

# The Sermon on the Mount #6

## Oaths, Vows, and Swearing Corrected (5:33-37)

### Introduction:

1. Our Lord continued the body of His sermon by rescuing true righteousness from the perversion of Pharisees.
2. Having explained clearly and forcefully that His intent was not to destroy the Law, He then applied the Law.
3. Having explained the importance of the least commandments and the totally inadequate righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, He continued by demonstrating their hypocrisy in making and performing oaths.
4. The Lord Jesus continued His definition of kingdom righteousness by applying the truth about swearing.
5. The Jews by tradition had promoted swearing for common matters of life, by various objects rather than by God Himself, and by assigning differences among objects as whether performance was required or not.
6. Self-righteousness, or presumed blamelessness before God, is always by limiting God's laws to fit your life.
7. It is extremely important to see that Jesus opposed what had been said, not what Moses had written earlier.
8. It is not an uncommon error that this sermon was Jesus Christ correcting and improving the Old Testament.
9. Missing the lesson could cause you to think Jesus changed the laws of covenants, oaths, vows, and swearing.
10. Since our Lord commended those who do and teach the least of His commandments, I will this day expand the laws of swearing from Moses to the full extent of the righteousness of our holy God (Matt 5:19).
11. Let the position of this lesson be instructive: Jesus began the body of His sermon with relationship problems, followed that with sexual and marital problems, and then dealt with frivolity and profanity of human speech.
12. The Pharisees modified swearing until no one was guilty; Jesus Christ expanded the commandment until everyone is guilty! But He obeyed His interpretation perfectly, and that righteousness is yours by grace!
13. All men have sworn incorrectly or forsworn themselves, and you will give an account of it on Judgment Day.
14. Let us tremble before God's word, search our hearts, clean our minds, and purify our tongues from profanity!
15. Our generation needs this teaching of our Lord Jesus and its application more than any other generation, for the frivolity and profanity of this generation has corrupted proper swearing by numerous verbal perversions.
16. This church once had members that could not grasp this lesson and opposed the church about oaths in court, for it is common to misunderstand the sense of our Lord's words and take an inconsistent position on oaths.
17. This subject is excellent for learning how to study the Bible and arrive at the sense of apparent contradictions.
18. As the servant ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, I will defend the integrity and sense of His teaching here.
19. To get your attention, read the story of a man that cursed in the Lord's name during a fight (Lev 24:10-16).
20. To get your attention regarding the seriousness of your speech, read both Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 and Isaiah 6:1-7.
21. So important was this subject to Agur that he prayed for sufficient food to keep him from stealing (Pr 30:7-9).

### The Text Explained

- A. Jesus identified the traditional interpretation Israel had been taught by scribes and Pharisees (5:33).
  1. He refers to what they had heard about oaths and swearing, not what had been written of them.
  2. Our Lord did not identify or correct, "It is written," but rather what had been preached in Israel.
  3. He did not correct, change, or modify Exodus 20:7,16; Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; or Deut 23:23; He corrected the wrong application that had been made to justify Jewish duplicity and profanity.
  4. He condemned the oral teaching and traditional interpretation the Jews had heard in synagogues.
  5. The scribes and Pharisees taught the tradition of the elders, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time," which modified several aspects of swearing to allow their wickedness.
  6. They had taken God's commandments and altered them to justify ungodly speech and actions.
  7. Moses commanded swearing (Ex 20:7; Deut 6:13; 10:20; Jer 4:2). Jesus did not destroy this law.
  8. Jesus Christ did not correct the law of God at all; He restored the law from Pharisee corruption.
  9. There are foolish and weak men who will not swear at all by totally missing the Lord's lesson.
  10. They foolishly conclude Jesus rejected bonds, covenants, oaths, swearing, and vows altogether.
  11. By basing Bible study on the sound of words rather than the sense of words, they err greatly.
  12. They leap at His words here and James's words in James 5:12 to reject even swearing in court.
  13. James, who wrote to Jews as well, dealt with the Pharisee perversion (Jas 1:1; Gal 2:9; Jas 5:12).

14. The Mennonites and Jehovah's Witnesses are two large groups that totally miss the lesson and slander Christianity with ridicule, suspicion, and trouble by rejecting oaths, vows, and swearing, even when asked for an oath with their left hand on the Bible and the words, "So help me, God."
  15. The scribes and Pharisees had taught and lived several errors pertaining to oaths and swearing, which errors can be seen more clearly by reading the account in Matthew 23:16-22.
  16. James, who wrote to Jews as well, dealt with the Pharisee perversion (Jas 1:1; Gal 2:9; Jas 5:12).
- B. Their first heresy was to make swearing a common act for most any inconsequential matter.
    1. Proper swearing, oaths, vows, covenants, bonds, or charges are for serious matters (Heb 6:16).
    2. The fact that Jesus endorsed bare yes and no for communicating indicates frivolous swearing.
    3. Swearing by your head could not been any great oath, further indicating their common use of it.
    4. Allowing the breaking of some oaths by their tradition also indicates frivolous vows (Mat 23:16).
  - C. Their second heresy was to swear and vow by all sorts of objects rather than by God alone.
    1. The commandment clearly stated that God was the object of right swearing (Deut 6:13; 10:20).
    2. The Jews were swearing by heaven, the earth, Jerusalem, their heads, the temple, gold in the temple, the altar, and the gift on the altar among other objects for sure. This was ridiculous!
    3. You cannot believe swearing by heaven? You are forgetting, Heavens! And, Heavens to Betsy!
    4. You cannot believe swearing by the earth? You are forgetting, For lands' sake! And, My lands!
    5. By their laws of oaths, they valued gold and sacrifices more than worship (Matthew 23:16-19).
  - D. Their third heresy was to allow prevarication or lack of performance of vows by certain objects.
    1. Their oaths by the temple or altar were nothing – swearing that could be broken (Matt 23:16,18).
    2. They were compromising the absolute honesty and integrity that God expects of His people.
    3. They had turned the formal and sober worship of God into a profane mockery by their tradition.
  - E. Jesus contrasted the righteousness of His kingdom to the teaching of scribes and Pharisees (5:34).
    1. There is a very definite contrast and opposition here by our Lord's use of the disjunctive "but."
    2. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He did not apologize for His superior religion!
    3. He dogmatically declared that God's standard of righteousness was far higher than the Jews!
    4. He did not flatter the false teachers or commend them in any way, because they were heretics!
    5. He did not excuse them from their error; He simply and boldly declared them wrong before God.
    6. Our Lord did not blanch or cringe dealing with oaths; He authoritatively and strictly defined it.
    7. The teaching of Jesus Christ was powerfully superior to the Jew's oral tradition (Matt 7:28-29).
  - F. Jesus first dealt with their heresy of swearing for all sort of frivolous or insignificant things (5:34).
    1. His words, "Swear not at all," must be understood in a specific sense against a specific error.
    2. His words, "Swear not at all," must be understood as stop swearing as justified by the Pharisees.
    3. His words, "Swear not at all," must be understood as rebuking frivolous use of oaths and vows.
    4. The Lord Jesus Christ went immediately into explaining exactly what swearing He condemned.
    5. Moses commanded swearing (Ex 20:7; Deut 6:13; 10:20; Jer 4:2). Jesus did not destroy this law.
    6. He does not have one syllable of condemnation against proper swearing in the name of the Lord.
    7. He did not condemn the many oaths of God and holy men in either testament by these words.
    8. He did condemn their light use of swearing for common matters of life that did not need oaths.
    9. For such matters they had reduced the object of swearing to reflect the minor matter at stake, which was not the Jewish practice in court, when they would invoke God's name (Matt 26:63).
  - G. Jesus then dealt with their heresy of swearing by things other than by God's name alone (5:34-36).
    1. Swearing is an act of worship when it involves God's name, which He loved (Deut 6:13; 10:20).
    2. In this context He condemned their oaths by heaven, the earth, Jerusalem, and their head.
    3. Why in the world would a person swear by God's throne rather than by God's name? Was it to reduce the severity of the oath so that consideration could be made for not keeping it?
    4. But the fact was very clear that swearing by heaven involved the same as swearing by God, for heaven is nothing without the presence of God that gives it its unique nature and honor.
    5. The fact was just as clear about swearing by the earth, for God created it and uses it as a hassock.

6. The fact was just as clear swearing by Jerusalem, for its esteem as a city was by God's blessing.
7. The fact was just as clear about swearing by the head, for only God can alter the hair of a man.
- H. Though not stated here directly, Jesus also condemned their easy breaking of light vows (5:34-36).
  1. We are told about their views of various oaths in Matthew's other context (Matt 23:16-22).
  2. Regardless of their object, God and Jesus Christ expected the people of God to keep promises.
- I. Jesus then returned to His argument against their common swearing by rejecting such oaths (5:37).
  1. Here is the positive explanation and application of His earlier words, "Swear not at all."
  2. Instead of frivolous and light swearing, their words should be based on simple "yes" or "no."
  3. In ordinary conversation and business, anything more than positives or negatives leads to sin.

### **The Text Applied**

- A. Our Lord Jesus Christ began with the most difficult and pervasive problem and temptation among men and women – godly relationships involving the heart, tongue, and actions (5:21-26).
- B. He then took up the second most difficult and pervasive problem and temptation among men – sexual fidelity in marriage and godly service to the needs and temptations of others (5:27-32).
- C. He followed those two areas of temptation with frivolous and profane use of our mouths, which surely ranks as one of the most common temptations that men face for easy sinning (5:33-37).
- D. We first must establish without any doubt that the Mennonites and Russellites are entirely in error.
  1. They forbid swearing, oaths, or vows by gross misunderstanding of Mat 5:33-37 and James 5:12.
  2. We avoid private interpretations and compare scripture with scripture (II Pet 1:20; I Cor 2:13).
  3. We do not take a position by the sound of words; we want the sense of God's words (Neh 8:8).
  4. Childish arrogance based on a literal reading of words without a context leads to certain heresy.
  5. We consider the scope and intent of a passage to determine the sense of its words (Matt 5:17-20).
  6. We determine if a passage is intended with absolute or relative force by comparing Scripture.
  7. Is "Thou fool" worthy of hell (Mat 5:22)? If so, what of God and Paul (Luke 12:20; I Cor 15:36)!
  8. Should we remove eyeballs or amputate hands (Matt 5:29-30)? Or is there a relative figure here?
  9. How are we not to resist evil (Matt 5:39)? Can parents resist children? Policemen criminals?
  10. What will you do if you are sued for your house (Matt 5:40)? Wait for the verdict and double it?
  11. What will you do if a thief leaves a note for your car (Matt 5:42)? Tell him, "My pleasure!"
  12. Must alms be done in such secret that no one knows (Matt 6:1-4)? What of Joses (Acts 4:34-37)!
  13. Is it wrong to have savings (Matthew 6:19)? What of the ant and rich (Pr 6:6-8; I Tim 6:17-19)!
  14. Is it wrong to have two jobs (Matt 6:24)? What about three jobs? Or are these opposing masters?
  15. How will you not think about life's necessities (Matt 6:25)? Show us such spirituality in fact!
  16. Do you eschew all future planning (Matt 6:34)? Or is this a relative warning of anxious care?
  17. Are you as those who condemn all judging (Matt 7:1)? Or is judging in the context (Matt 7:6)!
  18. We remember to place obvious limits on universal and general statements made for their power.
  19. We rightly divide the word of truth in order to judge righteous judgment (II Tim 2:15; Jn 7:24).
  20. God swore by covenant promise to Abraham His friend, and Abraham swore by covenant and by oath himself (Genesis 21:22-32; 22:15-17; 24:1-9; Heb 6:13-14). Observe that these vows, promises, covenants, oaths, promises, and charges are 400 years before the Law of Moses.
  21. Moses commanded swearing (Ex 20:7; Deut 6:13; 10:20; Jer 4:2). Jesus did not destroy this law.
  22. And the Law of Moses did include regulations for swearing (Exodus 20:7,16; 22:10-11; Lev 5:1; 19:12; Num 5:18-22; 30:2; Deut 5:11; 6:13; 10:20; 23:23).
  23. David and Solomon spoke of it (I Kings 8:31; Ps 15:4; 63:11; 66:13-15; 116:14,18; Prov 29:24).
  24. And the prophets of God dealt with good and bad swearing (I King 22:16; II Chronicles 18:13; Isaiah 45:23; 65:16; Jeremiah 4:2; 5:2; 5:7; 7:9-10; 12:16; 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 38:16; Daniel 12:7; Jonah 2:9; Zechariah 5:4; Malachi 3:5).
  25. The blessed and holy God even swore in His wrath against His people (Ps 95:11; Heb 3:11; 4:3), which is cursing during anger! Those that are paranoid about vows should use this against God!

26. And the whole nation of Israel swore together (Numbers 21:2; II Chron 15:14; Neh 5:13; 10:29).
  27. And Nehemiah really got into the act of forcing the people to swear a vow (Nehemiah 13:25)!
  28. But the New Testament is also full of such charges, oaths, swearing, and vows (Matt 26:59-64; Acts 18:21; Rom 1:9; Rom 9:1; 15:32; I Cor 4:19; 16:7,22; II Cor 1:23; 11:31; 12:19; Gal 1:20; Phil 1:8; I Thess 2:5; 4:1-2; 5:27; I Tim 2:7; 5:21; 6:13-16; II Tim 2:14; 4:1; Heb 6:3; Jas 4:15).
  29. Did the Lord Jesus Christ, Who supposedly condemned any swearing, sin by it (Matt 26:62-64)?
  30. And at the sound of the last trumpet, an angel shall swear by Almighty God (Revelation 10:5-7).
- E. It will be our wisdom and righteousness to review ways that we break God's laws for swearing.
1. Swearing in the Bible is any verbal act of appeal or promise that references God to add weight to your words: it is called adjuring, bond, charge, covenant, curse, oath, promise, swearing, or vow.
  2. God's laws are exceeding broad: it is our duty to examine ourselves in their breadth (Ps 119:96).
  3. We received an introductory lesson with the sixth commandment earlier (5:21-26), where we saw how extensive a simple commandment can be with a holy interpretation and application.
  4. Given our Lord's expanded interpretation of murder and adultery in the preceding lessons, we will apply His warning about swearing to any frivolous speech, especially of a religious nature.
  5. We will consider a few other Holy Spirit examples of God's expanded definitions of sinning with your mouth (Pr 10:19; 14:9; 20:14; Eccl 10:20; Matt 12:34-37; Eph 5:3-8,12).
  6. Each and every one of the offences that follows violates directly or indirectly, "Swear not at all"!
  7. It is a horrible shame to our religion, when (a) we commit these sins ourselves, (b) allow others to commit them with relative impunity, (c) expose ourselves to temptations in this area of our lives, or (d) do not treat the offenders as heinously as we would an unrepentant perjurer. Consider how you would watch and avoid an unrepentant perjurer in our midst.
- F. Godly swearing must have a **PROPER OCCASION** in order for it to be acceptable to God.
1. Most of the times men use trite objects for swearing indicates the swearing is quite unnecessary.
  2. The proper occasion for swearing is strife that can be settled by invoking the Lord (Heb 6:16).
  3. Our courts and public swearing-in ceremonies still use the Bible and the name of God for oaths.
  4. We make covenants, oaths, and vows when we marry, are baptized, join the church, commit ourselves zealously to specific righteousness, or promise the Lord a sacrifice for His deliverance.
  5. Short of these and similar very sober and serious situations, there is no need to use the Lord's name, for you would then be using it in vain in direct violation of the third commandment.
  6. All the frivolous and expletive uses of God's name, our Lord's name, or their attributes are very profane and blasphemous examples of ungodly swearing that the Lord will most certainly judge.
  7. Let your conduct be such that your word does not need ordinary confirmation (Matthew 5:37).
  8. Haste in swearing can result in great error and regret (Judges 11:30-40; I Samuel 14:24-45).
  9. Be afraid of swearing so as not to engage in it lightly (Ecclesiastes 9:2; Deut 6:13; Prov 29:20).
  10. God's name includes His attributes, so avoid swearing ignorantly (Isaiah 57:15; Exodus 34:6).
  11. Expletives for hitting your thumb with a hammer, having a traffic light turn red, or hearing someone sneeze are profanely inadequate situations for uttering any kind of an oath or curse.
- G. Godly swearing must have a **PROPER OBJECT** in order for it to be acceptable to God.
1. Swearing is an act of worship, for you appeal to the highest authority you know (Hebrews 6:16).
  2. The proper and only object for swearing is the name of the living God (Deu 6:13; 10:20; Jer 4:2), for He receives it as an act of worship, and He jealously demands that He be the only object.
  3. In the New Testament this includes the name of Jesus Christ (Rom 9:1; I Tim 5:21; II Tim 4:1).
  4. God's name includes His attributes, so avoid swearing ignorantly (Isaiah 57:15; Exodus 34:6).
  5. We violate this worship when we utter common words for emphasis, authority, or confirmation.
  6. Reject common words used for the purpose of swearing by emphasis or expletive: Heavens! Hell! Lands! Jupiter! Man! By George! Jumping catfish! Damn! Great day in the morning! Great balls of fire! Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! Sufferin' Succotash!

7. Reject euphemisms that are used for God, Jesus Christ, or other swear words: Goll! Golly! Gee! Geez! Gee Whiz! Gosh! Darn! Dang! Dog gone! Dog nabbit! Jiminy cricket! Jiminy Christmas! Jesus, Joseph, and Mary! Lordy, Lordy! Shoot! Sugar! Foot! Friggin! Freakin! Screw you!
  8. Reject blasphemous words: My goodness! Gracious! Goodness gracious, sake's alive! Holy cow! Holy Moses! Bless you! Holy Toledo! My word!
  9. Reject sex acts, sex organs, and human or animal excrement for the use is profane and stupid, since it means you are appealing to the authority of these things to confirm your evil character.
  10. What about, "Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye"? Is that how we verify truth?
  11. What about, "On my mother's grave"? On what authority or value will she keep you from lying?
  12. The depravity and profanity of man, and especially of this generation, is seen by these examples.
- H. Godly swearing must have a **PROPER RELIGION** in order for it to be acceptable to God.
1. Swearing is a use of God's name, which must be backed up with overall general righteousness.
  2. Agur feared taking God's name in vain by stealing, if he did not have enough to eat (Pr 30:7-9).
  3. We profane God's glorious and holy name when we do not live up to His righteous standards.
  4. We take the name of the Lord our God in vain when we do not live up to our public profession.
  5. **Vain.** Devoid of real value, worth, or significance; idle, unprofitable, useless, worthless.
  6. Those who have taken the name of Christ should live holy lives (II Timothy 2:19; Acts 11:26).
  7. The nature of proper swearing is summed up neatly in two passages (Exodus 20:7; Jeremiah 4:2).
  8. The name of THE LORD THY GOD is a glorious and fearful name (Deut 28:58; Psalm 111:9).
  9. The proper object with an improper religion is prohibited; you cannot cover for sin (Hosea 4:15).
- I. Godly swearing must have a **PROPER ACTION** in order for it to be acceptable to God.
1. Keep your vows to a minimum and avoid being a fool (Deut 23:21-23; Eccl 5:4-6; Prov 29:20).
  2. Whether you swear or merely use "yes" or "no," you should always keep your word impeccably.
  3. The commandment of scripture prohibits swearing falsely (Leviticus 6:1-5; 19:12).
  4. Even if keeping an oath will cause you harm or loss, you must keep it anyway, for that is not sufficient reason to overthrow it (Ps 15:1,4; Josh 9:18-20; Judges 11:35; II Sam 21:1-2).
- J. Hate any light use of God's name or related things (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 28:58; Psalm 111:9).
1. We do not call any man "Father" in a religious way, for we have only one Father (Matt 23:9).
  2. There is no place for jesting with religious subjects like Bible verses, Bible characters, Bible expressions, heaven, hell, different denominations, etc., etc.
- K. Are you keeping your marriage vows? It was truly a covenant before God. Can you remember them?
- L. We have developed a rather thorough marriage covenant with strong vows in hope of pleasing God.
- M. The blessed God has strong things to say against filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting (Eph 5:3-8).
- N. You will be held accountable for every idle word, especially in religious matters (Matt 12:34-37).
- O. Our words in God's house are particularly important, as we are in the presence of God (Eccl 5:1-3).
1. When in God's house, we sing with the understanding, which may include vows (I Cor 14:15).
  2. When in God's house, we pray with the understanding, which may include vows (I Cor 14:15).
  3. We baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the triune God, it is a very serious vow.
  4. We receive members in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a very serious covenant and oath.
  5. When in God's house, whether we call it vowing or not, our words should be sober (Eccl 5:1-3).
- P. Everything you do in life is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus with thanksgiving (Col 3:17).
- Q. Paul did not settle for mere "yes" and "no" in the charging of Timothy with duties, and he told Timothy to use similar charges on other ministers (I Tim 5:21; 6:13-16; II Tim 4:1; II Tim 2:14).
- R. We have used, and we will use, similar charges when ordaining men to the ministry (II Tim 2:14).
- S. You can be sworn to a duty by another, as Paul with Timothy, Abraham with his servant, Caiaphas with Jesus (Matt 26:63-64), or Solomon with Shimei (I Kgs 2:43).
- T. If you made a vow that involves sin, you have no obligation to keep it ... that would be another sin!
- U. If you made a vow that could cost you, you have an obligation to keep it (Ps 15:4; Joshua 9:17-21).
- V. Paul charged saints in churches by swearing (I Thessalonians 4:1; 5:27; II Thess 3:6,12; I Cor 5:3-5).

W. But our common conversation should be free of any foolish oaths, and we should keep our every word and commitment as Christians. Punctuality and performance should mark every member here.

**Conclusion:**

1. Do not despise perjurers in your thinking, unless you are free from the expanded interpretation of swearing!
2. Do not think highly of yourself in God's sight, until you are free from blasphemy, profanity, or perjury.
3. Do not presume that your worship of God is accepted, when you have opened your lips lightly or foolishly.
4. Avoid with holy hatred any vain or light use of God's name or holy things pertaining to Him or angry curses.
5. Consider the great Day of Judgment, when you shall give an account for every idle word and every time you spoke foolishly in the light of this study.

**For Further Study:**

1. See below.

## Filthiness, Foolish Talking, and Jestng

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither **filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jestng**, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Ephesians 5:3-7

**Filthy.** Full of filth; dirty, foul, nasty, unclean. Morally foul or polluted: obscene.

1. Paul expressly condemned filthy speech in those that are new men (Col 3:8).
2. The fornicating men of Sodom were guilty of filthiness (II Peter 2:7; Jude 1:8).
3. Our communication must be edifying and gracious, not corrupt (Ephesians 4:29).
4. God desires us to avoid all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (II Cor 7:1; Jas 1:21).
5. God would have us simple and silent regarding most evil (Rom 16:19; Eph 5:12).

**Foolish.** Fool-like, wanting in sense of judgment. Befitting a fool; indicating folly.

1. Remember that the prime mark of a fool is his mouth (Prov 9:13; Eccl 10:11-14).
2. Speech not conveying knowledge is foolish speech (Prov 10:21; 17:7; 15:2,7,21).
3. Consider a prating fool (Proverbs 10:8). **Prate.** To talk, to chatter: usually dyslogistic, implying speaking much or long to little purpose.
4. A fool does not teach or learn – he talks simply to discover himself (Prov 18:2).

**Jest.** To utter gibes, taunts, or ridicule; to scoff, jeer, mock. To speak in a trifling way. To say things amusing or facetious; to make witty or humorous remarks; to joke.

1. Deceiving your neighbor in the name of a joke is kin to insanity (Proverbs 26:19).
2. Job was known for gravity, so his laughter was rare and fitting (Job 29:21-25).
3. There is jestng with God, His Word, or sin (Ex 20:7; Pr 14:9; 10:23; Rom 1:32).

**Filthiness, foolish talking, and jestng ought not to be named once among saints.**

1. Some, in an attempt to protect jestng, alter the following clause to read “which **is** not convenient” and teach that there is convenient jestng that God doesn’t mind.
  - a. All three sins are equally evil, as the plural verb “are” proves clearly.
  - b. All three sins are inconvenient, as the plural verb “are” proves clearly.
  - c. Context shows them similar to fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness.
2. These sins are not convenient, like sodomy (Rom 1:28). For frivolous speech by mortal lips before a holy God is as stupidly perverse as men having sex with men.
3. Filthiness, foolish talking, and jestng ought to be replaced with giving of thanks.
4. They give very poor evidence of God’s grace, since they characterize the wicked.
5. Be not deceived by those who will try to make us appear old fashioned and morbid, as God will bring judgment upon this world for these very things.
6. We shall give an account of every idle word in the Day of Judgment (Matt 12:36).

# **A Few More Thoughts for Mennonites and Russellites Regarding their Heretical Phobia about Oaths and Swearing**

## **How we use the Bible.**

We do not approach the Bible like the Mennonites and Jehovah's Witnesses. We ignore the sound of words to determine the sense of words (Neh 8:8). We reject the appearance of things to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). We rightly divide the word of truth, for there are many divisions to be made to avoid shame in doctrine (II Tim 2:15). For example, we are not like the disciples and worry about our bread supply, when Jesus uses the word leaven (Matt 16:5-12), nor do we baptize for dead relatives with Mormons (I Cor 15:29), or condemn all judgment because Jesus said, "Judge not" (Matt 7:1).

We highly regard context, which tells us how words in a particular verse are to be understood. This is especially true in the Sermon on the Mount. And it is also true of Jesus or any apostle addressing Jews. We remember why we have a document entitled, "Jesus or Paul," because Jesus was a minister of the circumcision, and Paul was the apostle to us Gentiles. We only follow Jesus like Paul followed Jesus (I Cor 11:1-2). For a recent example of the importance of context, we do not forbid eating meat because we found Genesis 1:29 and the antediluvian patriarchs lived to an average age of 912!

We remember that the Bible is written to confuse those who read it like a handbook. We know we must study, make diligent search, compare spiritual things with spiritual, and avoid private interpretations (Pr 2:1-9; I Cor 2:13; II Tim 2:15; II Pet 1:20). We know we have to fit the whole Bible together to understand any one passage in it correctly. We know that God's sense of words is often not the most obvious, for the obvious impression is to mislead, not teach. It is a spiritual book, and we must approach it spiritually, looking for the intent that might be hidden beneath the surface. We remember why Jesus spoke in parables. We remember how many times He totally baffled His hearers by using carnal words and expressions to present spiritual truth. For example, He spoke of raising up "this temple" in three days, while He was standing in the literal temple (John 2:19)! Only a very spiritual man could grasp His holy play on words to confound the Jews and prophesy truth to believers.

We use the principle of interpretation that any true argument can be taken to a fair and logical extreme and it will hold up. If an argument begins to crumble when it is pressed with more extreme tests of application, then it was a false argument to begin with. The truth will never crumble, no matter what situation you throw at it. For example, the argument from silence that anything not condemned is allowed is easily proven false by raising the suggestion of Coke and chips for the Lord's Supper. Every true doctrine can easily handle extreme tests of application.

## **Some Bible and logical arguments defending Bible swearing**

1. If we reject all vows in the New Testament, then the marriages in our church have been incredibly sinful events, for we have directed the couples to make extensive vows in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as part of their marriage covenant, and we have put these vows and covenants in writing as well. We chose the words, "As the LORD liveth." Since the New Testament does not teach us anything about weddings or the initiation of marriage, we revert to the instruction of the Old Testament that marriage is a covenant (Job 31:1; Pr 2:17; Mal 2:14). Therefore, either Matthew 5:34-37 and James

5:12 do not apply to marriage, or Christian marriages should not involve any commitment or covenant before God involving promises of performance. I do not believe marriage can rightly exist without covenant vows, and Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 have nothing against such vows at all.

2. What did Paul do to Timothy about partiality as a minister? Here are his exact words: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (I Tim 5:21). Why did Paul drop so many names in this verse? The Lord's name must never be used in vain. Did Paul swear Timothy to his duties as a minister? If he did not, then why was Paul using all those names? Did Paul make Timothy vow passively by this commandment? If not, then what burden was placed on Timothy by these words? Was Timothy bound by the vow, oath, swearing, and covenant written by Paul? What was this charge? It was a commandment, which laid on Timothy the duties he owed to God and the churches of Christ, and it was done before God, just like any oath or vow of the Old Testament (Eccl 5:1-7). Was it a suggestion, a recommendation, an option, or was it a commandment of future performance brought with the full authority and power of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels on Timothy? Which? Was he bound to keep it? On what basis? On the authority of the oath! This beautiful sentence is Paul swearing Timothy to his ministerial duties, and Paul did not violate Matthew 5:34-37 or James 5:12 at all, though he went far beyond bare words of duties and yes and no. He did not say, "Yes, I want you to avoid partiality." He did not say, "No, you cannot be partial."

3. What about I Timothy 6:13-16? It is the same thing! Paul swore Timothy to his sacred duties as a minister of Jesus Christ, and this was all in the New Testament, and it was in the glorious name of the Lord Jesus Christ and His office as Blessed and Only Potentate of the universe! Was this swearing? Indeed it was! It was Paul putting Timothy under oath to his office! Just like George W. Bush on January 20, 2001 and 2005! Read the beautiful words of this passage and grasp the importance of the office of bishop and the duty to obey the word of God. Paul swore Timothy to his duties in a glorious way! It was done to me, and I did it to another. It has been done in every ordination since the apostles. Did I sin by ordaining men via swearing him in the name of Jesus Christ to uphold the commandments of the New Testament? Do I have that authority from the apostle Paul? Yes, I do. And I did not come close to violating Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12, because those passages have absolutely nothing to do with true swearing, true oaths, true vows, and true covenants. Love those wonderful swearing words of I Timothy 6:13-16 and grasp why proper selection, ordination, and swearing are incredibly important for maintaining a legitimate ministry for New Testament churches.

4. Are there more of these New Testament examples of Paul charging ministers in the name of the Lord? Yes! Yes! Yes! And they are beautiful! How about this one? "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim 4:1-2).

5. These charges are oaths and the voice of swearing, just like in the Old Testament, when the priests or judges would put witnesses, new officers, or criminals under oath (Ex 22:10-11; Lev 5:1; I Kgs 8:31; 22:16; Pr 29:24). A charge in the name of the Lord is an oath (Num 5:18-22; I Kings 2:43). A charge is a command to do something. When it is done in the name of the Lord, it becomes swearing and an oath that obligates the hearer to the action. It was a command to swear in the name of God under the Old Testament, because it was an act of worship (Deut 6:13; 10:20). And all the saints of God used it (Josh 2:12; I Sam 20:17), before, during, and after the Law of Moses.

6. Jesus maintained absolute silence in his trial, so much so that Pilate marvelled; but when the high priest charged Him in the name of the living God to speak, He honored the oath and did so (Matt 26:63-64). Why did Jesus participate in evil, if anything more than "yes" and "no" was wrong? Why did He hear the voice of swearing and obey it? He had not answered anything before. Jesus was honoring the worship of God, which was to tell the truth when having been sworn to testify in the name of Jehovah. This is the same Jesus who spoke Matthew 5:34-37, but He participated in swearing and spoke under oath in Matthew 26:63. Should we understand His trial differently, or should we understand His rebuke of the Pharisees differently?

9. Did Paul charge saints? Yes! Yes! Yes! Paul charged the Thessalonian church in the name of the Lord to godly living and to make sure the whole church got to read his epistle (I Thess 4:1; 5:27). This is swearing; this is an oath; and they were bound as if under a vow to keep his commandment. It did not matter whether they agreed or not; Paul just used his ministerial authority from God and Christ to put them under the duties of these commandments before the Lord. Paul also swore the Thessalonians to withdraw from every disorderly brother (II Thess 3:6). He also swore them to work hard (II Thess 3:12). You have to read these verses to fully appreciate the wonderful authority and power in the gospel. Paul ordered the Corinthian church under an oath in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to exclude the fornicator (I Cor 5:3-5).

10. What did Paul mean by these words, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (I Cor 16:22)? Was it a suggestion to love the Lord Jesus Christ? A recommendation? His advice? Or was he cursing any miserable strange child in the church at Corinth that did not fully and practically love the Lord Jesus Christ? This is an oath. This is swearing. This is much more than the "yes" and "no" of Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12. Did Paul sin? Not at all! And he addressed the whole church of Corinth this way. Jesus and James would have sworn the same way! And Jesus will swear the same way when He curses the wicked in the great Day of Judgment! They would have cursed the same people, for such people are cursed (Matt 25:41; II Pet 2:14).

11. Did Paul authorize Timothy to charge (swear) saints to duties in the name of the Lord? Yes! Paul told Timothy to charge other ministers before the Lord as to their duties (II Tim 2:14). And this takes place every time a man is ordained properly, just like in the Old Testament. I have done this, and the oath is in writing. It was a very extensive oath, vow, and covenant, worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ and according to the direction of the apostle Paul; and it did not violate Matthew 5:34-37 or James 5:12 at all. Paul went further and told Timothy to charge the rich about their duties (I Tim 6:17-19). Though the name of Jesus Christ is not specifically mentioned, there is no gospel reason for Timothy to fear putting the rich in serious mind of their financial duties. Paul also charged Titus to bring to bear the gospel of Jesus Christ on the people of Crete with all authority (Titus 2:15). He could not even keep this commandment without swearing his hearers to obedience! Titus had no authority apart from that which had been delegated from the Lord Jesus Christ, which Titus was to bring to bear on them. How do we bring authority to bear on anyone? We swear them to obedience!

12. What about Galatians 1:8-9, where Paul cursed any preacher teaching a doctrine different than his. Was this more, less, or equal to what Elijah did to 42 children (II Kings 2:24)? How did the apostles or Paul cast out devils? By saying, "Yes, I want you to come out"? No, they commanded them to come out in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for they put the devils under an obligation from God to obey (Acts 16:18). Did God throw the devils out of men at the apostles' request, or did the devils actively obey the oath that the apostles laid on them? Think about it! There is glorious authority in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! And we are to appeal to that glorious name when we need to do so for an important matter in His kingdom. Thank you, blessed Lord Jesus!

13. When we receive new members, it is based on numerous questions posed to them by the pastor and a few to the congregation detailing our mutual duties. We all make promises of future performance before the Lord Jesus Christ, Who attends every assembly, and Who is the Head and Bishop of our church. While I may not have used the words swearing, oath, vow, or covenant, we make a vow when we receive members, because we promise to perform in the future toward one another in a certain way. And we did this before the Lord, in the name of the Lord, and it was sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If we say it was not a vow, then what was it? Was it just a promise? That is a vow, when done before the Lord. Was it less binding than a vow? If so, in what sense? If we say the promises were unnecessary, then what is church membership? Does not the New Testament demand that we treat church members a certain way? In order to teach the whole counsel of God and keep our church mindful of God's commandments, I make sure His commandments for church members are well understood and agreed to when membership begins for a new member.

14. The Roman Catholics have numerous vows and oaths that have no place in the church of God, for their vows are for things condemned by the Bible, such as the vow of celibacy, which is directly contrary to the commandment of God (I Tim 4:1-3). While she is the great whore church and mother of all harlot churches and abominations of the earth, this does not mean that every concept she uses is wrong in its right context. For example, they do write many words about their ungodly sacrament of baptism, but we know that baptism is our Lord's command when done according to Scripture. Their use of baptism does not impact on our use of baptism at all. The fact that Rome has ungodly vows does not really bear on the truthfulness of godly vows at all.

15. We follow the apostle Paul, as he followed Jesus Christ (I Cor 11:1-2). Remember our document, "Jesus or Paul," which dealt with a number of differences between the two, because Jesus had His ministry to the Jews, and Paul had his ministry to Gentiles. James, the Lord's brother, had his ministry to the Jews as well (Gal 2:9). He wrote to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, and anything he wrote must be filtered by the apostle Paul (Jas 1:1). For example, both Jesus and James taught anointing of the sick with oil (Mark 6:12-13; Jas 5:14-15). But Paul did not teach any such thing to Gentile churches, otherwise he could have saved Timothy and Trophimus a lot of misery (I Tim 5:23; II Tim 4:20). We do not follow either Jesus or James in using oil; we follow Paul and leave our sick under prayer for the mercy of God. James, the Lord's brother, used words about swearing almost identical to our Lord, because they were both dealing with the same error - foolish vows for any little thing by heaven, earth, head, altar, temple, gold, etc., etc. (Matt 26:16-22). Neither James nor Jesus dealt directly with godly vows; because their example and use was extensive in the Old Testament, there was no need. And Paul gave us numerous examples of appealing to God's name to confirm his actions, his words, his plans, his commandments, his charges, and so forth. Paul swore frequently, and he taught us how to do it. Jesus and James were dealing with a very different congregation and a very different heresy - the excessive abuse of swearing for anything and everything and making all sorts of distinctions between gold and the altar, heaven, earth, and so forth. Their words are useful to us in condemning modern swearing, commonly called cursing, which I have taught diligently from time to time in this church.

16. Jesus (Matt 5:34-37) and James (James 5:13) are contradicted again and again throughout the Bible and again and again throughout the New Testament and beyond. It is our duty to understand they were dealing with a specific abuse of the Jewish Pharisees. We must understand this when considering any statement in the Sermon on the Mount, and James was giving the same rebuke to the same people and error. No one should ever read Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 without reading Matthew 23:16-22 to see what error Jesus and James were opposing. Jesus was confirming the importance of swearing correctly (Lev 19:12); He was condemning the abuse of swearing by the Pharisees. This is comparing

Scripture with Scripture. This is rightly dividing the word of truth. This is honest use of the Bible, for almost anything can be proved from the Sermon on the Mount. For example, Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt 7:2). How far should we take that? Not far at all! Why? Context! For example, Jesus said, "Resist not evil," (Matt 5:39). How far should we take that? Can we discipline our children? Exclude sinners? Wage war? Shoot intruders at night? Sue extortioners in court? Call the police on thieves? Any words from the Sermon on the Mount (which James was repeating) must be analyzed, interpreted, and applied very carefully. For example, Jesus said not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing in giving alms (Matt 6:3). How far should we take that? The New Testament expected money gifts to be brought to the apostles' feet and public distribution made. Men's names, like Barnabas, were well known for having given large gifts to the church (Acts 4:34-37)! But Jesus was condemning the Pharisee excess of giving for public praise. Jesus did not have a thing to say about Barnabas or any other saint that gives in simplicity and honesty. We must make this division, or all sort of evil results. Can I call my dad, "Father," in light of Matthew 23:9? Why did Paul say he was the father of the Corinthians and of Timothy in two different senses? If we were strict about Bible words, we could not say anything at all beyond "yes" or "no" in order to keep Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12. We would have to be one-syllable people all the time.

17. Not everything is taught in the New Testament. Should we spank children? There is no command to do so in the New Testament. Our commands to do so, and how to do so, are found in the Old Testament - the book of Proverbs. All the New Testament says is to bring them up in the fear of the Lord and not to anger or discourage them (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). If we just use New Testament verses, we will pamper our children like the rest of the effeminate Christians in order to keep from making them angry or discouraged. Do you think my children were ever angered or discouraged by their father reproofing, rebuking, or beating them? You bet! On what basis did I spank them? The book of Proverbs! How did I keep the New Testament commandment? By balancing the beating with lots of love and mercy and kindness. We must reconcile the Bible. Verses out of context are a pretext. They are worse than worthless, because they are deceiving; and they were designed to be deceiving to any that do not want to study the whole Bible. The list of things we learn from the Old Testament is large. For example, since the New Testament is all for giving and lending, should we still consider suretiship a danger? Or should we throw caution to the wind and cosign for anyone? We must rightly divide the word of truth, and we understand that suretiship is just as dangerous today as ever.

18. What about giving? It is taught in general in the New Testament, but we refer to the Old Testament to learn about a tithe. The tithe is mentioned in Hebrews, but it is in a very different context. Melchisedec received tithes of Abraham, and Jacob promised a tithe for God's protection of him (Gen 28:20). The tithe existed before the Law of Moses. And the tithes in Israel were likely something in the neighborhood of 23 1/3%. A tithe is a minimum, for offerings are considered in addition to it (Mal 3:8). We cannot reject the Old Testament for its instruction on subjects that are only introduced in the New Testament. Of course, a child of God fully appreciative of grace will think larger than the Old Testament.

19. Think about baptism! I consider it one of the most solemn vows a person ever makes. They are swearing their allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and promising to live a holy life. What makes it swearing? I have to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, even in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Is it done before God? Yes! Do they have to speak? Yes! Do we typically call it a vow? No. But it is just as binding in any and every sense of the word as a vow, for it is a promise of future performance in the name and symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, most Baptists do not give baptism enough thought to even consider it very important. It is just getting wet as part of being a Baptist. But true baptism is justifying God (Luke 7:29)! It is incredibly sober and binding

on the person doing it. That is why I do not rush every child into the pool! Forget the word "vow"! Think about the concept of a vow - a promise to perform by appeal to God! Is baptism a vow in concept? Absolutely! Is ordination? Absolutely! Is marriage? Absolutely!

20. Why is baptism not called a vow? Because everything a child of God does under the New Testament should be done with the same solemnity as the binding power of a vow (Col 3:17). Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 have nothing to do with true vows at all. They were only spoken and written against the excess of the Pharisees. But swearing, oaths, vows, and covenants are worship, and we have the most glorious Person by which to swear, make oaths, vow, and form covenants, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

21. When a new church is formed, how is it done? Was it by a casual handshake and agreement? Or was it by a covenant involving signatures? Swearing was really the only way it could be done! We had a group of people promising to perform certain duties to the Lord and to one another. They either made this commitment in the name of the Lord, or they made it without the name of the Lord. If without, then it wasn't much of anything. If in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, then it was a covenant, oath, and vow. Did we sin? Did we violate Matthew 5:34-37 or James 5:12? No, not at all! Those passages are not even connected to proper swearing, any more than Matthew 5:39 is opposed to parents spanking children.

22. How is a pastor installed in a church? By a covenant! There is no other way to do it, even if you call it something else. At least we are honest and open about it. Did we make our mutual promises of future performance in our own names, or in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is obvious, and that is why we did it. How does a pastor become bishop over a church? The church agrees to their duties to the pastor, and the pastor agrees to his duties to the church. How are these commitments made? Without the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, or with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? If with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is a vow, an oath, and a covenant.

23. What about church covenants from time to time? A church may commit to seek the Lord more fully for a period of time in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have every liberty to do so as a church, for the church of God has done it under both testaments, without any help from the Law of Moses? Does such a church sin? Where is the error? Is it the content of the covenant? No. Is it using the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? No, for every word and deed should be done in His name (Col 3:17).

24. Nehemiah 13:25 describes Nehemiah very violently forcing the regathered Jews to swear against their ungodly marriages. But he was doing nothing more than Paul did to Timothy and the Thessalonians. Where did Nehemiah get this idea? From the Law of Moses? No. From much earlier than that! For charges in the name of the Lord have been part of worshipping God from the beginning. Swearing, oaths, vows, and covenants did not originate with Moses at all. His laws simply gave some few rules for swearing, oaths, and vows. Consider Abraham (Gen 24:1-4), Isaac (Gen 26:28-31), and Jacob (Gen 28:20-22; 31:43-55). Why did they swear? Because God swore to them, and they knew that swearing was an act of worship. And they did not get it from Moses. They got it from God, Who swears Himself both in blessing and judgment.

25. Asa made the whole nation swear to a covenant to seek the Lord (II Chron 15:12-15). Where did he get the idea? Did the Law of Moses command kings to bring about revival by forcing the nation to swear to a covenant? No! Asa did it because it was a matter of liberty and wise practice to bring the people to consider a maximum commitment to serve the Lord. God greatly blessed this oath! Jehoiada did the same (II Chron 23:16). Hezekiah did also (II Chron 29:10). Josiah did the same (II Chron 34:31-

32). These great kings did this as a matter of liberty and wise practice in bringing maximum pressure on people to follow the Lord. It simply makes good, godly sense!

26. Are there any verses to restrict a pastor from charging his hearers in the name of the Lord, when he wants to bring pressure to bear to keep God's commandments? None that I can find! Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 have nothing to do with proper swearing, oaths, vows, and covenants, which is why marriage covenants, ordinations, civil courts, the apostle Paul, Timothy, and others swore frequently and gloriously. It is why Paul charged Timothy and the churches in the name of the Lord, and it is why this authority was transferred to Timothy to charge other men and bring all authority to bear on their hearers.

27. Do you have the right as a father to use an oath in leading your family? Totally. I have sworn my children to truth and other actions at times. There is nothing restraining any father from doing so. Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 do not apply any more against this practice than a father should apply oil to his child with strep throat instead of getting an antibiotic. A good father who wants a great family may have occasions to swear his family to follow the Lord. What would be the very best thing a father could do with his last sentences before death? Express affection? Express regret? Or cause his family to swear to keep the way of the Lord? Glory! Look at the faith of Jacob on his deathbed. Both Jacob and Joseph charged their children to bury them in the land of promise. David on his deathbed charged Solomon to obey his father's God. But none of these things were taught in the Law of Moses, for they are part of the liberty of private worship of God, much like prayer.

28. The New Testament has the explanation of God swearing in wrath (Hebrews 3-4) and swearing in blessing (Hebrews 6). So far from swearing not having any role in the New Testament, it is a major part of the New Testament. Even God swears, and God's greatest apostle swore often.

29. What if a pastor said, "I charge you fathers in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to not let your children marry unbelievers"? What if he said, "Will every father who swears this day in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to not let his children marry unbelievers please stand"? What if he said, "Every man please stand, who will commit with me to not let our children marry unbelievers"? There is hardly a bit of difference among them. They all end up being equivalent to vows, because even without the name of Jesus Christ formally introduced into the sentence, the public worship of God in His assembly is in the presence of Jesus Christ. These are oaths. This is swearing. How in the world is it wrong? Paul did it to ministers and members, and he told Timothy to do it to ministers and members.

30. Singing in the New Testament is not melodically reading poetry for the sound of the words and the melody. We sing with the understanding, and we teach and admonish others with very sincere and solemn words. As I wrote before, everything we do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col 3:17). But it is manifestly evident when we sing his name and promise our commitment and conduct in a spiritual song. How is it not a vow? Does it not have the name of God? Look at the words of songs of commitment. Do they not have a commitment to action? Read the sentences.

31. Both Daniel and John saw swearing by angels (Dan 12:7; Rev 10:6), because it has been part of solemn worship of God from the beginning, which even the elect and holy angels do. It must be a holy practice, or God would have told them to limit themselves to "yes" and "no."

32. Consider divorce for an illustration. What would you tell a person that said there were no grounds for divorce by virtue of Mark 10:11 and Luke 16:18? Would you tell him that Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:1-9 must be included to learn that divorce for fornication is allowed? Would you then tell him about Paul adding desertion for the gospel's sake from I Corinthians 7:15? Would you then tell him that

the mercy and intent principles of Matthew 12:7 and Mark 2:27 would cover other extreme cases? This is holy reasoning in the word of God, which David understood well, and which we also want to learn. No matter how sincere a person might be, they would only end up in heresy by resting on Mark and Luke alone. And it is not much better for the man adding Matthew's passages, for the man will still be ignorant of divorce teaching in other places in the Bible.

33. Follow Paul, who showed us how to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus was not our minister, but Paul was (compare Romans 15:8 and 15:16). And James was simply following Jesus in addressing the twelve tribes of Israel. If we make the wrong turn on swearing, we must start using oil for sickness and picking up the rest of the things that Jesus taught that no longer apply i.e. submitting to the Pharisees (Matt 23:2).

34. Why did James command his readers to submit all future plans to God with the words, "If the Lord will"? What are these words? They sure are more than "yes" and "no." Does James contradict himself about swearing in his short book? No, not at all! Think further about these words. What are they? Are they just a nice sound? Are they just a nice public gesture of trust in God? Or are they swearing in the name of the Lord, by submitting all plans to Him and declaring dependence on His providence? We can never use the name of the Lord in vain. Why did James tell us to use His name in any plans or activities? Because we swear that we are not trusting in our own strength, which is boasting. Read James 4:13-15 and think about these words beyond "yes" and "no."

35. We cannot forget or neglect those rules of Bible study that warn us to identify statements with relative or absolute force. For example, does Matthew 6:34 mean we can never think about tomorrow, next week, or next month? Of course not! We must place obvious limitations on universal or general statements. For example, did Caesar Augustus tax all the world (Luke 2:1)? Of course not! If these two rules were remembered, we would not get into as much trouble in sections like the Sermon on the Mount, which is filled with very short condemnations of specific errors that are not readily apparent.

## **Answers to four questions**

1. Is there not a risk of pulling things into the New Testament that should stay in the Old? As you can see above, the apostle Paul indicates what we are to bring forward into the New Testament. Swearing was not an invention of the Law of Moses, like the Passover and leprosy laws, which went away with the coming of Christ. Swearing was an act of worship, much like prayer, which was practiced long before the Law of Moses. Paul swore in every sense of the word, regarding himself and regarding others; and he did it frequently. He told Timothy and Titus to do it as well, which is pretty obvious by the nature of their office. Swearing was and is a basic part of life. Some Old Testament things must be brought forward, because the details are often left in the Old Testament, as with child discipline, suretyship, marriage covenants, and so forth.

2. Do two verses condemning vows weigh more than none commending them? In the first place, Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 do not condemn vows. They do not even mention vows. In the second place, they do not condemn swearing and oaths; they only condemn the Pharisee abuses of God's rules for swearing and oaths. In the third place, the epistles of Paul, both general and pastoral, include many illustrations and uses and instructions of swearing and oaths. Therefore, proper swearing and oaths are as legitimate under the New Testament as they have ever been, either before the Law of Moses or under the Law of Moses. Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 condemn swearing without the right religion, without the right object, without the right occasion, and without the right action. These two passages are

rightly defined and understood by the example Jesus Christ gave of how the Jews had ridiculous rules about swearing (Matt 23:16-22). Matthew 5:34-37 and James 5:12 have no more against righteous swearing than Matthew 5:39 has against righteous retaliation, Matthew 6:3 has against bringing your gift publicly for distribution with your name being mentioned, Matthew 6:19 has against a savings account, Matthew 6:24 has against working two jobs, Matthew 6:34 has against daytimers, Matthew 7:1 has against righteous judgment, and Matthew 23:9 has against calling a dad, "Father."

3. Is there authority from God's word for a pastor to lead a church into making vows to God? Yes. The pattern for all New Testament ministers, our beloved brother Paul, used swearing and oaths often. He taught Timothy to use them. He told Titus to use them. The verses are given in the above paragraphs. How does a marriage occur? Should a pastor lead two people seeking marriage to make a covenant? Should the covenant be in the name of the State of South Carolina, the father's name, the pastor's name, or the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? If in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, then marriage vows are a very Scriptural thing, and a pastor has a duty to lead believers to make such vows to obey the Bible (Job 31:1; Pr 2:17; Mal 2:14). Everything a pastor does is by the authority, the office, and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it is baptism or telling the rich to be ready to give their money away or ordaining another man or excluding an offender. In any or all of these cases, which are examples from the New Testament, swearing and oaths are implied, very appropriate, or very glorious.

4. Should the Catholics' love of vows be a fearful warning for us? This argument carries no weight, for Catholics love baptism as well. They just know nothing of Bible baptism. They love swearing and vows, because they put the vows of celibacy and poverty on all their ministers, male and female, which are doctrines of devils. They know nothing of godly swearing. What we should fear is that only the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mennonites believe that all swearing and oaths are wrong in the New Testament. They are consistent in that they will not take an oath, even in court.

## Summary

Covenants, oaths, swearing, and vows are important acts of worshipping the Lord God and His Son Jesus Christ. They were used by godly men before the Law of Moses, under the Law of Moses, and after the Law of Moses. The apostle Paul used them often, and he is the pattern for Gentile believers and ministers. While oaths and vows should be used very soberly and reverently, there is no reason to fear them in such a way as to take Matthew 5:33-37 and James 5:12 and construct a new doctrine that forbids them altogether. This is a ridiculous extreme, which overlooks the rest of the testimony of Scripture.