

Does God Swear?

Matt 5:33-37 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”

This Scripture intends that we be people of our word. If we say “yes” it means we will. If we say “no” it means we won’t, and you can expect our behavior now and later to be consistent with our yes or no. It recalls the Urim and Thummim carried over the High Priest’s heart (Rev. 1:3-8, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.... To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God... “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

In the context of Jesus speaking about keeping your word he goes beyond to tell his disciples to “go the second mile” when you are asked to go the first; give to the one who asks of you; love your enemies;

Matt 5:44-48 “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

The context of Jesus saying about taking oaths (“swearing”—not meaning use of profanity in biblical terms) is likening the behavior and ethic of Christ’s followers to that of God Himself. God is reckoned by His faithfulness to keep the promise he makes, uphold the covenant He cuts, and to fulfill the word He has spoken. When people want to stress the validity of your promise you pick out some great value and “swear by it.” The degree that you value and esteem the basis of your promise, to that degree your word can be trusted.

God’s Oath:

Genesis 22:15-18 “Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’”

2 immutable (unalterable) things:

1. A PROMISE—land & seed
2. AN OATH—sworn by Himself because there is no one and no thing greater; and because God is the same eternally, He is unaltered and unchangeable: "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself."

Aspects of God's promise: Genesis 12:

1. Go from—to the land I will let you see...I will
 - a) make a "great nation" of you;
 - b) give-you-blessing;
 - c) make your name great;
 - d) bless those who bless you;
 - e) damn those who curse you (Hebrew original language; E. Fox Five Books of Moses).
2. Go from dead works, and works that lead to death, to faith (repentance).
 - a. v.4 Abram went as the Lord said...
 - b. v. 5 when they came to the land...
 - c. v. 7 the Lord was seen by Abram and said, "I give this land to your seed!"Abram "journeyed on continually" ...(famine, Egypt, Sarai & Abimelech, Lot and land struggle, Abram "settled in the land of Canaan)
3. Gen. 13: 15-16:
 - a. the land as far as you can see to you and your seed;
 - b. your seed multiplied beyond measurability

Our promises are in the "unseen" realm of eternity and salvation. We "see" our "land of promise" by faith. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Without faith it is impossible to please God.

- Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3 Galatians 3:6; James 2:23)
- Abraham has established five "slaughter sites" altars where he worshipped, offered sacrifice, and called on the name of the Lord.

Hebrews 6:11-18 "We desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you." And thus, having patiently waited, he [Abraham] obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that

by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.

- God's purpose in this letter is that we would have "strong encouragement" to hold on to our hope in him and not to drift into false hopes offered by the world:
- **v 17 and 18:** In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.
- The hope is certainty in the coming of the Lord and our personal resurrection in a completely new and different existence ("eternal" life is not just a same life without end: it is an entirely different kind of existence in every way and outside the bounds of time, space, etc).
- God wants you to have strong, full, confident hope. Don't be sluggish in your fight to hold your hope in Christ, His promise, His word, His inheritance, strong, vivid, and compelling until all is fulfilled.
- v. 12 It's only "through faith and patience that we inherit the promises."

We maintain faith through "diligence" (6:11).

- Drifting in the Christian life is deadly. Little by little the value of the truth and promise of salvation can fade to the background of the events in our lives. Unless we are vigilant and diligent we could end up a person like Esau, pleading with God as Esau pled with Isaac to change his mind and give Esau the blessing in spite of his earlier disregard of it. Esau lost his inheritance when he "despised his birthright" in a moment of human desire/need (Heb. 12:16-17).
- God's Promise confirmed by God's Oath concerning the Promise is directing us to lay hold of and maintain strong encouragement, full assurance of faith, and keep it "until the end" throughout our natural lives.

The promise and the oath were made in direct response to Abraham's obedience of faith in offering Isaac (Hebrews 11:17) We read in Genesis 22: "Because you have done this, I will bless you." Obedience through faith is the qualifier for receiving God's promise. This is the "faith & patience" of Hb. 6:12.

Heirs of Abraham: The promise is not just to Abraham. It flows to his descendants, natural first and spiritual second who come to the inheritance promised Abraham through faith in Christ. **The ultimate promise of faith is resurrection:** Hebrews 11:19 "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only

begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'in Isaac your descendants shall be called' (indicating the ultimate promise, the Son, Christ, born through the Jewish people). He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

Genesis 17:4: God says, "Behold, My covenant is with you [Abraham], and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations."

- Abraham will have descendants beyond those who are Jewish according to natural genealogy (goyyim=nations; Gentiles)

Romans 11: 12-16 Now if their transgression (the unbelief of the Jews) is riches for the world (the veil on their hearts meant the gospel for the goyyim—the original promise of nations) and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! 13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. ...15 For if their rejection(the Jews) is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too."

Galatians 3:27-29: "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ...If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

- "That we may have strong encouragement who have fled for refuge."
- The promise is "In blessing I will surely bless you" (6:14).
- (Refer to Fox Genesis)

"By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD."

Not just a promise; but a promise and an oath.

Why did he add an oath to a promise?

v. 17b-18, "He interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement" and unshakeable hope throughout our lives; that we might continue to believe and trust God fully with all faith day by day until He comes.

God insists that we be people of confident hope, not of worry and uncertainty. He wants us to think about the future, and to be totally confident and assured about how it will turn out.

God cannot stop being God. He is Truth embodied and therefore it is impossible for Him to say anything other than utter truth. And because He is faithful it is impossible for Him to not fulfill His word of promise.

God can change His mind!

God is the greatest value in the universe. There is nothing more valuable or wonderful than God. So God swears by God.

The appeal is that all persons would “flee to God for refuge.” Flee from sin, flee from death, flee from the works of the enemy of man’s souls, flee from dead works and works that lead to death. Fee to the refuge.

Psalm 11 (NASB) when David fled from Saul

In the LORD I take refuge; How can you say to my soul, “Flee as a bird to your mountain; For, behold, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face.

Additional Oaths

Deuteronomy 6:13 "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name."

Leviticus 19:12 "You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD."

Exodus 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." (established again under Moses Deut. 5:11)