

NOTE: This file contains Part 1 of the message: "BOUND BY AN OATH".

OPENING SCRIPTURE(S): Ecclesiastes 5:1-6, James 5:12

"4When you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. **5**It is better to say nothing than to promise something you don't follow through on. **6**In such cases, your mouth is making you sin. And don't defend yourself by telling the Temple messenger that the promise you made was a mistake. That would make God angry, and He might wipe out everything you have achieved." Ecclesiastes 5:4-6

"But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned for it." James 5:12 NLT

"My friends, above all else, don't take an oath. You must not swear by heaven or by earth or by anything else. "Yes" or "No" is all you need to say. If you say anything more, you will be condemned." James 5:12 [Contemporary English Version](#)

Question:

- (1) How "reliable" is your word? How likely are you to honor and keep your word?
- (2) How prone are you "changing your mind" once you make a promise?
- (3) Would the people who know you well say you're bound to keep your word—EVEN if it hurts you to do so?

BOUND BY AN OATH, part 1

For simplicity sake, an OATH is also a VOW or PROMISE to DO or NOT DO something; SAY or NOT SAY SOMETHING.

1. The "beauty and enduring power" of a promise made in "good faith".

NOTE: The author of Psalm 132 is clearly not David.

Psalm 132:1-4 WE CAN INITIATE THE OATH OR PROMISE.

"1LORD, remember David and all that he suffered. **2**He took an oath [made a solemn promise] before the LORD. He vowed to the Mighty One of Israel, **3**"I will not go home; I will not let myself rest. **4**I will not let my eyes sleep nor close my eyelids in slumber **5**until I find a place to build a house for the LORD, a sanctuary for the Mighty One of Israel."

Psalm 132:11-12 THE LORD CAN INITIATE THE OATH OR PROMISE—OR RESPOND TO A PROMISE WE INITIATE WITH A PROMISE OF HIS OWN!

"11The LORD swore [an oath] to David a promise He will never take back: "I will place one of your descendants on your throne.

12If your descendants obey the terms of my covenant and follow the decrees [laws] that I teach them, then your royal line will never end."

2. What's wrong with "making a promise or entering into an oath"?

IN A POINT—WE CAN RENEGE OR GO BACK ON OUR WORD OR BREAK OUR PROMISE—EXPECTING OTHERS AND THE LORD TO "ACCEPT AND UNDERSTAND" THAT WE'RE ONLY HUMAN!

Heb. 6:16: "Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding."

- (1) We are "bound" by that oath—*even if we took it under pressure or under duress!*
- (2) We are "bound" by that oath—*even if we didn't "ask or understood" all the "terms and details" of that oath!*
- (3) We are "especially bound" by any oath or promise—*we entered into with "good intentions"!*

Thinking back to James 5:12:

"But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath [or strengthen a promise by swearing], by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you be condemned for it."

"My friends, above all else, don't take an oath. You must not swear by heaven or by earth or by anything else. "Yes" or "No" is all you need to say. If you say anything more, you will be condemned." James 5:12 [Contemporary English Version](#)

WHEN PETER DENIED THE LORD—HE "INVITED" THE LORD INTO A LIE—SOMETHING THE LORD IS INCAPABLE OF! MARK 14:66-72

LET ME ASK YOU THIS: HAVE YOU EVER CALLED ON SOMEONE TO "SWEAR BY GOD" OR "SWEAR BY GOD AS YOUR WITNESS"?

DON'T BE GUILTY OF DOING THAT ANYMORE!!

If we "urge, entice, or persuade" someone to "swear by God" or say "With God as their witness" to "THEM ON THE RECORD"—we potentially lead them into serious transgression against the LORD—IF they DON'T MEAN EVERYTHING THEY SAY or IF THEY DON'T KEEP THEIR PROMISE!

3. The Lord not only expects us to keep “every promise” we make to Him—He holds us “accountable” for “every promise” we voluntarily make to people—EVEN WHEN IT HURTS!

ECCLESIASTES 5 ALLUDES TO THE KIND OF HURT WE CAN VISIT UPON OURSELVES BY RENEGING ON A PROMISE WE MAKE TO THE LORD OR PEOPLE:

4“So when you make a promise to God, don’t delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. **5**It is better to say nothing than to promise something that you don’t follow through on.

6In such cases, your mouth is making you sin. And don’t defend yourself by telling the Temple messenger [human or angel] that the promise you made was a mistake. That would make God angry, and He might wipe out everything you have achieved.” Ecclesiastes 5:4-6

GO TO JOSHUA CHAPTER 24:11-28 JOSHUA ASSURES THE PEOPLE THEY ARE BOUND BY THEIR OATH.

19Then Joshua warned the people, **“You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy and jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.**

20If you abandon the LORD and serve other gods, he will turn against you and destroy you, even though he has been so good to you.” **21**But the people answered Joshua, **“No, we will serve the LORD!”**

22“You are a witness to your own decision,” Joshua said. **“You have chosen to serve the LORD.”** “Yes,” they replied, **“we are witnesses to what we have said.”**

23“All right then,” Joshua said, **“destroy the idols among you, and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”**

24The people said to Joshua, **“We will serve the LORD our God. We will obey him alone.”** **25**So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day at Shechem, committing them to follow the decrees and regulations of the LORD. **26**Joshua recorded these things in the Book of God’s Instructions. As a reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the terebinth tree beside the Tabernacle of the LORD.

27Joshua said to all the people, **“This stone has heard everything the LORD said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God.”**

MY CLOSING THOUGHT AND INVITATION TO ETERNAL LIFE

SOME PEOPLE THINK THEMSELVES SO WISE or SO INCAPABLE OF KEEPING A PROMISE THAT THEY WOULDN’T DARE ENTER INTO A “COVENANT” WITH THE LORD!

Such people have not qualms about signing a 10-year promissory note to fund a college tuition or a 30-year promissory note to repay a mortgage...

THEY’RE JUST “UNDECIDED” ABOUT THE LORD...AND HEAVEN...AND IMMORTALITY!

TO ANY “UNDECIDED” WHO MAY BE LISTENING. DON’T WORRY...

The strength and enforcer of any covenant with the LORD is NEVER US—but the LORD HIMSELF!

Of which Ezekiel 20:37 makes crystal clear:

“I will examine you carefully and hold you to the terms of the covenant.”

That’s the end of Part 1 of BOUND BY AN OATH.

Stay tuned for Part 2—where we’ll look at examples of some who were “bound by an oath to their own hurt”!