

THE BOUNDARY OF OATHS, VOWS, AND PROMISES

Intro: - Lord's Day 37 expands on Lord's Day 36, as an explanation of the third command.

- We might ask, Is a separate Lord's Day really important and necessary.
- May the Lord's name be honored by our oaths, vows, and promises.

I. THE IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE

- A. The negative command of Christ
 1. In Matt. 5:33 ff, Jesus commands us, "swear not..." (also James 5:12).
 2. On the basis of this text there are those who condemn any use of the oath.
 3. Is this what Jesus is teaching? Are all oaths wrong, and is the Christian not allowed to use one?
 4. Jesus is condemning the sinful use of oaths in his day (Matt. 23:16-22).
 5. We need to be warned against the use of careless, rash, unnecessary, or false oaths
- B. The positive teaching of the third command.
 1. Amongst brothers and sisters in the church, there should be no need for oaths.
 2. The reason for this is that the Word of God dwells in us richly.
 3. We have been changed from those who love the lie. By grace we love and speak the truth in love.
 4. Therefore our "yes" means yes and our "no" means no. What we say is true, and what we promise we will do!
 5. In the church we do not require the oath (unless a person has demonstrated the lack of truth in their speech and life).
- C. The reason for the oath.
 1. People are liars! The world that we live in is in darkness, no truth in it.
 2. God is a God of truth. God uses oaths to encourage us of his trustworthiness (Ezek. 33:11, Hebr. 6:13-17).
 3. An important principle: an oath is sworn by the name of God and by no other names. Reasons:
 - a. God is a God of truth and faithfulness in himself.
 - b. God is the only one who knows the heart and can bear witness to the truth and punish the liar.
 4. Jesus used the oath over and over in his ministry ("Verily, verily I say unto thee..." also before the High priest (Matt. 26:63)
 5. The Apostle Paul appeals to God for the truthfulness of his motives and preaching (Rom. 1:9, 9:1,2).
 6. Our whole life should be a continuous oath: we live before the face of God and call him to witness our vows and promises.

II. HONORING GOD WITH OUR WORD

- A. Oaths:
 1. The government as a servant of God absolutely has the right to demand the use of the oath:
 2. She does this when we places sinful men into offices of government or places guns in the hands of soldiers.
 3. She does this when in a court of law when there is a search for the truth in a matter.
 4. The church does not normally require it but assumes truthfulness between brothers and sisters; only as a last recourse.
 5. But oaths may be made by believers to the glory of God as an act of worship (Jer. 4:1,2).
- B. Vows:
 1. Vows are not oaths, but are nevertheless important, and must be kept unless a sinful vow.
 2. Although we do not take the name of God on our lips, we stand in God's church and call upon God as our witness.
 3. In marriage we vow before God and witnesses to faithfully love and care for each other until God parts us with death.
 4. As parents, we are reminded of the vows spoken by us at baptism to bring up our children in the nurture of the Lord...
 4. When we make confession of our faith, we vow to hold to these doctrines and to submit to church government.
 5. Office bearers take vows that they will faithfully carry out the duties of their offices to God's glory & congregations good.
- C. Promises:
 1. But in our lives we make many promises to those around us.
 2. Some are financial promises. We promise to pay someone for services, we must be true and faithful (Lev. 19:24).
 3. Even if we no longer are legally responsible for debt, we are morally responsible.
 4. We must be careful what things we promise to do lest they be foolish or impossible promises that we cannot keep.
 5. May we in this sinful world with broken promises and vows be known as those who love and keep truth.

III. A NECESSARY REMINDER

- A. God's name is a holy name.
 1. In Psalm 66:2 we are to sing forth the honor of God's name, to make his praise glorious.
 2. In Nehemiah 13, God's people dishonored God with their heathen marriages and compromise with the world.
 3. We must manifest the glory and honor of God by our antithetical speech and living.
 4. Are we true and faithful to our word? Will the heathen glorify God on our account (Jer. 4:2)?
- B. God is a jealous God who will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
 1. The third command warns us of the severity of God's judgment.
 2. Thankfully we do not stand before Mt. Sinai with its threatening, but we stand before Mt. Calvary.
 3. Jesus our Savior took all the severity of God's judgment in our place for us.
 4. This does not make us careless. Rather, out of thankfulness and love, we desire to keep this commandment.
- C. As God's redeemed people, we love God's name!
 1. Humbly we pray the prayer of Ps. 139: 23, 24.
 2. Humbly we ask, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight (Ps. 19:14)."
 3. We speak the truth in love before God to one another as believers and before a world that lies in darkness.