

Matthew 5; Lord's Day 37
THE CHRISTIAN'S USE OF THE OATH

- I. What's condemned.
 - A. Oaths and vows arise because of man's great proneness to lie, to be distrustful, and to be inconsistent.
 1. God gifts mankind with the ability to speak, convey thoughts and ideas, and to speak truthfully.
 2. But sin drastically changed this wonderful gift, making man a natural liar with the instinct to lie.
 3. An oath puts God before the consciousness of man in three ways.
 4. A vow is a promise to do or not do something (as Nazarites, Num. 30:3).
 - B. In our text Jesus continues to contrast His concept of righteousness (heart) with the outward show of the Pharisees (Mt. 5:20f)
- II. Jesus' instruction (as in the previous instructions of God's law) does not condemn the thing itself, but its mis-use.
 - A. Jesus' "swear not at all" is not absolute (prohibit all oaths) in light of other Scriptures.
 - B. "Cometh of evil" (37b) means that anything beyond yes and no is because of the fall (evil). Sin makes oaths necessary.
 1. Sometimes oaths are necessary to settle controversies and put an end to strife (I Kings 8:31,32; Heb. 6:16).
 2. Oaths and vows do have a lawful place in the believer's life: marriage, baptism, confession of faith, ordination into office.
- III. Oaths ought not be the norm for the Christian because of the work of Jesus and His Spirit within us.
 - A. First, God's people should so speak the truth that vows are not necessary: "yea, yea; Nay, nay (Matt. 5:37).
 1. As disciples of the Truth, let our whole life be lived in the consciousness that He is present as our witness.
 2. Jesus calls His disciples so to live that oath taking is not necessary in our common speech.
 - B. Let us be diligent to perform the vows we have made.
 1. We may vow, but we must not say them falsely (Lev. 19:12) nor break them (Num. 30:2).
 2. In this way God's name (which we carry) is to be honored by us and not blasphemed because of us.