"A PROMISE IS A PROMISE"

Matthew 5:33-37
5/7/2017

INTRODUCTION:

***Be a man/woman of your word! Realize the sacredness of every promise you make!**

I. All promises are sacred; therefore,
ALL PROMISES <u>MUST BE PERFORMED</u> (v. 33)

II. All promises are sacred, because
ALL PROMISES ARE <u>MADE IN GOD'S PRESENCE</u> (v. 34-36)

III. All promises are sacred; therefore,
ALL PROMISES <u>SHOULD BE STRAIGHT-FORWARD AND SINCERE</u> (v. 37)

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INTRODUCTION:

Daniel Webster wrote: "There is nothing as powerful as truth and often nothing as strange."

So much in our society is a facade or a mirage. Is anyone for real? Many, like Pilate in despair ask the question: "What is truth?"

Without truth you cannot have efficient law; you cannot have fair business; you cannot have a good marriage; etc. All of us depend on others telling us the truth (EX: the labels on packages and medicines).

"Even gangs of criminals and conspirators, who use lying and cheating as their stock-in-trade, demand the truth among themselves, because it is necessary to their own survival" (MacArthur, p. 320).

Satan is a liar and the father of lies (Jn.8:44). Since he is the prince of this world's system, it is no wonder that lying is so much a part of our world. Credibility often seems to be non-existent. This "credibility gap is widened even further by popular novels, movies, television, music, and advertising--in which truth, fantasy, and outright falsehood are blended into mixtures impossible to unscramble. Truth is so scarce that nearly everyone is suspect. Business people, advertisers, commentators, clerks, salesmen, lawyers, doctors, tradesmen, teachers, writers, politicians, and even many, if not most, preachers are suspect. Our whole society is largely built on a network of fabrication, of manufactured "truth." We shade the truth, we cheat, we exaggerate, we misrepresent income tax deductions, we make promises we have no intention of keeping, we make up excuses, and betray confidences--all as a matter of normal, everyday living." (MacArthur, p. 320)

Because of man's tendency toward lying, society requires certain safeguards to protect against falsehood --

People need references because people are liars.

People need I.D. because people lie.

People need to be finger-printed because people lie.

People need to sign contracts and co-sign because people lie.

People need secret P.I.N. (personal identification numbers) because people lie.

If everyone were honest, many of the jobs in NYC would be non-existent (people could use their lives for more productive things). EX: You would not need lawyers, judges, all anti-fraud professions would go out of business. The program "Shame on You" would not be part of the CBS local city news. Drug testings would not be needed if everyone told the truth. Business auditors, consumer protection agencies, inspection agencies, etc.

***Be a man/woman of your word! Realize the sacredness of every promise you make!**

I. All promises are sacred; therefore,
ALL PROMISES MUST BE PERFORMED (v. 33)

What is an oath? The book of Hebrews defines it perfectly. "For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute" (Heb. 6:16).

The name of something or someone greater than the person making the oath is involved to give great credibility to what is said. Any oath calling on God invites Him to witness the truthfulness of what is said, or to avenge if it is a lie. (MacArthur, p. 321)

"Forswear" = To falsely swear; to make a false vow. To vow that you will do something under the pretense that you will perform it, but having no desire to do it at all. (Lev. 19:12 - "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.").

To "forswear" also means to make a promise and then un-do it.

Thou "shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths."

Deut. 23:21-23 - "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill-offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth."

To be a false witness had stiff penalties in O.T. days (Deut. 19:16-21).

Scripture teaches that it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay (Eccl. 5:4-5). The reason is clear. A vow makes a person a debtor. The person is in debt to fulfill his vow or promise.

Num. 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."

Note: Interesting point in context - If a woman made a vow and her father or husband overheard it, she being under their authority, could have her vow annulled (Num. 30:4-5, 12-13)

Example of rash oaths:

- Joshua (Josh. 9:15 – An oath with the Gibeonites without seeking Counsel from God);
- Jephthah (Jud. 11:30-31 – Vowed to Sacrifice whatever first met him after victory over Amalekites);
- Saul (I Sam. 14:24 – Pronounced a curse on anyone who eats food after victory);
- Herod (Mt. 14:7 – To Herodius' daughter – "I'll give you whatever you ask").

It is not by accident that Jesus preaches about the subject of vows (v. 33-37) after giving Hissermonabouttheissueof divorce andthepermanencyofmarriage (v.31-32). Ifanyvowis to be kept it is especially the marriage vow!

"Unto the Lord" - The Jews would respect the vows made to the Lord, but would often view other vows as insignificant or non-binding. "The command 'You shall not swear falsely by My Name' (Lev. 19:12) was conveniently interpreted to mean that swearing false by any other name was allowed" (MacArthur, p. 323).

The Jews in Jesus' day thought that they could make an oath (vow) and not be obligated to keep it just as long as "God's Name" was not mentioned in the oath. So they, to get around using the name of God, would take oaths by Heaven, the earth, the Great city Jerusalem, or even by their own life.

II. All promises are sacred, because
ALL PROMISES ARE <u>MADE IN GOD'S PRESENCE</u> (v. 34-36)

What does the Bible mean by swearing?

EX: of things people say when they swear that they are telling the truth -
"Cross my heart and hope to die..."
"So help me God"
"I swear to God"
"May God strike me dead"

The words "swear not at all" - do not specifically refer to "profanity" or "vulgar" language (but Ephes. 4:29 does!).

"Swear not at all" - This does not mean that all oaths or promises or wrong.

Taking oaths is not wrong (indeed God legislated oath-taking - Lev. 19:12 - and many O.T. saints followed this practice – Abraham - Gen. 14:22-24, 21:23-24, 24:1-4, 10; David - Ps. 132:2)

What is wrong was the abuse of oath-taking whereby people would excuse themselves of being responsible to carry out their oath, just so long as it was not made in the name of God.

Therefore the phrase "swear not at all" means that we must never flippantly swear by anything or anyone (outside of the Lord).

"There are differences of opinion about legal oaths. Some believe they should never take an oath even for the sake of justice (EX: the Quakers). Others feel they can be called upon to swear for the sake of justice; but they should never swear of themselves; that is, take the initiative in verifying their word." (Outline Bible, p. 88)

SEE: Mt. 23:16-20 - How the Pharisees illogically viewed certain oaths as "<u>nothing</u>" (v. 16) - no big deal, no need to worry about fulfilling them.

Jesus' point: Since God is in Heaven and on earth, the owner of Zion and the controller of man's very life and existence, to profane any vow, is to profane God Himself.

God <u>sits</u> in Heaven (Is. 66:1); He <u>rests</u> His feet on earth (Is. 66:1; Acts 7:49); He <u>owns</u> Jerusalem (Ps. 48:2), and He alone <u>controls</u> life (Mt. 6:27; 10:29-30)

"Thou canst not make one hair white or black" - This was stated before hair coloring!

Just as one does not have control over such a little thing as permanently changing your hair color, so we cannot say "You have my life on it" because we don't know how long we will even live! God controls the length of our life (Ja. 4:14-15)

Any power or strength we have is given by God and can be taken away at any moment by God. Therefore, man does not have the power to guarantee oaths. He can be disabled or snatched away at any instant. The recognition of this reality should cause man to live so honestly and straightforward that his word alone is acceptable. Oaths and vows should not be necessary (The Preacher's Outline and sermon Bible, Matthew, p. 88)

"To dishonor and compromise any truth is to dishonor and compromise His truth. Heaven God's; the earth is God's; Jerusalem is God's; and every person's head is God's. It is therefore wicked and sinful to use anything of God's, whether His name or part of His creation, as witness to anything that is dishonest, deceitful, insincere, or in the least way knowingly false. God has no separate categories of sacred and secular. Everything that pertains to Him is sacred, and all truth is His truth, just as all creation is His creation. Every lie is against God, and therefore every false oath dishonors His name." (MacArthur, p. 325).

"Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which He is not involved" (Barclay, Matthew, Vol. 1, p. 160).

Many in Jesus Day thought they could LIE as long as God was not involved in the vow.

Today, all radical Islamists think that LIEING is OK as long as it is for Allah's benefit.

It is wrong to have one kind of language at church and another at home.

It is wrong to have one kind of ethics at church and another in business.

It is wrong to have one kind of morals at church and another in society.

III. All promises are sacred; therefore,
ALL PROMISES <u>SHOULD BE STRAIGHT-FORWARD AND SINCERE</u> (v. 37)

"Your communication" refers to your <u>words</u> (logos) whether written or spoken.

"Yea, yea; nay, nay" = "Yes, yes or No, no"

If you mean yes, say "Yes"; if you mean no, say "No."

"Yes, that is true; yes, I will do what I say" "No, that is false; no, I will not do . . ."
"Yes, I stole the tool" or "No, I did not."
"Yes, I will be there" or "No, I will not be."
"Yes, I will do _____" or "No, I will not."
"Yes, I erred, sinned, was wrong" or "No, I was not."

Jesus' point by the phrase "**Whatsoever is more than these"** is this: Don't elaborate by saying, "Yes, I promise, I hope to die, I swear on the Bible, I'll give you my photo I.D. as a pledge, May I drop dead if I don't keep my word, etc."

"Swearing and cursing do not make a matter more believable; they really make it more suspicious." (Outline Bible, p. 89)

ILLUS: of people who continually come up to the church door begging for money and giving phoney reasons why they are so desperately in need. EX: The man whose mother was in a certain hospital in the Bronx dying. He had to get to her. I asked the name of the hospital and then called up. They did not even know of such a person. Caught in his lie, he sheepishly walked out of our church.

An oath is only as trustworthy as the person who makes it. EX: Peter who "began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!'" (Matt. 26:69-74)

"Cometh of evil" = lit. "<u>the</u> evil [one]". Elaborations of "truth" usually are lies and come from the Father of lies, the devil.

"The evil one" - cp. Mt. 6:13; 13:19, 38; Jn. 17:15; II Th. 3:3; I Jn. 2:13; 3:12; 5:18, 19

James 5:12 - "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

All conversation should be straight and to the point. WE must be "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15)

Say what you mean and mean what you say."

CONCLUSION:

God desires truth in the inner man (Ps. 51:6).

He hates a "lying tongue" (Rev. 6:16-17).

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (12:22)

The eternal destiny of all unrepentant, unregenerate liars is "the Lake of fire" (Rev. 21:8).

EX: Ananias and Sapphira came to understand the seriousness of lying too late (Acts 5:1-11).

"Truth has no degrees or shades. A half truth is a whole lie, and a white lie is really black." (MacArthur, p. 326)

Is your word absolutely dependable? Is your word believable? Reliable? Are you know for your honesty and faithfulness?

The next time you say, "I will..." remember, God will hold you to it!

Be known for truth! Be known as a man of your word!

A promise is a promise! Keep your promises!