

16. The Man of Word

In old saying, "To man, his word is his bond." It was true. That is why they shook hands after they came to their business deal. It means that they will honor what they talked about in the meeting. It was good enough for both sides to honor and expect the other party to come through. And it used to be the case. But now when we want to make a deal with someone, we have to sign 20 different papers and show that we have enough assets to cover in case we choose to not to pay. Because more and more people don't take their own word seriously.

But we see the different things in God's way. When God says something, He means it and we can believe His Word that He will carry out what He says.

Psalms 138:2 I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

A. TO TELL THE TRUTH

James 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.

Here in this verse, James is talking closely with what the Lord Jesus talked about oath in Matthew 5:33 -37.

Matthew 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.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

B. WHAT ABOUT...

James was not condemning the taking of solemn oaths in court, such as God's oath before Abraham:

Hebrews 6:13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

or Jesus before Caiaphas:

Matthew 26:63-64 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

or Paul:

Romans 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, Romans 9:1 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

or a man before the Lord:

Exodus 22:11 then an oath of the Lord shall be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept that, and he shall not make it good.

But rather, James is condemning the flippant use of God's name or a sacred object to guarantee the truth of what is spoken.

To emphasize something in our conversation or to convince other person, we often say, "I swear!" On what? What do we swear on? If we say that we swear on God, that means He is our guarantee to prove that what we say is truth. Do we really understand what we are talking about? Do we have absolute confidence beyond shadow of doubt that what we said is truth and no wrong in it? It'd better be, because if there was any false, we are using God's name in vain, even though we don't use His name in foul language.

C. APPLICATIONS

To be a man who practice what it said in James 5:12, we need to think about being these types of man:

1) Man of Commitment

Before we say something to others, we'd better think carefully. We often say something without thinking and true commitment. And we may not even have any intention to keep our promise but we just simply passifying that person. Or maybe we mean it with all of our hearts, but not important enough to remember or carry through. This brings disappointment to others and continual practice of this kind of behavior will result distrust to us and our God. If we promised something, whether it is important to us or not, big or small, care other person enough to keep our words. Other people will give glory to God.

There is some commitments I recommend to break. Say you made commitment with someone before you came to the Lord, or before you heard this message. Now you are convinced that the commitment you made with that person is going against what the Lord Jesus is teaching you, then it is better to break the commitment with people than God.

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

2) Man of Integrity and Honesty

First of all, we need to be honest with one another that is including ourselves and God. When we think that we cannot do what others ask us to do due to situation and circumstances, we need to say, "Sorry, can not do it." It is better to say no from the beginning than making a mess later on. That will bring disappointment and resentment to both parties.

When we come to God, we have to come to God with honesty and open hearts. We cannot hide anything from Him who see all things and know all things.

3) Man of Responsibility

If any of you remember comic title called "Family Circus" by Bill Keane, you will remember this. Somebody spilled grape juice on the carpet, so mom asked her children, "Who did this?" All the kids say "Not me!" And you will see a little floating 'NOT-ME' ghost on the corner of the comic strip.

Not only we take responsibility when the results come out great, but also we need to be men enough to say, "I am responsible for what happen." when the result is not so great. It is tough!

As Christians, we need to be faithful to keep our word and promises to others like our Lord and Savior so that they may give glory to the Father in heaven.