

Vows

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to talk about vows, not vowels, which are a, e, i, o, and u, and sometimes y, but oaths.
2. I want to do this because vows, or oaths, though rarely called that today except when one gets married or testifies “under oath” in court, are a big part of our lives.
3. Our vows are a very serious matter to God and must be, therefore, a serious matter to God’s people.
4. With that said I want to look at what the Bible says about vows/oaths and its application to life.

BODY:

I. What is a vow, or oath?

- A. In O.T. a vow/oath was an assurance made before God that one’s words were true, which often included a *curse*, or penalty, for failing to fulfill the vow.
- B. These vows, which sometimes include cursings, are found in various forms in the O.T.
 1. Vows to **obey God’s commands** coupled with a curse (Neh. 10:29 – “these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a **curse** and an **oath** to walk in God’s Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes.”).
 2. The **Nazarite** vow of purity (Num. 6:1ff.).
 3. Thankful **worship/sacrifice** owed to God is described as *paying one’s vows* (Psa. 116:17-18 – “I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. ¹⁸ I will **pay my vows** to the Lord now in the presence of all His people”; also Psa. 22:25).
 4. There were legal vows of truthfulness or faithfulness to an agreement, made between two parties (Ex. 22:10-11 – concerned settling property disputes).
 5. There were everyday life vows/oaths, such as that of the servant of Abraham (Gen. 24:37 – “Now my master **made me swear**, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell.’”).
 6. No matter what the form of the vow/oath, God held one to keeping it.
 - a. Num. 30:2 – “If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”
 - b. Deut. 23:21 – “When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.”
- C. In the N.T. we also find *oaths/vows* with curses at times connected to them.
 1. There are bad oaths and good ones.
 - a. Bad (Acts 23:14 – “They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, “We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul.”).
 - b. Good (Heb. 6:13-14 – “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you...¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath”).
 2. We see the gamut of vows/oaths expressed when Peter was accused of being Jesus’ disciple (Matt. 26:70-74 – “But he **denied it** before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are saying.” ⁷¹ And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷² But again he **denied with an oath**, “I do not know the Man!” ⁷³ And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.” ⁷⁴ Then he began to **curse and swear**, saying, “I do not know the Man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.”).
- D. Jesus’ law restricts oath-taking in our daily conversation (Matt. 5:33-37 – “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall

you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. – NASB).

1. After mentioning the O.T. law on oaths, Jesus then forbade making oaths/vows in one’s conversation, specifically addressing those made in connection objects or places (5:33-36).
 - a. The only vows authorized in the OT were those in God’s name (Deut. 6:13 – “You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and **shall take oaths in His name.**”).
 - b. Making an oath by anything but God *lessened the reality that God acts as a witness to every word we say* (Matt. 23:16-17, 21-22 – “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’ ¹⁷ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?...²¹ He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by **Him who dwells in it.** ²² And he who swears by heaven, swears by the **throne of God and by Him who sits on it.**”)! God’s witness trumps all others!
2. Vows are unnecessary because a disciple of Christ must always be truthful *or face God’s judgment* (5:37; Jas. 5:12 – “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” **lest you fall into judgment.**”). *God holds us to telling the truth!*

II. Application: God holds us to our vows!

- A. Whether we realize it or not, we make vows all the time and God will hold us to them, seeing to not do as one says is to lie (Rev. 21:8 – “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, **and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone**, which is the second death.”).
- B. We must keep our marriage vows.
 1. Whether stated or not, vows are made before God to follow His rules of marriage.
 - a. One vows to fulfill one’s role and responsibilities (Eph. 5:22-25 – “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her”).
 - b. One vows to remain married, with only fornication being the one reason to sever this bond (Mt. 19:5-6, 9 – “...For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? ⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate... ⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”).
 - c. One vows faithfulness with his/her heart and eyes, which requires avoiding pornography (Matt. 5:28 – “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”).
 2. God is a witness to these vows and will hold you to them.
 - a. So, God as a witness hates when these vows are violated (Mal. 2:14, 16 – “...Because the Lord has been **witness between you and the wife of your youth**, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your **wife by covenant**...¹⁶ “For the Lord God of Israel says that **He hates divorce**, for it covers one’s garment with violence,” says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”).
 - b. He will not treat violators as blameless (Heb. 13:4 – “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”).
- C. We must keep our financial vows.
 1. Loans, credit cards, IOU’s, etc., are commitments, or vows, that we make to financial institutions and others to pay back what we have borrowed.
 2. God expects His people to pay their financial vows.

- a. The wicked refuse to pay what is owed (Psa. 37:21 – “The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives.”).
 - b. We must pay what is our duty to pay (Rom. 13:6-7 – “For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”).
 - c. Although our society treats such matters as nothing, with continual offers to eliminate credit card debt, or reduce taxes owed, God wants us to pay what we owe.
 - i. I know problems can arise that put even the responsible in financial straits.
 - ii. We need to avoid overspending, over-committing, lack of planning, and refusing to pay what we owe! (Eccl. 5:4-6 – “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—⁵ Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.”).
- D. We must keep our vows to Christ as His disciples.
1. When becoming Christ’s disciple, we vow to be like Christ (Matt. 10:24-25 – “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for a **disciple that he be like his teacher**, and a servant **like his master**...”).
 2. One vows to obey Christ’s will (1 John 2:3-4 – “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”).
 3. To love as Christ loves (1 John 3:16 – “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”).
 4. To be holy as is God (1 Pet. 1:15-16 – “but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”).
 5. Those who do not keep these vows face God’s cursing, seeing that Jesus is coming “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8).
- E. When becoming a member of the local church we vow to be faithful to that work.
1. We vow to submit to their elders and brethren (1 Peter 5:5 – “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”).
 2. We vow to attend the assemblies under penalty from God (Heb. 10:24-27 – “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”).
 3. We vow to do our part in building up the body (Eph. 4:14-16 – “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”).
 4. We vow to help our brethren remain faithful and saved (Gal. 6:1-2 – “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”)
 5. God will hold us to those vows (Heb. 10:28-29 – “Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God

underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”).

CONCLUSION:

1. There are many things in life that you do not have to commit to, and many more you shouldn't. But, there are many that you must commit to, and these begin with vowing to serve Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, which begin with F-R-C-B that you might be raised to life and hope of eternal life in Christ.
2. Will you vow to serve Christ in your life today?