

LET YOUR COMMUNICATION BE YEA OR NAY MATTHEW 5:33-37

Text: Matthew 5:37

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³⁷ But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Introduction:

Again we see how this part of this sermon builds upon itself.

Remember what the Lord said:

Matthew 5:20

²⁰ For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

He is addressing the subject of righteousness.

The Lord then speaks about anger, unforgiveness, lust and divorce.

He now begins to speak of keeping our word or vow that we make.

Growing up years ago children, in an effort to convince their friends that they were really serious about a matter, used to make an oath of sorts.

The oath was something similar to this, "Cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye."

When that "cross my heart" vow was taken, the only legal way to break it without any repercussions was to have had your fingers crossed at the time the commitment was made.

While all the oath taking and finger crossing seemed to be quite innocent back then as kids, that same mentality seems to have followed many into their adult years.

Many in our society have kept right on using that finger-crossing technique in order to find ways to justify breaking almost any commitment, especially when keeping the commitment becomes too difficult, costly, or even just inconvenient.

As a society we are reaping the consequences of generations of finger-crossing. Each year we spend billions of dollars to cover the cost of broken commitments in businesses, in marriages, and in many other facets of life.

The cost of broken commitments goes beyond the financial realm. There are also personal, emotional, and spiritual costs that need to be considered as well.

Nearly all of us, at one time or the other, have experienced the pain of discovering that someone we trusted, a parent, a spouse, a child, a friend, an employer or a co- worker, apparently had their fingers crossed when they made a "cross my heart" promise.

It's because of this that these words of the Lord are so relevant to us today. In these verses, the Lord is calling His followers to a new and different way of thinking and living.

1. THE CLARIFICATION

A. An Oath Defined

The entire concept of oath-taking originated in the Old Testament, but before considering its origin we would do well to understand what an oath is by definition.

An oath is calling upon God to be witness, judge, and revenger if they are not speaking truthfully.

Deuteronomy 6:13

¹³Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

The reason behind the commandment with regard to oath-taking was first and foremost to restrain man's inclination towards lying.

The taking of an oath in the name of the Lord was meant to bring to the minds of the people the seriousness of lying to their fellow man.

2. THE CORRUPTION

As was the case with killing, adultery, and divorce, the religious leaders of the Lord's day had corrupted the matter of oath-taking.

The Pharisees had developed a teaching that made a distinction between what they referred to as binding and non-binding oaths.

A. Non-Binding Oaths

Non-binding oaths were oaths that were taken by the temple or the altar. Other oaths considered to be non-binding were oaths taken by heaven, the earth, Jerusalem, and even one's own head.

B. Binding Oaths

The only oaths considered binding by the Pharisees were those taken in the name of the Lord. As long as

they did not invoke the name of God, they were free to renege, so they thought.

In His sermon, Jesus refutes the false teaching of the Pharisees by proclaiming that all oaths are binding, even though they may not mention the name of God.

- The Lord reminded the Pharisees that to swear by "heaven" was in effect to swear by God because heaven is where God's throne is.
- To swear by the "earth" would be to swear by the place that is considered to be God's footstool and to do so would be to swear by the One whose footstool it is.
- To swear by "Jerusalem" would be to swear by "the city of the great King" and consequently to swear by the King Himself.
- Swearing by one's head or by one's life as it meant, was also to swear by God because He is the author of life and is in control of life even down to the color of one's hair

3. THE CONCLUSION

Matthew 5:37

³⁷ But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

In this verse Jesus does two things:

A. The Lord Calls for Communication that is
Honest

As followers of Christ, the only oath and guarantee that any man should ever need from us is our word. We ought to be men and women of character, men and women whose word can be trusted.

Our lives ought to be so that there would be no need for anyone to question our character.

Our word should be our bond. Our "yes" ought to be absolutely "yes" and our "no" ought to be absolutely "no."

B. The Lord Condemns Conduct that is Horrible

The need for anything other than a simple "yes" or "no" rises from the depravity of man.

Since the fall of Adam, lying has been a natural part of man's life.

Close:

May the words of our Lord remind us that even our speech reflects either honor or dishonor upon the God we serve!