

Hebrews 6.16

I Swear...

We live in a time when honesty is rare, when truth is under attack and when the value of a man's word is less than zero. Affirmations are dismissed out of hand because the hearer has no expectation of anyone speaking truth and it has infected our entire culture with a deep and deadly miasma. A creeping rot of deceit and falsehood. It is not an accident that Jesus called the devil the father of lies...

John 8:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

This is truly the flavor of the culture, and sadly in many ways the flavor of the church as well...

I. HONESTY DEGRADED

- A. This land is deeply diseased by the lack of regard for truth
- B. It is a byword that politicians are thieves and liars, hypocrites and extortioners
- C. It is a byword that preachers are thieves and liars, hypocrites and extortioners
- D. Because of the lack of truthfulness in our culture our most common vows, agreements and relationships have been tainted by distrust
 - 1. Marriages nearly universally require an ironclad pre-nuptial agreement.
 - 2. Employers require NDA's prior to even speaking to a potential employee
 - 3. Legal threats and expulsions are threatened at universities and even high schools to combat the epidemic of cheating when a simple code of conduct used to be sufficient...

4. There is literally no sphere of life wherein contracts are not expected to force the other party to simply honor their word.

E. It creeps into our lives in small ways

1. People have no respect for the time of others,
2. Agreements are broken as a matter of course
3. Promises made and broken in every relationship and every possible connection
4. The social contract which used to define civility and responsibility has been abandoned by entire generations
5. The attempt to forgive student loans by our government, is indicative of the rot. The money was offered in good faith and taken in supposedly good faith... it is a debt and should be paid. This simple fact should not have to be explained, but there are countless thousands who all feel entitled to have without work...

6. The simple expectation of an employee showing up for work, (never mind on time) but just coming to work when they said they would... is a dead thing in this culture

F. Truth is a foreign concept today

II. GOD HAS SWORN BY HIMSELF

- A. There is none greater by which He can swear
- B. He has given the absolute highest of standards that can be given for veracity
 1. When men, false by nature, swear by God, we accept it as truthful
 2. How much more then is God, who is Eternal Truth Himself, to be trusted when He swears by His own Omnipotent and all glorious name?
- C. He has shown wondrous condescension in stooping to swear to us,

1. He owes us no such assurance,
2. He owes us no display of kind declaration,
3. no gentle promises to soothe away our fears
4. He owes us no extraordinary means by which we are to understand and believe Him
5. And yet, here He takes on the most human-like garb and swears, BY HIMSELF that we can trust Him to be who He is... it staggers the mind...

III. OATHS AND VOWS

A. Didn't Jesus tell us not to swear?

1. Contextually, it is not a simple prohibition.

Matthew 5.33-37

2. The Pharisees had taught, that in order to avoid violating the third commandment, their disciples were to take oaths in the

name of things RELATED to God but not by God's name itself.

3. It was this practice that Jesus was speaking against
4. For twice in Deuteronomy (6.13 & 10.20) we are told that taking oaths in God's name is permitted and exclusive.

Deuteronomy 6.10-15

- B. The taking of oaths is lawful and occasionally needed.
 1. When there is no way that anyone can really know the truth of another's heart
 2. When there is no evidence to support or clearly refute the claim
 3. When the matter is deeply and profoundly serious
- C. Two basic requirements for the oath taker

1. That the oath taker be of sound mind and discernment to understand what he swears and the consequences of doing so falsely.
 2. That the oath taker also have the power to make it good.
- D. Four basic issues about the oath itself
1. That the things sworn to be true are logically, morally and actually true, insofar as the swearer knows.
 2. That the oath be possible (if it is a future vow)
 3. That it be just and lawful. Righteous.

Jeremiah 4:2 (NKJV)

² And you shall swear, 'The Lord lives,' In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; The nations shall bless themselves in Him, And in Him they shall glory."

4. That the matter be weighty, with no other recourse available. For in the taking of an oath, the highest judge is approached.

The oath is, in fact, an appeal made to the final arbiter of truth. It is asking God to make the truth known, AND to undertake the role of avenger if falsehood is present.

E.It is a serious matter

1. Should be entered into deliberately and reverently - for we are invoking not only the name of God, but His active participation in the resolution of the matter.
2. It should also be entered into with religious understanding. Piously lifting our hearts and hands to heaven, asking God to make the matter plain to all.

F.It is a dangerous matter to do this falsely

1. We make God the judge of the matter
2. He is already, but we invoke upon ourselves the acknowledgment and consequence...
3. We appeal to God's omniscience

- a) He knows all things past, present & future
- b) He knows the secret things of the heart
- c) And the secrets acts of the life

4. We also appeal to His omnipotence

- a) He is able and just to avenge those who swear falsely
- b) He is able and just to avenge those who have been harmed in secret, or who have not known justice through the perversion of the judicial system or legislative skullduggery.
- c) He is willing and able to execute this charge of the avenger.

G. Thus an oath is an end to differences or disputes for we call God to settle it.

- 1. The swearer is bound to reveal the whole truth, and it in its entirety (the truth,

the whole truth and nothing but the truth,
so help you God)

2. The one sworn unto is called to accept the matter as stated and leave to God the issue to vengeance if it is false.
3. We are called to rest on a matter when vows and oaths have been taken.

IV. FALSE OATHS ARE DEEP ROT

A. Swearing by anything but God

1. It robs Him of His dignity in our eyes and testifies of our divided hearts... it is condemning that we place more trust in swearing by your mother's life or grave (be she living or dead) than by God Himself...
2. Pagans swear by false gods,
3. Papists swear by false teaching about god (and thus by a false god...) they swear by saints and they swear by tradition...
4. Profane persons swear by all manner of things and intend none of them...

- B. Swearing to things that are false or unlawful
- C. Swearing falsely, lying in your oaths
- D. Forbidding oaths altogether

1. This contradicts scripture, and must not be done. While the issue is complicated, it can be unraveled and understood with a little reflection and by allowing scripture to be its own interpreter.
2. It also robs us of a powerful tool for truth and peace between neighbors

E. Swearing constantly, or rashly

1. Cheapens the matter
2. Reduces its power to do what it is intended to do
3. Often involves the taking of God's name in vain
4. Otherwise involves taking oaths by false things
5. The land mourns because of it...

Hosea 4.2-3
Jeremiah 23.10

V. GOD CALLS US TO HONOR TRUTH

- A. We are saved by the One who IS the truth
- B. We are owned by the One who IS the truth
- C. Allowing lies to stand uncontested is being complicit in the false oaths
- D. Living a life that is marked out by truthfulness is required of us
 - 1. While oaths and vows may occasionally be required by circumstance, they are not to be the norm

Matthew 5:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

James 5:12 (NKJV)

¹² But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

E. Understand that God has power and authority to override your intentions, and let your speech reflect that reality

James 4.13-16

F. Be honest about your intentions.

1. DO NOT invoke "Lord Willing" if you have no intention of doing so,
2. and do not bind yourself beyond your ability.

G. Do not be a person whose trustworthiness is ever questionable, seek to be always dependable, always reliable, always punctual, always faithful - for this lifestyle will protect

you from the NEED for undo oaths and will be an adornment to the gospel –

H. Remember that our whole lives are to be an adornment to the gospel, that we are giving testimony about what is, at its core, a relationship of trust. IF we cannot be trusted, then our God is also suspect. And if He cannot be trusted, then there is no hope for salvation at all.