



Speaking Capital "T" Truth

Vince Cardarelle

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³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made." ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply "Yes" or "No"; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

Matthew 5:33-37



All right, good morning everybody. So last week as we continued through the *Sermon on the Mount series*. Pastor Dan led us through a pretty challenging and difficult message on lust and divorce. And next week as we look ahead we're going to be talking about retaliation, another difficult message. **But** between both of these challenging texts, we have what appears to be four verses on this stance against making an oath, at least that's what so many people conclude.

There are many Christian denominations that simply read this text and say we're not allowed to make an oath anymore. So, when they're in the court of law they'll never swear to anything, they'll only affirm to it. So, it's legally binding but it's not religious.

This is not what Jesus was trying to get at in this text. In fact, Jesus knew that God Himself made an oath with Abraham in *Genesis 22:16*. It says, "*By myself I have sworn*" declares the Lord, "*because you have done this and you have not withheld your son, your only son. I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, as the sand on the seashore.*"

In fact, later in the Old Testament, in *Deuteronomy 10:20*. It says, "*Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to Him and take your oaths in His name*". The Israelites were encouraged to take oaths, because oaths were going to help set the Israelites apart from the rest of the world. And they were going to be set apart from the rest of the world by speaking truthfully, whereas the rest of the world was going to be living and speaking lies.

So oaths we're going to help encourage truthful speaking and holding true to the statements and promises that they made, because if they broke this oath that they swore to God, they knew that they'd be paying the consequences from God Himself. We cannot read this text and simply conclude that this is not about

making an oath, that's such a shallow and legalistic approach to this text. It's all about truthfulness.

We also have to remember that this text is not about speaking truthfully in order to earn our salvation. Remember, Jesus is talking to His followers, His disciples. This whole sermon in fact, is about how to live and act once we are saved. If we are saved, the truth lives within us. And if the truth lives within us and the truth is on our heart, our words are going to demonstrate that, because our words demonstrate what's on our heart. But if we read this text legalistically, then we're bound to create loopholes around this command. And this is what the Pharisees did.

The Pharisees, they created two types of oaths in order to get around this command.

The first oath was called the *binding oath*. This oath would call on God as the witness to the statement that was being made.

That's exactly what an oath is. It's an appeal to God to witness to the truth of a statement, or the binding character of a promise. We might say something like this: *this is what happened, I swear to God, or I'll be home by nine o'clock, I swear to God*. We're calling...we're bringing credibility to what we're saying by calling God as the witness. And we see this in Galatians 2 with Paul. He says, “*And what I am writing to you before God, I do not lie*”. Paul is bringing credibility to the truthfulness of what He was writing to the Galatians, by calling on God as the witness. So this is the first oath. It's a binding oath—calling on God.

The second oath—and this is where the loophole lies—the second oath was called the *non-binding oath*. And so they would not call on God as the witness to what they were saying. They would call on something lesser than God.

Basically, they were making this rule, where you could break an oath as long as you follow the right oath breaking process. In other words, you can lie if you lie in the right way. Somebody might say something like, you know, *I swear to heaven, or I swear to Jerusalem, or I swear to earth, that I will do this*. If somebody comes up to you and says, “*Hey man, you said you swore to heaven that you were going to do this for me*”, I could simply respond with “*Yeah, I swore to heaven, but I didn't swear to the Lord of heaven, so I'm not going to do that*”. Then they would go and run for office or do whatever it is liars did back then. [laughter] It's a joke. [more laughter]

But they would use oaths to try to deceive people. And this is what Jesus addresses in verses 34-36. He says, “*Do not swear an oath at all; either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King*.” His point is that God is everywhere, and he's present in every oath that we make. So we cannot keep God out of any claim or truth statement that we make.

In fact Jesus goes on to take it one step further. He says, “*And do not swear by your own head, for you cannot even make one hair white or black*.” Jesus is saying that you can't even swear on your own life. I know some of you are thinking, *Jesus you're being a little too restrictive here. It is my own life to swear on. I should be able to swear on that*.

But, we got to remember that Jesus is talking to His followers, His disciples, people that have presumably been saved. And so, if we've been saved, our debt has been paid by Christ on the cross, and we no longer belong to this world and we no longer belong to ourselves. In fact, in *Isaiah 43:1*—it's my favorite verse by the way—God is talking to the Israelites, His people. He says, “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine*.” God is present in every oath that we make, and every statement that we make. So we can't just include God into our lives on Sunday, and then neglect Him on Monday through Saturday. That's what this whole passage is about.

All this talk about truthfulness, but what is truth? Truth is the revelation of God, because God brings truth into this reality.

Now there are many people that say, *objective truth doesn't exist and everything is subjective*. That's going to be a popular argument. But just the statement that objective truth does not exist is an objective truth claim in itself, so it's a self-defeating argument.

Objective truth has to exist, and it has to exist from outside of the world that we live in, because if we make these claims within the world that we live, it's nothing but an opinion and a skewed belief on reality. So objective truth has to come from outside of the world we live in. And this is addressed in *John 8:31*. It says...it tells us that if we abide in Christ's Word, then we will know the truth. In other words, Jesus is the embodiment of the concept of truth. He is the one outside of this world, that came into this world to reveal Himself—the truth—to us.

How do we know what is true and what isn't true? Well Jesus, He sends us a helper—that is, the Holy Spirit, also called the Spirit of Truth. In *John 16:13* Jesus is speaking about the Holy Spirit. He says, that He—the Spirit of truth—“*will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own. He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is to come. He will glorify me because it is from me, that He will receive what He will make known to you*”. It is the Spirit that opens our eyes to the truth that is Christ, and Christ who reveals the Father. It's through listening to the Holy Spirit that we will know truth.

Now this is a whole separate sermon here, but I think it needs to be brought up. We actually need to listen to the Holy Spirit. So many times when we pray, it's a one-way conversation where we're talking at God. We tell them our concerns, our desires, our praises, but we never take time to listen to Him speak to us. If we never take time to listen to Him we're never going to be able to recognize His voice.

I'll give you a practical example. We have a three-year-old son Isaiah; many of you have met him. When he was, let's say four months...and younger, we'd be in the back of a church talking in the lobby area. There were other babies in there. I'd be talking to somebody, and my wife and Isaiah would be elsewhere, talking to somebody else. All of a sudden I would hear a baby cry, and I would be like, *that might be my kid*. I don't know. I couldn't really recognize his voice at that time, but now three years later, I've heard Him talk I've heard him scream, I've heard him cry and everything else, and I could recognize his voice distinctly. I know that that is his voice. That is my boy.

And this is the same with the Holy Spirit—we have to be able to close our doors, go in our room, listen quietly to the Spirit speak to us, so when we go into the world and it's loud, distracting, and chaotic, we will be able to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit as He guides us in truth. And as we listen to the Holy Spirit speak to us, it's also important to note that there are other spirits that try to speak to us, that try to distort the truth.

These are evil spirits, and we need to test these spirits as in *1st John 4*. It says “*Beloved, do not believe every Spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God.*” This is how we're going to know the difference between the evil spirits, and the Holy Spirit. It says, “*Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-Christ which you heard was coming and now is in the world already*”.

When we listen to the spirit talk, we have to test that spirit with the objective truth of God that He gives us in the scripture, and that's how we are going to test the Spirit and ensure that we are following the truth of the Holy Spirit.

A lot of churches that talk about...they have catchy slogans like, *don't put God in a box*, or *don't narrow God down to a book*. But as soon as you start looking outside of the book, to be led by the Spirit and to test the Spirit, you're no doubt going to be led astray by a an evil spirit, because we we're no longer looking at that objective truth that God has given us.

Now speaking truth is just as important as being able to hear the truth, and that's because speaking truth shows that our words have power. Our words, if used incorrectly and falsely, can lead somebody straight to the depths of hell. If used truthfully and gracefully on the other hand, our words can reveal the truth, who can then lead one to salvation.

Proverbs 12:18, it says, “*the words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*” Our words have power.

In the book of Corinthians, Paul writes to the believers. He says, “*Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*” It says *our labor is not in vain*. That means our labor, our words as Christians, have eternal consequences. Now this makes we want to be a bit more careful with the words that we speak, because sometimes we have no idea how much our words can hurt somebody, and their potential walk with Christ.

Barna Research, they did a study. They found that one-fifth of all people who have left the church, has had a painful encounter with the church, or with a Christian that gave them a negative image of Christ. Because that's nearly 50 million adult residents in this country, along with 9 million younger residents in this country, that have left the church because of the words of a so-called Christ follower, and potentially the Kingdom of God as well. So it's important to speak truth, but it's also important to speak truth in a loving manner.

I'm guilty of this too, but over the past year it's been sickening watching how people talk. They might disagree on politics, they might disagree politically, or covid...ly [laughter], or insert any other hot topic issue, right? And they're arguing to win the argument. They're arguing to be right, but they're not arguing to find truth. And this only leads to explosive arguments, and ad hominem attacks. You see, we can speak things that are true, but we can totally miss the mark on presenting the capital T truth, that is Christ.

What does this mean? It means that we can present religion, but we can totally miss on presenting the gospel of Christ. And when we are speaking in this religious context, we condemn and we judge.

For example, let's insert this into a biblical story. If Jesus just spoke through the means of religion, when He found the woman who was caught in adultery, He would have walked up and said “you're an adulteress. You deserve an eternity in hell, and wrath, and punishment”. And everything He said would have been completely true. He would have sounded exactly like the Pharisees, but it all would have been true. But once the Pharisees left, after of course they realized their own sin, Jesus continued on in *John 8:10*, “*And He said, ‘woman where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one Lord’. And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.’*”

See, Jesus ensured that He went on to reveal Himself the capital T Truth—that is Christ—when He pursued love, and forgiveness, and reconciliation. So we can't use and abuse truth to push our religion, otherwise we will sound no different, be no different than the Pharisees who are ready to stone that adulteress woman. We need to reveal Christ, the truth, both His reality and His character in the words that we speak.

And God, He even equips us with the ability to reveal the character of God. *Galatians 5* tells us that we are filled with the Fruits of the Spirit, which are *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*. These characteristics are not only meant to describe our works, but also our words, especially when it comes to speaking patiently, kindly, gently, and controlled.

Now if we are spreading lies intentionally, or we're speaking truth in a malicious way, we need to seriously consider who we are following. Are we following the One who we call the Truth, Christ? Or are we following the father of lies, that is the devil? In *Hebrews 16*, it says that God does not lie; in fact it is impossible for Him to lie. So God then calls His church to this higher standard of speaking truthfully, not partial truth, but full truths, so we are separated from the rest of the world in order to glorify Him and to

reveal His character to all those that are lost.

When we speak truth in any given situation, we will be the people group—the church—that no longer needs oaths anymore, because we will be known to speak truth. Whereas the rest of the world, they lie and try to deceive people. They will continue to need oaths to try to bring credibility to their statements.

Why is it important to speak truthfully? Why is it important to follow this command? Well because truth strengthens relationships, and lies they destroy relationships. If your relationship is built on truth, the foundation is sturdy, and it's solid. But if it's built on lies, it's fragile and it's likely to fall apart.

This is exactly what Satan tried to do in the garden with Eve, right? Eve told Him *no I can't eat that fruit or surely I will die*. In fact, she even said *I can't even touch that fruit*. She's building a buffer for herself. But Satan came and said, *surely you will not die*. You see, he introduced a lie into her relationship with God in order to try to break and tear down that relationship. And he still uses the same method today, and that's why it's so important that we give our ear to the Holy Spirit, that we're able to recognize His voice speaking to us; so that we can be led in the truth; so our relationship with God can flourish and so our relationship with each other can flourish as well.

Of course, as we strive to become more like Christ, we realize that reaching that standard of speaking in a perfect manner to glorify God is absolutely impossible. James says *“No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.”* So no human being can tame the tongue. And just for that in itself we are all guilty, and we deserve an eternity of wrath and punishment. In *Revelation 22* it even says, people who practice falsehood they will be outside of God's holy city. They will be outside of the gates of heaven. And that's the lowercase t truth.

But we also have the capital t truth. Christ came as the fulfillment of this law. Because we cannot tame the tongue, Christ came. He did this for us. He achieved the law. And now we are no longer dead in that sin. We are made alive in Christ, who is the way the truth and the life. It's now our opportunities. We reflect on the punishment, on the wrath that Jesus took for us, to glorify Him by speaking truth—letting our “yes” mean “yes” and our “no” mean “no”. And this is how we'll bring glory, and honor, and praise to Jesus, who has been dimmed by this world, it seems. The world is trying to reject Him, but we can bring light to the world by speaking truthfully.

So I want to leave you with two questions today. *Are there any lies that you're living in right now? Are there any lies that you need to confess, you need to repent of?* I want to encourage you guys this week, to go home, close the door, and pray to God. Ask Him to reveal those lies in your life. And then ask for strength to go confront those lies and go address those wrongs.

Second question—*are you glorifying God through the words that you speak? When you disagree with somebody, you're confronting somebody, are you presenting religion, where you pursue division, and criticism, and hate? Or are you presenting Christ, when you pursue forgiveness, reconciliation, and love?*

This our purpose church, to speak truthfully and lovingly, in order to stand out from the rest of creation, so that we can reveal the character of God to this lost and this broken world.

Let us pray.

Jesus, you command us to speak truthfully, and to speak lovingly. And Lord, we just...we acknowledge that we continue to fall short every single day; each and every single one of us. Lord, we deserve the wrath and the punishment. But you Jesus, you came and you took that sin. You died for us, and you rose from the dead, ensuring that the sacrifice was efficient Lord. And we are now made alive in you.

Please continue to sanctify us Lord. Help us to speak in that loving and truthful manner, so that we can bring glory, and honor, and praise to you in every conversation that we have. We just pray this over your

Church Lord. Please continue to be with us. Fill us with your presence. We love you. In Jesus Holy name, amen.



TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

**Are there any lies that you're living in right now?
Are there any lies that you need to confess and need to repent of?**

Go home, close the door, and pray to God. Ask Him to reveal those lies in your life.
And then ask for strength to go confront those lies and go address those wrongs.



Are you glorifying God through the words that you speak?

When you disagree with somebody or confront somebody, are you presenting religion, where you pursue division, and criticism, and hate? Or are you presenting Christ, when you pursue forgiveness, reconciliation, and love?



WORSHIP SONGS:

Another in the Fire | Canten Al Rey | Yes I Will | We Believe