

# Matthew 5:33-37. Christ Forbids Irreverent Swearing.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

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*The Lord Jesus teaches us that we should use language with reverence and awe, and that irreverent speech displeases God.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:13, Isaiah 65:16, Matthew 12:36, Hebrews 6:17, James 5:12

**Topics:** "Christian Ethics", "Reverent Speech"

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## Description

Favell Lee Mortimer emphasizes the importance of being mindful of the words we speak, as the Lord Jesus observes and is displeased with every irreverent and profane expression. While ungodly people may habitually use disrespectful exclamations, those who revere God will speak with solemn awe and simplicity. Although there are occasions where solemn oaths are permissible, it is crucial to remember God's condescension in confirming His promises with an oath, providing strong consolation to those who seek Him.

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## Transcript

The Lord Jesus observes the expressions we use in our common conversation; he notices every reproachful word we utter to each other; he notices also every irreverent word we speak of God. He heard with displeasure the Jews of old calling their brethren *raca* and fool, and swearing by heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, and by their own heads. Let us never forget that he still listens to our words, and is displeased with every profane expression, such as, "God bless us," "The Lord knows," "Upon my soul." Ungodly people are so much in the habit of uttering these exclamations, that they scarcely know when they use them. But they could not have acquired the habit, if they had felt reverence for the majesty of the Almighty God. But when men became sinners, they began to despise Him. If they were to hear his dreadful voice, they would be filled, as Adam was, with fear; but when they do not see him, they feel no dread, and care not how they insult his name. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you use His name in vain."

But with what solemn awe the Son of God speaks of his Father! Even the heavens and earth are not common things in his sight. When we look up at the blue vault above our heads, we are gazing upon the throne of its Creator; and when we look around upon this green and smiling earth, we are gazing upon the footstool of its glorious Monarch--even our own heads are His, and not ours; for He made them, while we

cannot make one hair, white or black. If men were not sinners, they would be satisfied with saying "yes" and "no," without using oaths to confirm their words. For Jesus said, "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one--or the evil heart."

There is one difficulty that may be urged respecting the rule Christ laid down. How is it that Paul in his epistles often appeals to God, saying, "God is my witness, I speak the truth in Christ; I lie not. I call God for a record upon my soul." Did Paul speak profanely? That is impossible, for he spoke by the Holy Spirit. It is therefore lawful to appeal to God on solemn important occasions; as in a court of justice, when our words may affect the life of a fellow-creature. It is even mentioned in Isaiah as a proof of piety in future days, that men instead of swearing by false gods, will swear by the true God. "He who swears in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth." (Is. 65:16.) In Deuteronomy also, God said, "You shall fear the Lord your God, and serve him, and swear by his name." (6:13.) It must therefore be lawful on some occasions to use solemn oaths.

How condescending God has been to us in having used an oath to confirm his promise to us! Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, and he said, "As I live." This he did to quiet the unbelieving fears of his own people. He says to each of those who have fled to Christ for pardon, "Surely blessing I will bless you." He adds his oath to his word, and says, "As I live." Thus by two immutable or unchangeable things, his word and his oath, he gives strong consolation to the poor penitent trembling at his footstool. He uses the same oath when He threatens to destroy His enemies. "I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, 'I live forever.' If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold in judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me." (Deut. 32:40, 41.) Well, then, may we fear this glorious and fearful name, "The Lord your God."

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