Ten Commandments. They're not the ten suggestions but the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are given in two major divisions. The first four relate to God and the last six have to do with our relationship to others. They're summarized we know from the encounter that Jesus had when he summarized the law in "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." That relates to the first four commandments. "And your neighbor as yourself." That relates to the last six commandments.

Last Sunday evening we shared together the first two commandments. The third commandment: Thou shalt not take the Lord your God in vain. Or as the NIV puts it, You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

In the scripture names are very important. The name represents the sum of all the person stands for. A name is more than a tag. A name carries meaning. It's indelibly tied to the nature of a person. The writers of both the Old and the New Testament use the word name as it refers to God as far more than referring to some tag line. The psalmist said, "They that know thy name shall trust in thee." Psalm 9:10. By this the psalmist was not saying whoever knows how to pronounce the name of Yahweh or Jehovah is going to trust in him. It was not simply a matter of enunciating the name. It was knowing the name. Whoever knows thy name shall trust in thee.

The psalmist was very knowledgeable in realizing that many persons who did not know the God of Israel nevertheless knew his name. He was different than Baal or Molech, any of the other gods. He was the God of the Hebrews. They knew his name. But the psalmist is saying "know" as *really know*, enter into the meaning of what his name represents. His name, his character, his personality. Know the meaning that stands behind his name. Those who know his name will trust in him.

The psalmist can later say, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." That as a psalm that was used when the Israelites went into battle. Remember the name of the Lord thy God. It did not mean that they used the name of God as a magic talisman. It was remember his character, who is God for in the conflict. What does God represent? He represents justice, concern for his covenant. He's made an agreement with us. he's committed to us as we obey his word and his law. He will defend us. He is our helper, our Jehovah-Jireh, our God who provides. He is the mighty one. We remember that name and character of himself.

So to say the name of the Lord, to remember the name of the Lord is to forcibly bring to mind his character. He is one who loves righteousness and hates evil, who punishes injustice and loves the truth. Therefore because he is that kind of God, we can call upon him and count upon him in difficulty.

Knowing simply how to enunciate God's name does not mean reverencing him or really knowing him. Jesus says in John 17 when he's done with his earthly ministry "I have manifested thy name." That means far more than Jesus went around simply pronouncing the name of God.

## COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4

### The Ten Commandments

It means that when Jesus got done with his living and his teaching people understood. They heard the name of God and understood that it was more than a line in an entry somewhere. They knew who God is, what God represents, what he stands for.

Therefore in using the name of God we're talking more than simply verbalized speech. We're talking about the whole character, personality, all that is wrapped up in God himself that his name represents.

Using the name of God, how do we misuse that name? I would suggest that the third commandment is cautioning us, warning us against two major wrongful uses of God's name.

The first is when his name is used with irreverence. God asks that his name be treated reverently. Jesus teaches us to pray as the first petition in the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." That is, May the name of God be treated as sacred. And more than just the handle, but the whole understanding of what his name represents. May we reverence and hallow God in a way that we do nothing else.

Our intimacy with God should never bring us to a state of talking about God or talking to God which is in any way less than respectful. Therefore the second commandment in reverencing God's name forbids derogatory use of God's name. It means that we cannot employ if we really understand and know God we cannot employ God's name as a swear word. And I might mention that when a person uses God's name as a swear word there is a degree of culpability or responsibility that is present depending upon how well the person understands what the name represents. If for example somebody who doesn't know the Lord, never picks up the scripture, never reads it, says the name of God in an oath that is a far different thing than if I as a Christian and minister do the same thing. I am in a far greater position of judgment because I know what his name represents. The other person doesn't. It's just a tag. It's just a word. That's not to say we give permission for God's name to be used that way. It's to simply say that those who know his name are called upon especially to exercise tremendous care.

Therefore we are forbidden to use God's name in a swearing context. We are forbidden to use God's name in a sacrilegious sense. To use the name of the Lord lightly. I think we as Christians do well to always treat and regard the name of the Lord even within the context of humor as sacred and not mimic that name. To employ the name of God in a casual way of speech that brings his name in a non reverent kind of usage. The scripture is telling us to be careful about that. Don't do that.

Even when employing the spiritual gift of tongues if the person says, "The Lord God says to you," to be very careful that the Lord is speaking it. Not employ that name meaninglessly.

When in praise and repeating the name of the Lord it is all right to repeat the name of the Lord but to simply get in a rote, park the mind in rote, a mantra of the name of God and saying it over and over again, to kind of go in some sort of mindless state, is not using the name of God in the sacred sense that the scriptures call us to.

Let us in regard to the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and all the names in scripture that stand for the personality of God be careful in our discussion with him and about him.

## COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4

### The Ten Commandments

When the third commandment is given it not only has to do with speech about God's name that may be blasphemous in character or sacrilegious in character. But a second major concern of the third commandment is to avoid careless use of God's name when taking an oath.

An example in Exodus 22:10-11. The name of the Lord may be employed in affirming the truthfulness of our word. For example when we take an oath in a court of law and affirm [swear] that we are telling the truth "So help us God" we are doing something that is proper biblically. We are using God's name in the appropriate way if we are telling the truth. We are taking an oath and saying, as God is my witness and there may be no other witness other than God, I affirm that I am telling the truth. It is proper to do that but you break the third commandment if you employ the name of the Lord to back up your word and you know as you did it that your word was not true.

This has all kinds of applications for Christians today. We are prone to use the name of the Lord to get business. Christian yellow pages. To say as you enter a business deal, "I'm a Christian. You can trust me." I've found that not every psychologist that has the word "Christian" in front of their name understands what that word means. There are some of the most unglued people in the counseling profession wearing the name of Christian without the foggiest concept of what it means. Just because a persons uses the name doesn't mean he's treating it rightly. If you misuse the name of God, if you call yourself Christian and in fact are not or not living as one, you break the third commandment. You take God's name in vein. You misuse it.

When we employ the name of Christian we're employing a very high and mighty name. Use it well. Use it correctly. Live in grace but use his name correctly.

Even when we come to prayer, when we sign off our prayers, "In the name of Jesus." That's more than a sign off tag. That means that what we pray is offered with the understanding that we know the character and nature of God. And that his character and nature stand behind our prayer request. So we can offer it to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. I'm sure when the Father hears some of our prayers, that are in a wonderful tone of voice, we sign off saying, "Father, we ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen." And the Father looks at the Son, "Did you authorize that prayer?" Praying in the name of the Lord resting in his character, his person, his work.

We know from the name of the Lord in regard to prayer the Lord may be free to change the circumstances which we've asked for him to change. Or be free to give us the power to go through them. The deeper you know someone the more their name means to you. The deeper we know God the more his name means to us.

We use his name carefully, reverently and in praise.

The fourth command is the Sabbath keeping commandment.

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and

## COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4

### The Ten Commandments

all that is within them. But he rested on the seven day. Therefore God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. The commandment in shortened form is simply remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

The fourth commandment I believe if we're to understand it properly we need to do three things. We need to look at what the commandment meant within the Old Testament. We need to look at what it means within the New Testament. We need to look at the principles that this commandment is teaching us or everyday living now.

In the Old Testament the commandment on keeping the Sabbath day holy had two fundamental applications. The Sabbath – from sundown Friday night to sunset Saturday night, was for the purpose of rest and it was for the purpose of worship. Wherever you find Old Testament scripture relating to the Sabbath you will find admonitions being given in one of those two respects.

From God's point of view I'm sure that the Sabbath was meant as a holy day, a hallowed day, meant as a day of rest. In the world in which the children of Israel lives and worked as slaves in Egypt they worked seven days a week. People wear out at that pace. The Lord said I'm going to provide opportunity for rest. One day a week you're to quit working. That includes you, your family, your servants, everybody in your house. Just stop working and rest. When the manna was given in the wilderness, even enough was given for a two day food supply so nobody would have to go out and gather food on the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5 says "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God bought you hence with mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." The principle of rest. God was concerned for his people lest they overworked.

But the Sabbath was also for worship. Leviticus 23 gives a whole list of special days during the year when the children of Israel were to be off work. And they were to worship. "Six days shall work be done but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of solemn rest, a whole convocation." Meaning that's the time that the people of God are to gather to hear God's word, to worship God, to pray together, to receive from God.

This principle of rest and worship was not only established for the people but it was established for the land as well. It was mandated that every seven years the land should lie fallow, Exodus 23 and every 49<sup>th</sup> year would be followed by a second Sabbath, the year of Jubilee when for two years the 49<sup>th</sup> and the 50<sup>th</sup> year the land would lie untilled that the land itself might have rest. That was long before the days of crop study and modern fertilization techniques. The land wore out. It needed to be replenished. It needed to be left. God was telling then if people wear out the land wears out, let it rest.

2 Chronicles 36 says because the children of Israel never kept this, because greed motivated them all the time they were in the land, there came a moment of captivity and they were taken away captive for seventy years that the land might have the seventy Sabbath years it had missed. They had been in the land 490 years, they had missed 70 years of letting the land lie without being tilled now God would force it, seventy years all at once.

## COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4

### The Ten Commandments

You know that as a vital principle in your own body. If you keep going at a high maximum stress pace and do not take any time for rest or relaxation there will come a day when it will catch up to you. Then all the days you didn't take off you'll get to take them all off all together. God's word is common sense.

Those things catch up with you.

There came a time when keeping the Sabbath became such a religious thing that it failed to have it's spiritual meaning. People failed to understand why God gave it. It was part of his grace and his mercy to give people rest and to give them opportunity to gather together and worship his name. As that time came around people began to pride themselves, in the later part of Israel's history that they kept the Sabbath. The prophets came along and said, "New moon and Sabbath and calling of assemblies I cannot endure iniquity in solemn assembly." Amos said, "The question is when will the new moon be over that we may sell grain?" People were saying let's get the Sabbath over that we may offer wheat for sale... What were they doing? They were saying we'll keep the Sabbath. That shows we're God's people. But let's then get back to cheating people. The prophets cried out that that was to misunderstand and misread the meaning of Sabbath.

The Old Testament gave it as protection of the people of God. And as a commandment.

When you come to the New Testament you find the New Testament reinterpreting the meaning of the Sabbath. It is out of the Ten Commandments it is the one commandment that undergoes some thorough revision in terms of its application. All the other commandments hold. But the keeping of Saturday as the Sabbath does change within the New Testament.

We know for example that Jesus' disciples plucked corn on the Sabbath. Something that was not appropriate for a good Jew to do, Mark 2:23-28. Jesus through this began to preach that the Sabbath was made for man and he was the Lord of the Sabbath. When you're Lord over something you control its use. He has the right to determine how that day is going to be used. He says he's Lord of the Sabbath. As Lord of the Sabbath he began to heal on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had a whole special legislation worked out on the keeping of the Sabbath. Someone could be given medicine to keep them from getting worse but not to get better. You could only arrest the condition but not help the healing process. It was theorized if you helped the healing process you set in motion the process of working and you would therefore violate the commandment. Jesus again and again violates that scribal interpretation of the fourth commandment and heals. Jesus says "My Father is working and I am working." In other words "If you think that God rested from deeds of mercy on the Sabbath day you're wrong. God may have finished his creation and rested from it on the Sabbath day but he never quit loving and doing mercy. So he is working and I am working."

We know that the Lord himself kept the Sabbath as a time of worship, Luke 4:16. But when he is risen from the dead the calendar changes. He meets with his disciples on the first day of the week. He meets with them and breaks bread with them. This then becomes a pattern for the whole church. We find them later on meeting and breaking bread on the first day of the week.

In John 20 he appeared to the 10 on the first day of the week.

## COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4

### The Ten Commandments

When you come to the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul you find all of a sudden the church not being described as meeting for worship on the Sabbath. Acts 2:46 describes the experience of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. They are worshipping daily in the temple. Then things regularized. By the time we come to Acts 20:7 which is about 25 years or so after the resurrection we find Paul encountering the disciples at Troas. He stayed with them 7 days but on the first day of the week when we were gathered together to break bread Paul talked with them. Christians at Troas were meeting on the first day of the week. That begins another Sunday night tradition.

Paul preached that night so long that one of the persons fell out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> story window and died. Paul just goes down and raises the guy up and then preaches all night long. 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul gives instruction to the church at Corinth “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something said to store it up. I’ve given these same instructions to all the churches in Galatia.” Meaning by then it was a practice for the churches to meet together the first day of the week.

An early letter that survives as a piece of literature outside of the New Testament from a Roman governor writing to the emperor. He isn’t sure how to treat Christians whether to seek them out and persecute them or respond if somebody turns them in. Or what is the imperial policy toward Christians. In 112 A.D. he describes some of the habits of the Christians. He says they meet early on the first day of the week before the dawn and sing hymns antiphonal to Christ as to a God. Why were they meeting before the crack of dawn? They went to work at dawn. So when was their worship time? Not 8:30.

How about 5:30? The early Christians did.

Revelation 1:10 finds John in the Spirit on the Lord’s day. By that time the first day of the week, by the time of John 90 A.D. had been called the Lord’s day. It was no longer the Sabbath day. It was the Lord’s day.

The New Testament then gives counsel because how do you teach this church which is part Jewish, part non Jew. The Jews are coming out of a religious tradition of the fourth commandment that says keep Saturday, keep the Sabbath. The gentiles are coming in with this new freedom and saying Christ rose on the first day of the week, the early apostles met on the first day of the week. Let’s meet on that day of the week.

How do you reconcile these things? The controversy was already going by the time Paul writes the Roman letter. Verse 5-6. “One man esteems one day better than another. While another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord.” Whatever day you observe, Saturday or Sunday, observe it in honor of the Lord. Colossians 2:16 Paul says, “Therefore let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food or drink or in regard to a festival or new moon or a Sabbath.” So anyone who says if you don’t worship on Saturday you’re breaking God’s law and therefore displeasing him. Paul is saying let no one set in judgment with you on that matter. Let everyone be free to follow the call of conscious and conviction as he or she might desire.

I think that goes both ways. If someone is worshipping on Saturday, from a Seventh Day tradition, if they’re setting aside that day to worship God, and they’re genuinely worshipping

## COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4

### The Ten Commandments

God as he must be worshipped in Spirit and in truth, praise God. Let's not hassle one another on this matter.

If you keep Sunday, if Sunday is the Lord's day, how do we integrate the principles from the fourth commandment into the Lord's day in observances? Two key things that come out.

One is that there ought to be one day a week that is for rest. Both soul rest and body rest. Soul rest is simply recognizing that on the seventh day God's work was done both in creation and in redemption. Take one day a week to get your spiritual batteries charged, to open yourself in worship to the Lord. Break the normal routine. Set it aside for rest in your soul. Also one day out of seven rest in the physical level. Whether housework or studies or whether you're working two jobs, find a day in which you can rest.

Worship on the Lord's day. The writer of Hebrews says in chapter 10:24-25 "Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another." Come and let this day be a day of worship. The Lord's day is like the Sabbath. It's not a private day. It is for meeting with God's people. Without such gatherings we do not survive spiritually. Someone has said, "If you want to kill the individual Christian, teach him or her to be a Christian in isolation. To live unto themselves. Then they will die unto themselves." We need one another and we need worship.

There are special problems our culture imposes upon us. One is weekend leisure. What do you do if you have enough money to go away for the weekend. Camping, fishing, boating, Palm Springs, the mountains, the desert, San Diego, whatever. What shall we do about our weekends? That's a marvelous time to rest and some of you periodically enjoy that and get away. I try hard to not be envious of some of you who do that on weekends. But in regard to your need for recreation on the weekend some questions derived from the fourth commandment.

Will this getting away achieve its desired end, spiritual rest and physical rest? If your weekend away does not provide time for spiritual rest and renewal and just provides body rest and a change of pace it's not going to do for you all that needs done. Even when you're away find time on the Lord's day for worship. Worship with his people.

Will my recreational desires affect or hurt the body of Christ? By regular absence of being involved on the church you're a part of, how is that going to affect your children if you have children? Are they learning from you commitment and faithfulness to the people of God.

Is it going to keep you from commitments? I know people in the body of Christ at large who will not make commitment to serve the Lord which involves teaching a Sunday school because it will somehow get in the way of their being away on weekends. That's just not right. If your weekend is such that it keeps you from making commitments to the Lord and his people then it has become too major a priority for you. Rethink that.

Will this weekend help or hurt my own spiritual experience?

What about work on the Lord's day? Some of you because of conscious do not work on the Lord's day. I encourage you. I regret that our society has produced such a desire for money that merchants must stay open on Sabbath. I'm comfortable with blue laws. If you must work on the Lord's day then adopt somewhere a Sabbath principle in your life where you're finding a regular

## **COMMANDMENTS 3 & 4**

### **The Ten Commandments**

space and time to meet with the Lord and have the physical and soul rest that you need and find others to worship with.

Sunday is a time to give opportunity to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day. On that Lord's day we understand that Christ has already done something for us. He's done a marvelous work of resurrection. We look back on the Lord's day to the fact that it all got kicked off because Jesus rose again from the dead. We realize too as we keep the Lord's day or keep a day for spiritual and physical rest that God does use rested people. If we are all the time going at a tremendous speed it's difficult for us to be used by the Lord. We're simply tired out and don't have energy to work with. God does use rested people.

The Lord's day also reminds us that there is yet a Sabbath rest for the people of God. The Old Testament Sabbath was partly given as a prophetic idea that there will come a day when all of God's people are going to lay down their burdens, lay down their work responsibilities and forever be rested and yet have meaningful things to do. Won't that be great? Never be tired any more. Never worry about not enough hours in the day or the night. Never be so stressed out with responsibilities. But looking forward to the Sabbath rest that is provided for God's people. Keep the name of the Lord holy and find ways to apply the principles of the fourth commandment on the Sabbath into the Lord's day or a similar day for rest and for worship.