

**Saturday, February 3, 2024 • Read Matthew 5:33–37**

*Questions from the Scripture text: What have they heard was done (v33)? To whom were these things said? What were those of old told not to do (cf. Ex 20:7, 16; Lev 19:12)? What were they told to do (cf. Deut 23:23)? By combining these things with a wrong emphasis, to which oaths had they limited these commands (end of v33)? But now against swearing by other four things does Jesus warn (v34–36)? What reasons does He give? What is there that is unrelated to God? So, by what may someone make a “less sincere” oath (v34a)? What must be sincerely said (v37a)? From where does all insincere speech come (v37b)?*

**When must we be careful to be truthful and faithful to our word?** Matthew 5:33–37 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord’s Day. In these five verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we must always be careful to be truthful and faithful to our word.**

**More bad hermeneutics.** In the previous section (v31–32), the Lord Jesus had overturned the rabbis’ teaching on divorce, in which they had misused Deut 24:1–4 to justify it. Now, we see Him overturning the rabbis’ teaching on the ninth commandment (cf. Ex 20:16). They had combined it with Lev 19:12 and Deu 23:23 to show (so they thought) that it was only when an oath was made in the Name of YHWH that it had this strongest binding effect.

Elsewhere (23:16–22), we see that they had a graded scale of how binding various oaths were, according to by what the speaker swore. So also, now, we see four different things by which men had become accustomed to swearing: heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and their own head.

**The problem is in the heart.** As we have seen throughout Jesus’s exposition of the law, the problem is in the heart. How could someone think that an oath upon heaven is less obligatory, when it is God Himself that makes heaven to be heaven (v34)? And if, taking their cue from Isa 66:1, they swear by earth because it is “only” YHWH’s footstool, should they not tremble at Whose footstool it is (v35a)?

The Lord Jesus takes these things personally. He is YHWH, after all. In both His divine nature and His human nature, He is the great King. Jerusalem was much honored by its relation to David, its relation to God, its relation to Christ. Indeed, it is Christ in Whom there is life; our life is not in our hands. So, it is folly to swear on one’s life, when one cannot determine what color hair would come out of his head (v36). In all such oaths, there is a grievous disregard for God and for Christ. Indeed, what could we swear by that would not disregard Him? He is the ultimate reality; everything else has its reality in Him. And, He is witness to everything that comes out of our mouths, which mouths themselves were created for His praise!

**A principle for our common conversation.** We know from many Scriptures that it is lawful to take vows and oaths and to keep them. The Lord Jesus even testifies to His own glory under oath (cf. Mt 26:63–64). And God Himself swears oaths (cf. Ps 110:4; Heb 6:13–18). This, of course, is not because there is any doubt about God’s Word. He speaks in this way to help us on account of our own weak and wicked doubt.

So when He gives us to take oaths, it is not because it is somehow more permissible to lie without them. Rather, it is for our own sake, because we are prone not to take our own words seriously that on particularly important occasions, He gives us to strengthen a commitment with an oath or a vow. But these should be reserved for such occasions, and even then it must not indicate that our words are any more true than at other times.

The mouths of those who are known to lie are full of assurances like “I swear,” or “I promise,” or “honestly,” or “this is the gospel truth.” But Christians should be rigorously, conscientiously truthful in all of their everyday talk. Even something as ordinary as a “yes” or “no” should stand on its own. Any lightly or insincerely spoken word on the believer’s part does not come from his new nature in Christ; it comes from the evil one. The devil is a liar and the father of it (cf. Jn 8:44).

When do you find yourself tempted to stretch the truth or make promises that you are not that committed to keeping? Whom are you disregarding when you are not careful with your speech and sincere in your promises? In which conversations should you be strictly honest?

*Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You for the gift of speech. You created by Your Word, uphold all things by Your Word, give faith by Your Word, sanctify by Your Word, and save our souls by Your implanted Word. Moreover, You have spoken to us, and You have given to us to speak to others and even to You. Forgive us for when we are dishonest; we know that the devil is a liar and the father of it. So, forgive us and cleanse us to be sincere and honest in all that we say, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP15 “Within Your Tent, Who Will Reside?” or TPH400 “Gracious Spirit, Dwell with Me”**

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

Matthew 5 verses 33-37 these are God's words. Again, you have heard that it was said to, those of old. You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your Oaths to the Lord. But I say to you, do not swear at all. Neither by heaven for this God's throne nor by the Earth for it is his footstool nor by Jerusalem.

For it is the city of the great king nor shall you, swear by your head. Because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your yes be yes and your no no. For whatever is more than these. Is from the evil one. So far the reading of gods inspired and And they aren't.

The Lord Jesus again is teaching us how to read our Bibles that we don't. Uh, go to our Bibles looking for. Excuses for what we want to do. In the previous section, you remember in Deuteronomy 24 1-4, Uh, because Uh, divorce causes adultery. God was giving Uh, regulations for them.

To commit that adultery and make things even worse and in the course of giving those regulations. Referred to a certificate of divorce which would make things orderly. Even though they were still sinful and they were like, aha, see, divorce is okay. As long as you have a certificate. So they're coming to the scripture.

Uh with a desire to do something wrong and looking for an excuse from the scripture. Well, we have something similar here. When he says again, you have heard that it was said to. Those of old, you shall not swear falsely but shall perform, your Owe to the Lord. It is a combination.

Of X is 20 verse 7, and Leviticus 19, verse 12 and Deuteronomy 23 verse 23, Um, And each of, Had something to do. Uh, with the lord's name. And so, Exodus 20 verse 7. Uh, you shall not take the name of your lord in vain and uh, then combine that with verse 16, you shall not bear false witness.

Against your neighbor. Uh, but then Leviticus 19:12.

Uh, you shall not swear by my name. Falsely nor shall you profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh. So combining Those two things. And then finally Deuteronomy, 23 verse, 23,

That which has gone from your lips, so keep and perform for you. Voluntarily vowed to Yahweh your God, what you promised with your mouth. And so what we have in verse 33 is a hybrid. Of all three of those or four. If you can't. Exodus 20:7 and 20:16. As kind of.

Uh, separate things. Uh and he says you shall not swear falsely but shall perform your Oaths to the Lord. And what they had done is they had taken this bearing of false witness and swearing false falsely for not keeping your promises and they said, aha. That is when you swear by the name of the Lord or when you take an oath or make a promise in the name of the Lord, that you really have to keep it.

But at other times, there is lower obligation for having to keep your promises or lower obligation for having to tell the truth. So they made this like sliding scale of honesty in your life and very conveniently then they would just avoid making promises in the Lord's name altogether because then you know you were somewhere lower on the sliding scale and you could break the promise and they had.

Uh, they had an entire system. Of those things. The Lord Jesus is going to address this later. Uh, and Matthew records that for us, too. Um, in chapter 23, he says woe to you blind guides who say, whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing. But whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.

Fool's blind which is greater the gold or the temple that consecrates makes the gold. Holy And whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing. But whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar, he's obliged to perform at fools and blind, which is greater. The gift or the altar that consecrates sanctifies makes holy the gift.

Therefore, whoever swears by the altar swears by it and all the things on it, he who swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it, he swears by Heaven swears by the Throne of God. And by him who sits on it. Uh, and so they had had this Uh, this whole series of things.

That you would. Could swear by but it was quote, unquote, nothing you didn't have to tell the truth. You didn't have to keep your promise. Uh, and so they had used The Lord, bringing his name to their attention. Uh, in the various passages that you know Exodus 20, Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 23, they had used that in their sin and their desire to excuse themselves for dishonesty sometimes.

They had actually used those passages to say, you only had to be honest when you used the Lord's name, in your speech. Uh no, of course that is wicked. And they are forgetting what. Even the Lord's name actually means. Because the Lord's name was Yahweh. I am that. I am meaning that he has being and existence inherent to himself.

He is uncreated His existence is part of his innate nature. Existence does not belong to us. We exist in dependence upon God, he made us. And if he ever were to stop upholding us, we would cease to exist immediately And so, if they had understood that, they would have understood that you swear by Heaven, you swear by something that's connected to God.

You swear by Earth, you swear by something, that's connected to God, you swear by Jerusalem, he swear by something that's connected to God. Even if you swear by your own head which is a way of saying on my life, you hear people say that still today? On my life, or I swear on my own head was the way they said it, meaning the same thing.

He's like you don't even you don't even get to decide whether the hair coming out of your head is black or white. God is the one to whom your life belongs. Don't you see that? No matter what you swear by you swear in the presence of God and you swear on something that belongs rightly to God And so all of our speech, all of our speech is before God has witnessed and all of our speech.

Is created for the, for the point of praising him. He is the god of Truth. Uh, the devil is the liar from the beginning. He is a liar and the father of it.

The scripture tells us in John. 8 44. So Uh, we are We are to keep all of our vows and all of our Oath, there isn't this sliding scale. In fact, we are not only to speak seriously and truthfully in all of our promises Uh, but we are to speak, seriously.

And truthfully, uh, at all times, even in ordinary conversation, Uh, did you wash your hands? Yes, or no. Uh not yes, I swear, I promise. Honestly, or this is the gospel truth. You know who add things like that, to their yes, or to their Liars. Liars, add things like that because if they weren't Liars, They would have.

Their character would be known that if they said, yes, it meant. Yes. And they wouldn't have to say, I swear, or on my mother's life, or No one says that anymore because people don't honor and love their mothers enough. Uh used to be that even the most wicked man at least had tenderness and honor for his mother and you as you'd get the greatest Scoundrels and criminals who would like I swear on my mother.

And, So we should be honest. Not just, when swearing an oath, But we should be honest even in our daily conversation. Now, the fact That olds and vowels are. Appropriate, we can see throughout scripture. Uh, you can see it. Uh even in the Lord, not forbidding the making of vows to him, but the requiring of the keeping of vows and passages that we've already seen We can see it in God himself.

Uh, swearing enough. Which shows us that That's swearing. An oath is not meant to say. I'm going to be more truthful right now. Because God can't be more truthful than he is at any time. Um, Cannot lie. It is impossible for God to lie. The opening of the book of Titus says, Uh, and so We know that God when he swears yet to Abraham, Hebrews tells us he swears by himself because there's nothing higher to square by, and it's not for God's sake, it's for Abraham's sake because Abraham is weak in faith.

So God gives to Abraham one more thing to help his faith. Not one more thing to Uh to a test that God is telling the truth. The fact that God is saying it means, it's the truth. And we too then swear not for God's help and it ought not to be for us to make the truth, but when we do take them out, or take an oath, we do so, recognizing before God, and before men, Uh the significance, the seriousness.

The solemnity of the thing to which we are promising. So, a man and a woman. Take a vow. Or take vows with one another not because In their marriage or in their covenanting. Together. That it would have been okay for them to commit adultery or okay for them to abandon each other.

Uh, But the the vow is for their own sake. Uh, to help them be more serious about keeping their promises because they are sinners. And their vow is for the witness's sake, to give their those who witness the vow, the ability to hold them. To hold them to it more.

More plainly more clearly more. Obviously. Same thing for membership. Vows Um, in a church or Nation vows with a man. Or when you're participating in a court proceeding and there's a matter of Justice and what happens with other people's lives and other people's property is on the line. Uh, there are there are occasions, but it should not, then become a part of our ordinary speech.

Uh if a vow is used to express the seriousness of something that is a very significant moment in life or as significant profound ramifications for what is going to happen with. With people's lives. Then what happens if we just make vows all the time? Something that is overused like that.

It's like the government printing more money, right? The the currency becomes less valuable. Well, if you If you inflate the number of vows that you're making making swearing O's and and solemn promises all the time. You reduce the value of the promise, you reduce the value of, Of the oath.

And so in ordinary conversation verse 37 is telling us two things, first that we should be consistently honest, all the time, even in the smallest things. But second that when we are in ordinary conversation, don't use the oath, don't use the vow. Save that for, Significant things. The, that we need the extra seriousness and the solemnity.

In order to help us because we are sinners because we are fickle. And often unfaithful. And so, Uh so the the Lord Jesus Takes the seriousness of using God's name in an oath. He says, don't swear. By any of these other things. Take the fact that the using of God's name tells us the seriousness of an author of owl.

And don't use that as an excuse to be dishonest at other times. No, you must always be honest. But do use it to recognize that. You shouldn't always be swearing thousand. Oaths Because that is going to cheapen. The seriousness of your oath. And the seriousness. Uh, of your vow.

So again, We must come to the word of God as it instructs us. Not looking for excuses. To do what our sinful Hearts want to do. We must come and receive what the word says in its context as given to us. By the Lord Jesus himself. Who is God from all eternity.

Who is God, who has given the Bible? Who is God, who gave his law? Uh, at Mount Sinai and by the scriptures of the prophets but who has now become man to save us. And is making very clear that Becoming man to save. Does not cheapen or decrease his law at all.

It just describes to us what his righteousness is like what he has done in our place and What we whom he saves must aim for because he is doing that in us too. As he fits us for Glory, as he fits us. For the new heavens and the new Earth.

With him forever. So, Uh, let us be careful. To always be truthful and honest in all of our daily conversation. Uh, watch out for all of those throwaway ways that we were recognizing. I swear, I promise, Etc. Don't fill your conversations with those things. It's just going to cheapen.

Your promises and your vows when you need. To really make them. Uh, be grateful that the Lord Jesus is the truth. And remember that, when you do lie, If you if you are a liar and you have to fill your conversation with other things and not just have yes yes or no.

No that's from the evil one. The devil is the liar, a liar? And he is the father. Of lime, there's no lying that comes from God. Comes only from Satan. Spray. Our gracious God and our heavenly father. I thank you. Uh for your love to me and to my dear family that you would give us your word that you would give us your son.

That you would give us to know about your forgiveness that you would give us to know about your righteousness. Pray that your Holy Spirit would help us to remember this part of your word and the truth that you teach us in it. Please help my children always, to be honest And to flee from lying, like, they would flee from the devil.

Since that is that since that comes from him, We pray both the Lord that you would help us. Not to be making vows and O's. And And promises and swearings. In our ordinary conversation, lest we cheapen it, but then O, Lord, when we do take these serious vows, We pray O Lord that you would help us.

Uh, that you would make them helpful to us to keep them. We thank you. That you yourself. Uh, have sworn and vowed and Uh, upon yourself in things in order to help us. Oh Lord, forgive us for how unbelieving we often are And Grant unto us, that we would be sure of everything that you say.

Lest we would treat your faithful word like the Unfaithful words of men. Don't let us do that. We ask. Help us in all these ways. We ask For Your Glory and out of your love for us, that desires our good. Both of both of which you gave Christ and in his name, we ask it.

Amen.