

**5:33**

**Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, “Thou shalt not forswear** If you might have a newer version it might say “perjure thyself.” In fact, it’s the only time in the New Testament that word is used. And obviously it has legal ramifications. **Thou shalt not be a perjurer.**

**Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:”** “That’s what you’ve heard that it says.”

**5:34**

**But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35. Nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.**

**5:37**

**But let your communication be, “Yea, yea; (or) Nay, nay:”** Let your communication simply be yes and no.

**for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.** Interestingly enough when you look at the end of verse 37 and you realize anything more than a yes and no communication comes from evil. It’s not like it is in the Lord’s Prayer where it is “the evil one,”

**5:38**

**Ye have heard that it hath been said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:” 39 But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.** So if you want to know what evil is, just look two verses later and find it’s the same kind of evil that will gladly smite two cheeks. It’s the same kind of evil. I can’t define it, but it is the same kind of evil that walks up to you and slaps you.

**5:43**

**Ye have heard that it hath been said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.” 44. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good.**

Would it surprise you that the good Father in heaven sends rain on the evil? Of course it would. We would be surprised. We don’t expect evil people to get rain, at least not in our human nature where we repay good for good and evil for evil. We do not expect evil people who have farms to get rain when they need it. Now of course, the Father is better than that.

There’s no complicated idea here. What is the evil that produces communication that is simply more than “yes” and “no?” It is the same kind of evil that would gladly punch you in the face. And it’s the same kind of evil that would curse the God who gives that person rain. That same kind of evil is the kind that works in us to be more than simple communicators. Think through that. Think through that. Think about how powerful that is. If you will, the same kind of evil that would use you, abuse you, drive across your lawn if you live on a corner; that is the kind of evil that produces a communication that is more than “yes” or “no.” The same kind of evil that would look up to a God that has blessed them with fruit, season after season after season, is the same kind of evil that works in these body’s members to produce complicated communication.

Let’s remember please that these are the words spoken to us by the Lord who bought us with His blood. This is our Lord. He died for our sins, every sin that was ever committed. I never want to get tired of saying it and I hope you never get tired of hearing it. Every sin that we count as being colossal as the highest Everest, as deep as the lowest hell, and simple as a little white lie—those all crushed the Son of God on Calvary. They were all nailed to His cross. We never want to get over the fact that it is those sins

that hung Him on the cross. Yes, the Father; yes, Judas; yes, Pilate; yes, the Romans; yes, but my sin nailed Him to a cross. There would be no Christ needed, no Savior needed, no cross needed, if Bill Sturm was not a sinner. And so the greater part that we can identify in ourselves that is sinful, the greater grace is magnified in our eyes through the forgiveness of Jesus. It is this same Jesus that testifies of His own grace every time we acknowledge some uncleanness in ourselves. It's not a pleasant job.

And here, this very Son of God, less than three years before He dies and pays an unspeakable price for our salvation, says something very clearly here. It doesn't seem like it speaks to us today. Not many of us are out there saying, "I swear by Capital Hill!" God knows there's not much to swear by. "I swear by the genie in the sky." Well, we all know the genie is not real. "I swear by..." "I swear by..." That seems like something so far out there. As a matter of fact, we don't take it very seriously and why should we?

*Leviticus 19:12 And **ye shall not swear by My name falsely**, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God:*

*Numbers 30:2 If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or **swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond**; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

And so we would say, "Ok, well that makes sense, I suppose. We should probably not break that law." And certainly, who would break such a law?

In other words, if I come to Eugene, and I say, "Eugene, I need to borrow your lawnmower and I swear by the God of heaven that I will bring it back to you tomorrow," I'm bringing now three people into the agreement – Eugene, me, and God. And Jesus says, "You don't need to do that. I know you're allowed to do that. You don't need to do that."

Craig Blomberg says the situation described is one which many Jews viewed swearing by heaven or Earth or Jerusalem or one's head as less binding than swearing by God. So here's the two-edged sword. Typically Jews had a lot of respect for the name of God. As a matter of fact, Matthew exhibits that often. Where Mark, Luke, and John will talk about the "kingdom of God," often Matthew says "kingdom of heaven" because he had such great respect for the name of God among his audience, the Hebrews. And so these good Pharisees would say, "Well, we can't say name of God, so let's say something like "heaven." Let's say "Jerusalem." Let's say "earth." Let's swear by things that He's kind of responsible for."

And on the other side, they would come up to you and say, "I swear by heaven that I will return your lawnmower to you tomorrow. And then tomorrow they could decided they needed it another day but didn't call you."

You say, "Well you swore by God."

They say, "No, I didn't. I swore by heaven."

So not only do they look more religious because they won't say the name of God, but they get out of promises they make to people because they didn't say the name of God. Works both ways for a good Pharisee. They're always bending the word of God to suit them.

And then they would get in this thing where they would try to get as close to God without saying, "God." So, they would say, "I swear by Venus that I will bring your lawnmower back to you."

"I can get closer to God than that, so I'll swear by Pluto."

"I can get closer to God than that; I'll swear by Hercules, that star out there in Andromeda."

"I swear by Orion."

"I swear by his belt."

“I swear by the empty space in the north.”

“Well, I swear by the throne of God.”

It’s kind of like that with the Pharisees. “Well, let’s see whose promise is more binding. Oh, you said by God’s throne and I only said by earth. Ha! I guess you have to keep your promise.” A very strange system of rules. But we are after all talking about the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were expanding oaths to technicalities much like our American legal system that often twists and turns the normal meanings of words—Evolving to the point of destroying the justice they were supposed to serve. All of a sudden, you have codes and laws so thick the legislatures don’t even read it. I mean, how in the world can you read a healthcare bill as thick as a phonebook?

Apparently this was a pretty long lasting issue.

*Matthew 23:16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, “Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!” 17. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18. And, “Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; (that’s what you say) but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.” 19. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 20. Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. 22. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon. 23. Woe unto you.*

What is a promise? It’s when you say you’re going to do something, or have something, or something is so. It’s not when you say, “I promise.” Our kids shouldn’t have to look at us and say, “Do you promise?” They should be able to think, “Ok, dad is a Christian. Mom is a Christian. They said that something will happen and it will happen.” This stuck with the half brother of Jesus, James.

*James 5:12 Above all things my brethren, **swear not**. Neither by heaven or by earth, or by any other oath. But let your yay be yay and your nay, nay, lest you fall into condemnation.*

*Exodus 20:7 **Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain**; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.*

It seems that if a Christian makes a promise, he’s including Christ and there is no greater invocation. So you got all these Pharisees saying, “I swear by Earth.” “I swear by the clouds.” “I swear by the angel on the clouds.” “I swear by the harp in that angel’s hands.” “I swear...” And you know what? There’s no higher name to swear by, so to speak, than Jesus. We are Christ’s name bearers. And every time we disciple someone of the nations and make them a part of the community of Christ, we are making another Christ-name-bearer. You can get no higher witness than a person to say, “I’ll do something.” It’s like Christ saying, “I’ll do something.” That’s the way it’s supposed to be when a Christian says they are going to do something.

1. Saying what you’re allowed to say is not always supposed to be said. That’s the point of Jesus. “Ok, since 1446BC, when you got the law from Mount Sinai with Moses, up until today. You’ve been allowed to swear by God. And you’ve abused it so much that I think you should just quit exercising your rights, and talk like a Christian.” You want to talk about a higher standard? Because you might notice chapter 5 verse 1, who’s He talking to primarily? Disciples. So disciples have a word that is supposed to be as dependable as the word of Christ.

2. Speaking too much doesn’t become less sinful just because we use spiritual language. That’s what’s happening here in this passage. We’ve got a bunch of people acting carnal, using spiritual

language like, “I swear by heaven,” as if that makes them righter. “Well, this is a matter that needs to be known. It’s kind of a prayer request. It’s just something that everyone needs to know about.”

3. Speaking emphatically about what you cannot control is simply illogical. Now, you might notice this particularly in verse number 5:36,

*Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

So we are so busy, worried, or concerned about things we simply cannot control and so I’m consistently, easily aggravated by things I really don’t have control over, and God needs to help us to have simple yes and no communication. When you look at someone, when we make business dealings, when we talk with brothers and sisters, we ought to be people that follow Ecclesiastes 5:

*He’s in heaven and we are on earth, so let our words be few.*

Are we willing to exaggerate because we really feel like we’re going to accomplish a lot? “If he does that again I’m walking out!” You know full well you’re not walking out. You need the job.

But we say things in an oath manner, a swearing type of manner, and we are saying things that we really don’t mean. And it is as reckless as saying, “I swear by my white hair that will be black tomorrow.” That’s ridiculous, you can’t do that! We’re busy saying things like, “You do that again I’m walking out on you.” And we really don’t mean it. Before you know it our much speaking has created scars in the lives of other people. This demands control over the old man and it demands control that God can command in our life.