

The purpose of this publication is to spread the truth, to sow God's good seed, the Word of God, and to confront religious error for the good of men's souls. Editor: Allen Dvorak

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that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred?²⁰ So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it.²¹ And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it.²² And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

-- **Matthew 23:16-22; ESV**

Although Jesus' statement about making oaths (Matthew 5:34) appears to be an absolute prohibition of any oath, it seems that His statement on this subject was similar to other statements that also appear to be absolutes. For instance, Jesus said, "Do not resist the one who is evil" (Matthew 5:39). Are disciples forbidden to resist evil under any circumstances? How then are we to understand the commands of James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9?

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

-- **James 4:7; ESV**

⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

-- **1 Peter 5:9; ESV**

Jesus also said, "And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9). Should we understand this prohibition as absolute, thus prohibiting a person from addressing his male parent as "father"...or should we understand the prohibition in light of the greater context of the passage?

Jesus seems clearly to have taught that a Christian's word shouldn't need an oath for the confirmation of its veracity (James' point as well). There is a sense in which even swearing by the name of the Lord doesn't confirm truthfulness, unless the Lord immediately punishes the one who swears falsely by His name! One writer perceptively noted that Jesus "knew that oaths were of no use – a good man would not need one, and a bad man would not heed one."³

The facts that Paul used oaths to confirm his word and Jesus answered under oath deny the affirmation that all oaths are forbidden. However, we shouldn't miss the point of both Jesus and James about the need for Christians to speak truthfully so that oaths are not typically needed.

³ Cited by Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 106.

Bible Challenge Question - Answer

Abijah, son of Jeroboam, was spared the ignominious end of the rest of Jeroboam's house because the Lord found something pleasing in him. Sent to the house of the prophet Ahijah at Shiloh to inquire about her sick child, Jeroboam's wife was told by the prophet, "Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat, for the Lord has spoken it" (1 Kings 14:11). As soon as his mother returned and crossed the threshold of the palace at Tirzah, Abijah died, but Israel buried him and mourned him.



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Taking Oaths (Part 2)

By Allen Dvorak

[This article is a continuation of the article begun in last week's bulletin. To provide continuity, the following review repeats some information found in the previous article:

Can a Christian take an oath? Can a Christian testify in court under oath to tell the truth? That's a troubling question for some disciples, especially in light of comments made by both Jesus (Matthew 5:33-37; 23:16-18) and James (5:12). In the Sermon on the Mount and in the epistle of James, it sounds as though disciples are forbidden to take an oath under any circumstances.

³³ "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.'³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.
-- **Matthew 5:33-37; ESV**

¹² But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

-- **James 5:12; ESV**

The Law of Moses permitted the taking of oaths (Leviticus 19:12; Deuteronomy 6:13). Jesus answered the high priest under oath (Matthew 26:63) and Paul used oaths on several occasions to confirm the veracity of his words (Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Philippians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:5).

But what about Jesus' teaching? Either Jesus wasn't forbidding all oaths or Paul violated the Lord's teaching. Assuming that Paul didn't violate the Lord's teaching by calling God as witness to his truthfulness, how are we to understand Jesus' comments?]

Spence-Jones, in the *Pulpit Commentary*, commented on 2 Corinthians 1:23 as follows:

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So You're Just A Kid...

By Allen Dvorak



Text: _____

Outstanding young people in the Bible:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Responsibility of young people:

1. _____ (Eph. _____)
2. _____ (Eph. _____)

Other passages:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

**Even a child makes himself known
by his _____, by whether his
conduct is _____ and _____.**
-- Proverbs 20:____; ESV

Young people need to be _____ of one another.

1. Practice _____ (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12)
2. Be careful _____
3. Put away _____
(Galatians 5:19-21)
4. _____

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

-- Nelson Mandela

“By the use of such ‘oaths for confirmation,’ St. Paul, no less than other apostles, shows that he understood our Lord’s rule, ‘Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay,’ as applying to the principle of simple and unvarnished truthfulness of intercourse, which requires no further confirmation; but not as a rigid exclusion of the right to appeal to God in solemn cases and for good reasons.”¹

For instance, an oath sworn by the Lord had to be kept; one sworn by heaven, the earth or the holy city could be broken.² Jesus observed that heaven, earth and Jerusalem are all connected to the Lord, exposing the illogical (and hypocritical) nature of their thinking.

Jesus made reference to Leviticus 19:12 in Matthew 5:33.

In any discussion of the Sermon on the Mount, it is important to understand that the Jewish rabbis had developed many different ways of “getting around” the obligations/restrictions of the Law of Moses. Jesus addressed some of these “loopholes” in the mountain sermon.

¹² You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.

-- Leviticus 19:12; ESV

With reference to oaths, the Pharisees had devised loopholes through which they could “swear” but would not have to keep their oath.

The original point in Leviticus was not to swear falsely, but the Pharisees had twisted the Scripture so that the point of emphasis was that one should not swear falsely *when swearing by the name of the Lord!* Jesus’ comments to the scribes and Pharisees on a later occasion illustrates the spurious nature of their distinctions even better:

¹ Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *2 Corinthians* (p. 7). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ ¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift

Bible Challenge Question

Who was the only son of king Jeroboam to receive a decent burial?

The answer to this question is on the back page.

² An entire tractate in the Mishnah was devoted to the making of oaths.