

Vows, Oaths, Swearing

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into the topic of swearing and oaths as discussed in Matthew chapter 5, emphasizing the importance of truthfulness and integrity in our words and commitments. It explores the biblical perspective on swearing, vows, and oaths, highlighting the need for sincerity and faithfulness in our promises, especially when made to God. The sermon encourages believers to be people of truth, passion, and unwavering commitment to righteousness, drawing insights from various Bible verses and examples like David and Jonathan.

Scripture: Matthew 5:33, Numbers 30:2, Deuteronomy 23:21, Psalms 15:4, Hebrews 6:16, Romans 1:9, Psalms 119:106, 1 Thessalonians 5:27

Topics: "Truthfulness", "Integrity in Commitments"

Description

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Transcript

The portion of scripture I'd like to call your attention to this afternoon is found in Matthew chapter 5, our ongoing study in the Sermon on the Mount. One of the advantages to preaching expositively through a portion of scripture is that unless you're going to just pass over material, you're confronted by things that sometimes the preacher might not actually preach on. Truth is, in probably close to 30 years of preaching, I have never, until today, preached on swearing and oaths.

So are you all excited and thrilled? Matthew chapter 5, verse 33, is where we find ourselves. Now I'm thrilled, because I'm thrilled because I learn things about Christ on a regular basis. When I hear Him talk, it helps me to get to know Him better, and how He taught, and what He taught, and what was important to Him, and what's important in being a Christian, and important as far as the kingdom goes.

Matthew 5, verse 33. Again, you have heard. He's been saying this.

He's got six very specific areas that He delves into here, that they had heard certain teachings about. Again, you have heard that it was said, to those of old. Again, that's interesting that He doesn't just come

out and say, you heard Moses preach, or you heard your rabbis expressly say, or the scribes and Pharisees.

He keeps saying it fundamentally the same way. You've heard that it was said, to those of old. You shall not swear falsely.

Now the New American Standard, you shall not make false vows. The Holman Christian, the New English Translation, you shall not break an oath. The reason I read all those different translations to you is this.

The ESV says, swear. Others say, you shouldn't swear falsely. Other translations say, make false vows.

Other translations say, break an oath. Vow, swear, oath. Different translations will use any one of those three words.

But shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. NAS says, fulfill your vows. New King James says, perform your oaths.

Again, I'm hitting the different translations just so you see that they're interchangeably using swearing, vows, and oaths. Again, but I say to you, do not take an oath at all. Or do not swear at all.

Either by heaven, for it is the throne of God. Or by earth, for it is his footstool. Or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

And do not take an oath by your head. For you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no.

Anything more than this comes from evil. So those three words. I want us to just think for a moment.

Swear, vow, and oath. Now I imagine for both of us, when you hear swear. Isn't that interesting? The original meaning of that word has been lost.

In casual conversation. When we hear swear, we basically think of cursing, and cussing, and foul language. Even oaths.

Not so much anymore, but it used to be. That if you said, he exploded with a mouth full of cursing and oaths. Even oaths was somehow connected with foul language and four letter words.

And how did that happen? How did cursing and oaths get attached to foul language? Undoubtedly, because of what Jesus says right here. I mean, you can't imagine any other way. That terminology would get connected with foul language.

And why? Probably because of the very last word that he says in verse 37. It comes from evil. I mean, basically, Jesus counted swearing and oath taking as evil, apparently, in this verse.

So these terms seem to become associated with all sorts of evil and obscene language and four letter words. But here's the thing. We need to stop and consider what these words really mean, biblically.

What are they all about? Okay, turn in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 30. Numbers chapter 30 verse 2. In all of your Bibles, I look at all the different translations, and I'm checking out what's going on because I know we have a variety of translations here. Numbers chapter 30 verse 2 is the only verse in all of your Bibles to use all three terms.

Swear, oath, and vow. All in the same verse. So it's a good place to look.

It's a good place to get a feel. Numbers 30 and verse 2. This is the one verse that uses all three. If a man vows a vow to the Lord.

Now let's just stop right there. Because that's where vow is dealt with. If a man vows a vow to the Lord.

You know what's very interesting? You start searching that out throughout your Bibles. And you're going to find that what constitutes a vow is that which you make between yourself and God. And just listen to how it's used in Scripture.

Deuteronomy 23. Don't turn here. Stay right at Numbers 30 verse 2. Listen to this.

Deuteronomy 23. If you make a vow to the Lord your God. You see what it is.

It's a vow between you made to the Lord your God. You shall not delay fulfilling it. For the Lord your God will surely require it of you.

And you will be guilty of sin. Deuteronomy 23 again. Verse 23.

You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips. For you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God. If you look at vows.

That's how they are made. A vow is made to God. Now can you think of some of the well known vows in Scripture? Like the most famous vow.

Nazarite. Well there is the Nazarite. I'm thinking of one very specific one that an actual man made.

Specifically that we have record of in Scripture. Jephthah's vow. Right.

He vowed to God that the first person that walked out of the door. If God gave him victory over the Ammonites. He was going to offer as a burnt offering.

Now listen to this. Jephthah made a vow to the Lord. Again you see that another famous one.

Maybe you don't think about it so much. Is Hannah. Do you remember Hannah's vow? But again the vow was to the Lord.

It wasn't made to Eli the high priest. Eli didn't know about it. Until after she got pregnant.

But what she vowed to the Lord. Was that if God gave her this child. She would give the child to the Lord.

So that's the idea behind vows. Now go back to Numbers 30 and verse 2. We got vows out of the way. If you vow to the Lord.

So you see that. Or swears an oath. Okay now that's interesting.

Because swearing and oaths go together. You see that. An oath is a solemn promise or a pledge.

A vow is to God. This is made to other people. But it's basically a promise or a pledge made to others.

And swearing is the verb that's used. That describes the action of taking the oath. You swear the oath.

The oath is the promise. Swearing is you presenting it. It's the verb that's attached to it.

And I'll give you the first example in Scripture. Where swearing shows up. It's actually found in Genesis 21.

At the time Abimelech. Abimelech you may remember him. He was a king of Gerar.

The king of the Philistines. He's called both. And Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham.

God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore swear to me by God. That you will not deal falsely.

And Abraham said I will swear. Just a few verses later. It says that Abraham presented seven new lambs.

And he set them apart. And again it's with Abimelech. And it says that therefore that place was called Beersheba.

Because there both of them swore an oath. So you see an oath is the promise. It's the pledge.

And you swear the oath. So you get the vow. The vow is made to the Lord.

An oath is a promise or a pledge. It's a solemn pledge that you make to somebody. And you appeal to something sacred.

Now typically the appeal was to God. But we get to where we swear by all sorts of things. And that's obviously what the scribes and the Pharisees were doing.

And people say I swear by my mother's grave. And people do all sorts of things. Something they feel is sacred.

They'll swear by the Bible. Or they'll do different things. But you see what we have here.

They want Abraham to make a promise by God. You know what they're doing when you are swearing by God. Is you're calling upon God to be witness to you.

And if you don't keep that promise. Then what you're actually saying is you want God to bring the punishment. And God deal with you appropriately if you break your word.

That's the whole idea. He's watching as a witness. But he's not just a static idol witness.

He's a witness that will actually do something if I don't carry through on my end of the bargain. That's the whole idea. Now here's the thing.

God is not hesitant to swear oaths. And I just think that this is fantastic. Because if on the one hand you just simply isolate Jesus' words.

That anything that comes from more than yes or no is from evil. You have to say. Well hey wait a second.

Doesn't scripture tell me that God swore an oath. Like more than once. Like repeatedly in scripture.

Yeah it does say that. And I think we need to consider that. Now listen to these.

I don't want you to take the time to turn all of them. You'll never stay up with me. But listen.

Brothers. I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David. That he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet David. Probably didn't know David was a prophet. And knowing that God had sworn an oath to him.

That he would set one of his descendants on his throne. Now you want to get that. God made an oath to David.

And he swore that oath. That he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Or how about this.

Hebrews. As I swore in my wrath. They shall not enter my rest.

Can you imagine this? Can you imagine yet being alive and having breath in this world. And having God swear. You will never enter his rest.

That is a fearful thing. But God did that. God swore in his wrath.

That those people out there in that wilderness would not enter. That promised land. And if you read Hebrews 3 and 4 carefully.

You recognize what he is really saying. They perished. That promised land is only a picture of a greater promised land.

And a greater rest. To whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest. But to those who were disobedient.

Or how about this. Now pay careful attention here. When God made a promise to Abraham.

Since he had no one greater by whom to swear. He swore by himself. Now listen to what it says.

For people swear by something greater than themselves. And in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise.

The unchangeable character of his purpose. He guaranteed it with an oath. And then you have this.

Hebrews 7. A better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. You know another time he gave an oath.

He gave an oath that Christ would be a priest forever. According to the order of Melchizedek. It was not without an oath.

Those, the Aaronic priesthood. Those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath. But this one was made a priest with an oath.

By the one who said to him. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. You are a priest forever.

So I don't know about you. But I feel a bit of a tension here. Because when Jesus basically says.

Hey swearing oaths. It comes from evil. At the same time I see that God has no hesitancy in swearing an oath.

And certainly it comes from nothing but good. And so I think we have to be careful here. Because you know what Jesus is saying.

Jesus is saying let your yes be yes. Let your no be no. Anything more than that.

It comes from evil. Well isn't that the case with God? I mean come on. God can't lie.

Isn't his yes good enough? Is his yes good enough? Then how come he doesn't think at certain times it was sufficient? Why at certain times did he feel like to give them extra assurance. To let them know. I mean you heard how it was said.

When God desired to show more convincingly. When he really wanted to convince somebody. But you say well wait a second.

Isn't he really honest all the time? Isn't his yes really good and rock solid and firm foundation? And yet when he more convincingly wants to prove something. He swears. I find that extremely interesting.

So listen to our Lord's words again. Go back to Matthew 5. In verse 33. Because I'm going to argue something here.

I'm going to make a case to you about the way that Jesus teaches. And I want you to pay careful attention. Because I want us to be balanced.

I want us to be right. I want us to be correct in our thinking. We don't want to dismiss our Lord's words at all.

But we want to take them for what he's saying. We want to see what he's saying. We want to see what the real issue is here.

So listen to the Lord's words again. Matthew 5.33. You have heard that it was said to those of old. You shall not swear falsely.

But shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. Now there's no exact statement like that anywhere in the Old Testament. However, there are similar statements.

Listen to some of the statements in Scripture concerning swearing and oaths. Leviticus 19.12. You shall not swear by my name falsely. Now listen to this.

Jesus said you heard that it was said to those of old. You shall not swear falsely. Here in Leviticus 19.12. You shall not swear by my name falsely.

And so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. Or Psalm 15.

We're getting here. Who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly. What characterizes him? In verse 4 of Psalm 15 it says, Who swears to his own hurt and does not change.

Again, the blameless man who would walk with God. You know what we're being told there? He's not described as a man who never swears. He's described as one who does swear but doesn't change.

That's a righteous man. That's a blameless man. Jesus could say about divorce, Well because of the hardness of your heart this thing over here was allowed.

But there doesn't seem to be anything. This is not what characterizes somebody of heart of heart. This is what characterizes somebody that's actually very righteous, very blameless, and dwells on the Lord's holy hill.

Numbers 30 and verse 2. We were dissecting it looking at vows and oaths and swearing. But just listen to it for what it said. If a man vows a vow to the Lord or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word.

He shall do according to all that proceeds from his mouth. Listen, there is absolutely no question that swearing of oaths in the Old Testament was permitted. It was swearing falsely that was forbidden.

Which is precisely what Jesus says. That they had heard, right? Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old. You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.

And I would say, yep, that's precisely what they had heard. And it sounds like they had heard it straight from God's word. They heard it from the Old Testament writing.

There's no question about that. So, here's the thing. It's not from any erroneous interpretation.

A lot of times people say, well, it's the erroneous interpretations of the scribes and the Pharisees. Undoubtedly that comes in here. But the fact that the Old Testament said, swear, just don't swear falsely, that was taught in the Old Testament.

There's no question about it. It was not an erroneous interpretation at all. But then Jesus says this.

Matthew 5.34 But I say to you, but I say to you, in other words, you heard this taught, but I say to you, do not take an oath at all. Now you know if we stopped right there and we just put a period, and we went on to the next subject, that would be one thing. There would be a real absoluteness about it.

But I think what we have to hear, is you have to hear what's connected. He says it like this. Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

Do you know something that jumps out at me? In none of this is he condemning, specifically, the using God's name to swear by. It's all these off-handed ways of swearing. Now watch it.

Don't take an oath by heaven, it's the throne of God, or by earth, it's his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it's the city of the great king. Do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no, anything more than this comes from evil.

Now I would just say this, wait a second, I thought Jesus said back in verse 17, that we're not to think that he came to abolish the law or the prophets. I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until it's all accomplished.

Doesn't it sound like he's changing this? And I'll tell you this, most of the Anabaptists, you know the German Baptists, and Quakers, you had a good deal of Quakers here in the UK, maybe you still do, they

basically have taken an absolute position on this. If you put them in a court of law, they simply will not go under oath. For religious reasons, they will absolutely not do that.

Others have taken that position, John Piper takes that position, and won't take an oath in a courtroom, they forbid all kinds of oaths of allegiance, period. But here's the thing, now follow me closely here, our Lord had a style of teaching, that I think we would admit, was often times, if you take an excessively literal approach, you end up with craziness. And you know, there tended to be strains of hyperbole, hyperbole in his teaching, and I think that's super important, that we recognize, you know this, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, this is a classic example, he cannot be my disciple.

But have you thought, even here in this Sermon on the Mount, we haven't gotten to it yet, but when he says things like, give to everyone who begs from you, from the one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. Now if you take that in an excessively, literalistic fashion, I mean are we supposed to do that, just be insensitive, and very simplistic, in our just absolute acceptance of these words. Well we have to think, and we have to compare Scripture with Scripture.

The reality is, if somebody asks you for anything, are you going to give them anything? Are you going to give them your child? In fact let me ask you this, are you going to give a man who is too lazy to work, are you going to give him money for food? Does Scripture say you should do that? Right, you shouldn't do that. So should you give to everybody that begs from you? But didn't Jesus say to give to everyone that begs from you? So? Contradiction? Context. We have to compare.

Now you don't want to get away from the fact that, our Lord is making strong points here. He's making strong points about the righteousness that we better have, that better exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, otherwise we will never inherit the kingdom. You don't want to dismiss His words, just simply because we're not always to take them in the excessively literalistic fashion.

I'll tell you this, Luke chapter 12 says, sell your possessions and give to the poor. That is not said to the rich young ruler right there, that's said to all of us. So? Who's putting their car up for sale later today? You are? How much you want for it? But what we recognize is, and I'll tell you Jesus is not the only one who taught like this.

You ever notice that John tends to resemble him a lot as well? I mean John is dogmatic. He makes these very dogmatic statements, that sometimes blow your hair backwards. But you recognize that that often times is the teaching.

Now, listen to this. I would say that, not only do we have to consider that Jesus often taught in this dogmatic, absolute form of sometimes even relatively hyperbolic teaching. But here's another thing you need to consider.

The Old Testament didn't just seem to permit swearing by God's name. Listen to Deuteronomy 10.20. You shall fear the Lord your God, you shall serve Him, hold fast to Him, and by His name you shall swear. Now I find that interesting.

That's not just permissive. That's like godly man, godly woman. This is what your life looks like.

And then I come back to this. Jesus says that swearing oaths comes from evil. Yes, often times, especially when you swear like the scribes and Pharisees, who obviously is the one whose righteousness is being put on the table here.

But obviously not all swearing comes from evil. Because God swears. So God's swear oaths again and again and again from nothing but good, righteous, holy motives.

Now listen to this. I want you to hear this again. When God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself.

For people swear by something greater. Now notice what the author of Hebrews is saying here. Not that this is some horrible sin that we all need to run away from.

He says people do swear by something greater than themselves. And in all their disputes, an oath is final for confirmation. You see what he's basically saying? You have a dispute in a court of law, and people swear an oath, and that's considered to settle the matter.

And the author of Hebrews is not implying this is some wicked practice. He's saying no. We all recognize that this is how things work, and God is basically doing the same thing.

God desires to show something in an even more convincing manner. He uses an oath. And the truth is, he swore by himself because there's nothing greater.

When people swear, they swear by something greater. And in their disputes, it's final. And the author doesn't see this as evil.

He sees this for final confirmation. He does not say it's wrong. He accepts it as something which is right and customary, and that even God himself does.

I mean, if you take that. Have you ever noticed? Do you recognize what an oath is? See, you have to have ears to hear it. Do you realize? I find this extremely interesting.

Do you realize that when the high priest said to Jesus, I adjure you by the living God to tell us if you're the Christ, do you realize what he was doing? He was putting Christ under oath. And do you realize something? It specifically says Christ was silent and would not answer until the high priest said, I adjure you by the living God. Do you know what happened right there? Jesus didn't say, oh, you must not say that.

That's wrong. Do you realize Jesus was quiet until he was adjured by the living God and then he spoke as though, okay, now I'm being put under oath. I am going to speak.

And he did. He didn't recoil from it. He didn't bounce back from it.

Why didn't he simply say, well, that's the wrong way to put it. It's enough for me to say yes. He doesn't say that.

But here's another thing. The angels. If you look at Revelation, the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives.

And what I love about this is who he's swearing by. He's swearing by God, but he doesn't say, I swear to God. He says, I swear by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it.

If you're going to swear by God, that is a good way to do it. Just be prolific in the adjectives that you use. How great He is.

But then you say, well, that's an angel. It was Christ. It was God.

It was an angel. Isn't there a different standard for us? Listen, do you recognize how often Paul did this? Paul says in Romans 1.9, For God is my witness whom I serve. Now, if we have ears, that's basically what making an oath, swearing an oath is.

By God, we make this. And he's saying, God is my witness. Romans 1, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians.

He keeps saying, God is my witness. He says, I'm not lying. God is my witness.

Or how about this, 1 Thessalonians 5.27. He says, I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. I put you under... Wait, Paul? That's inspired? The Holy Spirit's carrying you along and inspired you to tell us? He's actually telling Christians that I'm putting you under an oath before the Lord. So here's the thing.

What we need to think about is the real issue. Now, back to Matthew 5. If you're there, great. But notice how Jesus speaks about taking an oath.

He says, But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it's the throne of God, or by earth, for it's his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it's the city of the great king. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. See, the issue is plainly this.

There was a tendency on the part of the people. You remember how the Jews were. They didn't want to say the name of God.

And they felt like... See, God had said not to take his name in vain. And you have to recognize that one of the great ways to take his name in vain was to swear an oath in his name and not keep it. That was one of the primary ones.

It wasn't just flippantly using his name. It is that. But they looked at it in this realm.

Because God specifically attached it. You don't defile my name by making an oath. He specifically said this to them.

But there was a tendency on the part of the people. What they had done is they started to whittle these oaths down. And they started making... They swore oaths about every trivial thing under the sun.

Oaths were obviously to be reserved for the most solemn and exceptional matters. The scribes and Pharisees, they were just swearing about everything. And moreover, their system of swearing actually came to the place where they permitted lies.

Listen to this. Woe to you, blind guides, who say if anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing. Do you realize what it means to say it's nothing? You swear by the temple, it's nothing.

It's not binding. I don't have to keep my word. He said, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he's bound by his oath.

You see what they were doing? The Pharisees were basically saying, you know, swear by that thing, you're not bound. Swear by that thing, you are bound. What? What's that? Swear by that thing and you have to be honest? Swear by that thing and you can be dishonest? That's basically where they'd come to.

You blind fools. That's exactly right. Which is greater? The gold of the temple that has made the gold sacred? You say if anyone swears by the altar, it's nothing.

But if anyone swears by the gift that's on the altar, he is bound by his oath. You blind men. Which is greater? The gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Now notice this.

Here he does not condemn swearing. Not altogether. Listen to what he says.

So whoever swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it. Whoever swears by the temple, swears by it and by him who dwells in it. Whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

You see, Jesus is actually establishing that all swearing is solemn and it's valid and it's binding. In both Matthew 5 and here in Matthew 23, you know what Jesus does? He relates everything back to God. You can't pray by the altar and not have it come.

You can't even pray by your head. Why? Because God owns your head. You can't do anything to change any of it.

He can. He owns it. You see, what Jesus is doing is no matter if you swear by Jerusalem, you swear by the altar, you swear by the gold on the altar, it doesn't matter.

He says basically in the end, it all comes back to God. All of it. God's ultimate sway over all things.

Do you know what the real question about all of this is? It's truthfulness. What these guys had done is they basically created different realms where, well, you've got to be honest over here, but you don't have to so much be honest over here. And Jesus says, you know what, any thinking like that at all comes from evil.

Do you know what these guys were like? And here's the real test. Jesus says to them one day, they wanted to know, by what authority are you doing all this? And Jesus said, you know what, I'll tell you by what authority I'm doing all this if you answer a question of mine first. The baptism of John the Baptist, from God or from men? Do you remember how they reasoned among themselves? They said to themselves, if we say it's from God, he's going to say, why didn't you believe him? If we say it's from man, we fear the people because they all think John was a prophet.

We don't want to get stoned. So what was their answer in the end? You see what they were doing with truth? They weren't thinking what's true. They were thinking, if we answer this way, how does it impact us? And if we answer that way, how does it impact us? And because both answers impact us bad, we don't want to answer.

It has nothing to do with truth. That's how these guys were. And you know what, I find you get people in the church like that too.

People, you know what, when we're lost, it's not surprising. You get people to creep into the church. And things happen, it's a self-defense mechanism.

You know, we have to get to the place where we just speak truth. You know, I know this is an odd thing, but I have seen some videos before. I'm interested, I've had to deal in a lot of situations, a lot of conflict, a lot of counseling situations.

And so, I mean I have an idea about people and watching people, observing people. But I have been interested, maybe you've seen some of these documentaries that they've made on how you can tell when people are lying. You ever seen anything like that? And I've actually watched some of these videos about interrogations, police interrogations.

They've got the interrogation room. And they've got some individuals that they tell you, this person was found out to be innocent. And watch how he responds to being accused of these crimes.

And then they had other people who they knew were guilty and how they tried to lie out of it. And you know what, there's one kid who was going to college and he shot and killed another guy that lived on the same floor of his dorms. And they caught him, he was trying to hitchhike to Canada and they picked him up and they brought him in for interrogation.

And you know what, they counted this guy insane. You know why? Because he exactly told the truth. I mean, they hauled him in and they questioned him.

And he was like, yes sir, yes sir, answered right down. Yep, I shot him, I did this, he spelled it out. They thought he was insane because there was no self-protective mechanism at work.

He wasn't being careful how he answered in order to protect himself. You know, there was something about that. They count him insane.

There was something about that that I thought, ought to be Christian. Not that you're killing people and you're in there, but just to be able to answer that way. Without actually thinking, how does this impact me? People of such truth, people who just answer that way.

And if the world thinks us insane, okay. But no games, no gimmickry. Jesus wants people that are devoted to truth.

And that's the real issue here. What Jesus is emphasizing is that honest men don't need to be resorting to oaths. I mean, this doesn't mean that we must all the time.

Listen, I don't believe as Christians that when some external authority, like the government, wants us to take an oath in a court of law or in some kind of situation, that that's what's... I mean, in a court of law, it seems like the author of Hebrews says, that's often how things are settled. I mean, even God himself resorts to it. See, in that case, it's not where you're doing this thing.

Have you ever heard people... There was a season when I was lost, when I was a kid, that I got into the habit of saying, I swear to God. Do you hear people like that all the time? See, that's the kind of situation that it's... We want to get away from this just casual use. The point is this.

A man or a woman who basically can't be believed, unless they swear, they're already condemned. I mean, you see what's happening? You basically have this sacred object over there, and you say to yourself, well, if I swear on that sacred object, somehow your confidence in my truthfulness is upped, right? I mean, it's almost like it assumes men are liars. It assumes, basically, that my commitment to truth

is weak, but if I swear, somehow I've just upped it, in my estimation and in yours.

I remember when I was a kid, a bunch of my cousins came from California and they visited, and I don't remember what the exact issue was, but we were all debating something, and one of my cousins said something, and I think her brother, her sister, were challenging her and telling her, that's not true, and she wondered if we had a Bible, because she wanted to swear on the Bible. I mean, what happens? You know what happens? It's like somehow the truth is going to be elevated because of that sacred thing over there that we're afraid to desecrate. You know, somebody swears on their mother's grave, like I'm supposed to believe them more.

The very fact that you have to resort to that means already your integrity is questionable. Or Jesus just says, let your yes be yes, and let your no be no. That doesn't mean in the courtroom or taking vows before the Lord when somebody gets married is wrong, because obviously God, in solemn cases, when it came to David having one of his children, his descendants sit on that throne, when it came to Christ being a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, when it came to making a promise to Abraham, God did to certify this reality.

He swore an oath. And I think when we're dealing with very solemn and very important matters, Jesus isn't saying you can't do that. Jesus responded to be adjourned.

Paul said, I hold you under oath to have that read. Brethren, we can do that. And we need to compare Scripture with Scripture.

Most of the time, swearing is really just a pathetic confession to men's own dishonesty. And you get people that trivially use it. I don't know how much we have those kind of situations, but listen, we ought to be able to speak this way.

God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing, I make mention of you. There's another place where he says, God is my witness, how much I love you, or David. I've sworn an oath.

And I've talked to you about this before, and this is what I want to end with. David said this, I swore an oath to God that I'm going to keep his commandments. That is found in Psalm 119.

And I encourage us. Brethren, I'll tell you, there are times to make vows to God. And I don't think Jesus' words in Matthew 5 are telling you you can't do that any more than David would have thought it was wrong, or any more than the person who is blameless and dwells on God's holy hill is a man who swears, even to his own hurt.

But he doesn't change, not. Brethren, there are things that are worth vowing. There are things that are worth making oaths about in this world.

Marriage is a thing worth vowing. There, walking in righteousness, and swearing an oath to God. What a thing is that? See, I like to challenge Christians just with even thinking in that category.

Psalm 119.106, I have sworn an oath and confirmed it to keep your righteous rules. You know what? Christians should say what they mean. Christians should mean what they say.

There's no question about that. Christians need to recognize that no matter what you say, every yes you say, every no you say, is set in the presence of God. It's not like when you swear on the Holy Bible, somehow that ups the ante in God's estimation.

God is looking for truthfulness in the inward parts. But I'll tell you what, we ought to be people that feel passionate about certain things in life, that we can actually get to the place where we are driven enough, and we have enough passion in us to be able to say to God, I swear an oath to you. I am going to walk in your ways.

I am going to follow Christ. David could do that. Can you do that? Now you know what? There should be fear and trembling before you do something like that.

But do we feel strongly enough? Are we so casual about these things? See brethren, on the one hand, we want to take Christ's words for what they are. He wants people of truth. But on the other hand, we don't want to so rule these things out, that we can't adjure somebody by the living God.

We can't say God is my witness. We can't hold somebody under oath to read that epistle. That's how Scripture speaks to us.

Or have ourselves held under oath. Lord, I am going to walk in your rules. I am going to.

Now obviously something like that is said in faith. It's not said in willpower. It's not said in our own strength.

But it is a man who loves the Lord, who is saying, Lord, I promise you, and I make an oath. I swear an oath. I am going to walk in your ways.

I'll tell you, this very man, when he got to the end of his life, he was a man after God's own heart. And except for one major blemish in his life, he did really well. I've been thinking a lot about Jonathan lately.

Do you realize, Jonathan, what a man of faith he was? Armor bearer up the side of that mountain, we're going to take on. God can save by many or few. Do you recognize, you will never find a single negative thing said about Jonathan.

I have thought, who in Scripture gets the most mileage, the most attention, the most amount of Scripture, who has no flaw? Obviously Christ. But behind him who is perfect, who? Maybe Jonathan. Brethren, we need to be so committed to righteousness, that we ought to not be afraid.

We need to be passionate about things. Passionate enough that we can actually say, God, I, in your sight, you as a witness. I mean, when it comes to purity, when it comes to sexual purity, when it comes to our eyes, when it comes to walking uprightly, when it comes to certain places where you have struggled, over and over and over again.

Listen, does God recognize what we're made of? And certainly as God's people. I mean, do you think that he looked at David, when David made a pledge like that, and said, seriously, you swear an oath to keep my law, don't you know? Don't you know what you're made of? Don't you know you're not perfect yet? Don't you know you'll never? You have to know God was pleased with that. And even though he fell, he recommitted, and God was pleased with that.

Sometimes we hesitate, because we're afraid of our weakness. But David was made of the same stuff. Lord, help us.

Hopefully, something about swearing in oaths, is now in your brains, that never was before. So, we're going to dismiss now, and I need to meet with the deacons up here. So, if you guys could come up as soon as possible, that'd be great.

Father, help us to be people, that are every bit reflecting the teaching of our Lord, the fullness of this. We want to be people of truth. We want to be people of passion as well.

People not afraid to call you out as a witness. Not afraid when it's appropriate to commit ourselves, even in swearing in oath, that we will be people that will be pleasing to you. Help us Lord, to be people that are right, and good, and upright, and balanced, and the kind of people who swear to their own hurt, and don't change, who give their word and don't change, who say yes, and they don't change, we say no.

You've given us these two monosyllable words, little words, two letter no, three letter yes, and so often that's all that's necessary in the life of a Christian. Just that we speak what we mean, we mean what we say, we do what we say. Lord, help us to be people of the utmost integrity.

People worthy to walk upon your holy hill. I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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