Matthew 5:36-37 Commentary

PREVIOUS NEXT

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"Sermon on the Mount" (Bloch)

Matthew 5:36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot * make one hair white or black. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: mete en te kephale sou omoses. (2SAAS) oti ou dunasai (2SPMI) mian tricha leuken poiesai (AAN) emelainan.

Amplified: And do not swear by your head, for you are not able to make a single hair white or black. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

NLT: Don't even swear, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. NLT - Tyndale House)

Philips: No, and don't swear by your own head, for you cannot make a single hair - white or black! New Testament in Modern English)

Wuest: Neither put yourself under oath by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black,

Young's Literal: nor by thy head mayest thou swear, because thou art not able one hair to make white or black;

NOR SHALL YOU MAKE AN OATH BY YOUR HEAD, FOR YOU CANNOT MAKE ONE HAIR WHITE OR BLACK: mete en te kephale sou omoses, (2SAAS) oti ou dunasai (2SPMI) mian tricha leuken poiesai (AAN) e melainan

- **Mt 23:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21) (Mt 6:27; Luke 12:25**

See Background on Oaths and Vows in commentary on Matthew 5:33

Make no oath (swear)(3660) (**omnuo**) derives from a basic meaning to grasp a sacred object (Friberg). The verb **omnuo** thus means to swear, confirm or affirm the truth of a statement by calling on a divine being (heaven, altar, temple, throne of God) to execute sanctions against a person if the statement in question is not true. To put one's self under oath. To threaten with an oath as in Heb 3:11,18, 4:3. **BDAG** phrases it this way "to affirm the veracity of one's statement by invoking a transcendent entity, freq. w. implied invitation of punishment if one is untruthful."

It is distinct from **horkizō** (3726), which means to adjure or implore someone divine to accomplish a task (demon in Mark 5:7; exorcists in Acts 19:13).

Louw-Nida on **omnuo** - to affirm the truth of a statement by calling on a divine being to execute sanctions against a person if the statement in question is not true (in the case of a deity taking an oath, his divine being is regarded as validating the statement

Used of Peter's denial of Jesus (Mt 26:74, Mk 14:71), an oath he regretted (Mt 26:75). King Herod made an oath he regretted (Mk 6:26 = "although the king was very sorry, yet because of his **oaths** and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her."). Used of God's oath to Abraham (Lk 1:73, referring to Ge 22:16-18). Peter refers to God's swearing an oath to seat one of David's descendants on the throne (Acts 2:30, quoting Ps 132:11 - David knew that God would keep His oath and fulfill it in the Messiah - cf the "Davidic Covenant" in 2Sa 7:11-16). Of God's swearing to Abraham that his people would come out of bondage (Ge 15:13-15, cp Jdg 2:1). Of God's oath that disobedient Israel would not enter His rest (Heb 3:11, quoting Ps 95:11). An angel swore in Rev 10:5-6.

Examples of **omnuo** used in the Septuagint (Lxx) - "I **have sworn** by Myself. (Isa45:23) "The Lord GOD **has sworn** by His holiness." (Amos 4:2) "Because the LORD loved you and kept the **oath** which He **swore** to your forefathers (e.g., to Abraham = Ge 22:16-18, Ge 26:3) , the LORD brought you out (of slavery in Egypt) by a mighty hand." (Dt 7:6)

Omnuo in Classical Greek - **Omnuō** was a common verb in antiquity and is found in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, Herodotus, Xenophon, Philo, Josephus, and in many papyri. The papyri exhibit the ancient formula of swearing (omnuō) by someone, with that name placed in the accusative case. Thus, "I swear by King Ptolemy", and "I swear by Nero Claudius Caesar"

Gilbrant on Septuagint Usage - **Omnuō** is also a common verb in the Septuagint nearly always translating the Hebrew term

shāva/shâba' (07650), “swear.” The idea behind this action could be to bind oneself by “seven things” (Ge 21:28; cf. the related noun **sheva'/sheba**, “seven”; “Swear,” Colin Brown, 3:739). In Genesis 21:24 **omnuō** means “swear” in the sense of “take an oath” (cf. Ge 21:31; Judges 21:1,18; 2Sa 21:2). In the prophetic literature the phrase “swear by myself” was appropriate only when God promised to make and keep an oath, for only He could fulfill and guarantee such a statement (cf. Jeremiah 22:5; 29:13; Amos 4:2). (Complete Biblical Library)

See Related Resources:

- Oath - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary
- Oaths - Torrey's Topical Textbook
- Oath - Nave's Topical Bible
- Oaths - Holman Bible Dictionary
- Oaths - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible
- Oath - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament
- Oaths - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament
- Oath - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
- Oath - Kitto's Popular Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature
- Oath - The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia
- Oath - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature

Omnuo - 26x in 20v - Note most uses are in **Matthew** and **Hebrews** - **NAS Usage**: make an oath(1), make… oath(1), swear(6), swears(10), swore(6), sworn(2).

> Matthew 5:34 "But I say to you, **make** no **oath** at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,
>
> 36 "Nor shall you **make** an **oath** by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.
>
> Matthew 23:16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever **swears** by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.'
>
> **Comment** - Jesus had instructed his disciples to dispense with swearing oaths altogether and be a people known for stating the simple truth (Mt 5:33-37). Here he notes their refinement into binding and non-binding oaths. Non-binding oaths meant that what was said in effect was "nothing." This extra category serves as an illustration of how the hypocrites' charade with words fails to reckon with the fact that God is the ever-present witness (cf. Mt 12:33-37).
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> Matthew 23:18 "And, 'Whoever **swears** by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever **swears** by the offering on it, he is obligated.'
>
> 20 "Therefore, whoever **swears** by the altar, **swears** both by the altar and by everything on it.
>
> 21 "And whoever **swears** by the temple, **swears** both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it.
>
> 22 "And whoever **swears** by heaven, **swears** both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.
>
> Matthew 26:74 Then he began to curse and **swear**, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed.
>
> Mark 6:23 And he **swore** to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom."
>
> Mark 14:71 But he began to curse and **swear**, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"
>
> Luke 1:73 The **oath** which He swore to Abraham our father,
>
> Acts 2:30 "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD **SWORN** TO HIM WITH AN **OATH** TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,
>
> Hebrews 3:11-**note** AS I **SWORE** IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"
>
> Hebrews 3:18-**note** And to whom did He **swear** that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?
>
> Hebrews 4:3-**note** For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I **SWORE** IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.
>
> Hebrews 6:13-**note** For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could **swear** by no one greater,

He **swore** by Himself,

Hebrews 6:16-**note** For men **swear** by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

Hebrews 7:21-**note** (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD **HAS SWORN** AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER '");

James 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not **swear**, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

A T Robertson - The various oaths (profanity) forbidden (mēte, thrice) are in the accusative case after omnuete, according to rule [ouranon, gēn, horkon]. The Jews were wont to split hairs in their use of profanity, and by avoiding God's name imagine that they were not really guilty of this sin, just as professing Christians today use "pious oaths" which violate the prohibition of Jesus.

Revelation 10:6-**note** and **swore** by (Vincent - Lit., "sware *in*, " a Hebrew idiom) Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer,

Tony Garland explains that "Here and in Daniel 12, the angels **swear** to underscore the **unchangeable nature of the message** they give. In both cases, the aspect of the message being emphasized is the **timing** with which prophesied events will take place. Daniel's angel indicated that the final period when the power of Israel would be shattered would be "**times, time and half a time**" (Da 12:7). Here, the angel tells John that the long history of delay where God's grace prevented Him from moving in final judgment has come to an end. (Dear reader - have you received Christ, believed in His Name, for eternal life? Jn 1:12, Jn 20:31)

Omnuo - 149 verses in the **Septuagint** -

Gen 21:23f, 31; 22:16; 24:7, 9; 25:33; 26:3, 31; 31:53; 47:31; 50:24; Exod 13:5, 11; 22:8; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 5:4; 6:3, 5; 19:12; Num 11:12; 14:16, 23; 30:2; 32:10f; Deut 1:8, 34f; 2:14; 4:21, 31; 6:10, 13, 18, 23; 7:8, 12f; 8:1, 18; 9:5, 27; 10:11, 20; 11:9, 21; 13:17; 19:8; 26:3, 15; 28:9, 11; 29:13; 30:20; 31:7, 20f, 23; 32:40; 34:4; Josh 1:6; 2:12; 5:6; 9:15, 18ff; 14:9; 21:43f; Jdg 2:1, 15; 15:12; 21:1, 7, 18; 1Sa 3:14; 19:6; 20:17, 42; 24:21f; 28:10; 30:15; 2Sa3:9, 35; 19:7, 23; 21:2, 17; 1 Kgs 1:13, 17, 29f, 51; 2:8, 23, 35; 2 Kgs 25:24; 2 Chr 15:14f; Ezra 10:5; Ps 15:4; 24:4; 63:11; 89:3, 35, 49; 95:11; 102:8; 110:4; 119:106; 132:2, 11; Prov 30:9; Eccl 9:2; Isa 19:18; 45:23; 48:1; 54:9; 62:8; 65:16; Jer 4:2; 5:2, 7; 7:9; 11:5; 12:16; 22:5; 32:22; 38:16; 40:9; 44:26; 49:13; 51:14; Ezek 6:9; 16:8; Dan 12:7; Hos 4:15; Amos 4:2; 6:8; 8:7, 14; Mic 7:20; Zeph 1:5; Zech 5:4; Mal 3:5; Matt 5:34, 36; 23:16, 18, 20ff; 26:74

See **F B Meyer's** related comments **Simplicity in Speech**

The Mishnah (**note**) devotes one whole section called ***Shebuoth*** ("oaths") which is an elaborate discussion of when oaths are binding and when they are not. As previously discussed, in Jesus' day the swearing of oaths had degenerated to a system which indicated when a man could lie and when not.

Jesus insists that whatever a man swears by is related to God in some way, and therefore every oath is implicitly in God's name. Thus He also condemned swearing by one's own head. What validity does that add to the oath? What they meant by using the expression "by my head" was something like

"*May I lose my head* (i.e., my life) *if what I am telling you is not true, or if I fail to fulfill my promise*"

Jesus logic is that how can they control their life? No man can even change the intrinsic color of his hair. Ultimately even the hairs of the head are all under God's sway and ownership. He Alone determines whether at any given moment a hair is black or white. Therefore, it follows that even swearing by one's head is in the final analysis swearing by God and is just as binding as an oath using the specific name of God.

Matthew Poole asks…

Doth our Saviour here oppose himself to the law of God, which saith, Deut 6:13 10:20,

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and swear by His name?"

Doth he condemn Abraham, who sware his servant by the Lord God of heaven and earth? Ge 24:3.

Doth he destroy such a useful means for the end of strife? (see note Hebrews 6:16).

> None of all these. We must consider that our Saviour is here opposing himself to the corruptions of that age brought in by the Pharisees, who had taught people that swearing was nothing, if they did not forswear themselves; or at least swearing “by the heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, by their head,” or in suchlike forms, was no sin, if they forbore the name of God; that they were only obliged to swear by the name of God in public courts of justice, but they were not tied up to it at other times.
>
> To these and such like corruptions our Saviour offers these opposing words, “I say unto you, Swear not at all;” not at all voluntarily, but where it is necessary for the end of strife; not at all in your common discourse, James 5:12: and so it is expounded in the next verse.
>
> The law doth not only forbid false swearing, but common and ordinary swearing, needless swearing, which speaks a great want of reverence in the heart of the name of God.
>
> And let not your teachers cheat you, in telling you God, or the name of God, is not concerned, in your swearing by heaven: is not heaven the throne of God? Or by earth: is not that the footstool of God? Or by Jerusalem: is not that the city of God? Or by your head: is it not God that hath given you your life and bodily members? Is it in your power to make a hair of your head white or black?
>
> So as the great thing here forbidden, is common and ordinary swearing, where God calleth us not unto it for the determination of strife. Do not only think that false swearing, but be assured that ordinary, common, needless swearing, is forbidden by God. (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the NT)

William Barclay on **oaths** - One of the strange things about the Sermon on the Mount is the number of occasions when Jesus was recalling to the Jews that which they already knew. The Jewish teachers had always insisted on the paramount obligation of telling the truth. "The world stands fast on three things, on justice, on truth, and on peace." "Four persons are shut out from the presence of God--the scoffer, the hypocrite, the liar, and the retailer of slander." "One who has given his word and who changes it is as bad as an idolater." The school of Shammai was so wedded to the truth that they forbade the ordinary courteous politenesses of society, as, for instance, when a bride was complimented for her charming appearance when in fact she was plain.

Still more did the Jewish teachers insist on the truth, if the truth had been guaranteed by an oath. Repeatedly that principle is laid down in the New Testament. The commandment has it: "You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). That commandment has nothing to do with swearing in the sense of using bad language; it condemns the man who swears that something is true, or who makes some promise, in the name of God, and who has taken the oath falsely. "When a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word" (Numbers 30:2). "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not be slack to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin in you" (Deuteronomy 23:21-22).

But in the time of Jesus there were two unsatisfactory things about taking oaths.

The first was what might be called frivolous swearing, taking an oath where no oath was necessary or proper. It had become far too common a custom to introduce a statement by saying, "By thy life," or, "By my head," or, "May I never see the comfort of Israel if… " The Rabbis laid it down that to use any form of oath in a simple statement like: "That is an olive tree," was sinful and wrong. "The yes of the righteous is yes," they said, "and their no is no."

There is still need of warning here. Far too often people use the most sacred language in the most meaningless way. They take the sacred names upon their lips in the most thoughtless and irreverent way. The sacred names should be kept for sacred things.

The second Jewish custom was in some ways even worse than that; it might be called evasive swearing. The Jews divided oaths into two classes, those which were absolutely binding and those which were not. Any oath which contained the name of God was absolutely binding; any oath which succeeded in evading the name of God was held not to be binding. The result was that if a man swore by the name of God in any form, he would rigidly keep that oath; but if he swore by heaven, or by earth, or by Jerusalem, or by his head, he felt quite free to break that oath. The result was that evasion had been brought to a fine art.

The idea behind this was that, if God's name was used, God became a partner in the transaction; whereas if God's name was not used, God had nothing to do with the transaction. The principle which Jesus lays down is quite clear. In effect Jesus is saying that, so far from having to make God a partner in any transaction, no man can keep God out of any transaction. God is already there. The heaven is the throne of God; the earth is the footstool of God; Jerusalem is the city of God; a man's head does not belong to him; he cannot even make a hair white or black; his life is God's; there is nothing in the world which does not belong to God; and, therefore, whether God is actually named in so many words or not, does not matter. God is there already.

Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which he is not involved; there cannot be one kind of language in the Church and another kind of language in the shipyard or the factory or the

office; there cannot be one kind of standard of conduct in the Church and another kind of standard in the business world. The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life, and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and every activity of life. He hears not only the words which are spoken in his name; he hears all words; and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into a transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred, if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God.

The End Of Oaths (Matthew 5:33-37 Continued)

This passage concludes with the commandment that when a man has to say yes, he should say yes, and nothing more; and when he has to say no, he should say no, and nothing more.

The ideal is that a man should never need an oath to buttress or guarantee the truth of anything he may say. The man's character should make an oath completely unnecessary. His guarantee and his witness should lie in what he is himself. Isocrates, the great Greek teacher and orator, said, "A man must lead a life which will gain more confidence in him than ever an oath can do." Clement of Alexandria insisted that Christians must lead such a life and demonstrate such a character that no one will ever dream of asking an oath from them. The ideal society is one in which no man's word will ever need an oath to guarantee its truth, and no man's promise ever need an oath to guarantee its fulfilling.

Does this saying of Jesus then forbid a man to take an oath anywhere--for instance, in the witness box? There have been two sets of people who completely refused all oaths. There were the Essenes, an ancient sect of the Jews. Josephus writes of them: "They are eminent for fidelity and are ministers of peace. Whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath. Swearing is avoided by them and they esteem it worse than perjury. For they say that he who cannot be believed without swearing is already condemned."

There were, and still are, the Quakers. The Quakers will not in any situation submit to taking an oath. The utmost length to which George Fox would go was to use the word Verily. He writes: "I never wronged man or woman in all that time [the time that he worked in business]. While I was in that service, I used in my dealings the word Verily, and it was a common saying, 'If George Fox says Verily, there is no altering him.'"

In the ancient days the Essenes would not in any circumstances take an oath, and to this day the Quakers are the same.

Are they correct in taking this line in this matter? There were occasions when Paul as it were, put himself upon oath. "I call God to witness against me," he writes to the Corinthians, "It was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth" (2 Corinthians 1:23). "Now the things that I write unto you," he writes to the Galatians, "In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!" (Galatians 1:20). On these occasions Paul is putting himself on oath. Jesus himself did not protest at being put on oath. At his trial before the High Priest, the High Priest said to him: "I adjure you by the living God--I put you on oath by God himself--tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God" (Matthew 26:63). What then is the situation?

Let us look at the last part of this verse. The Revised Standard Version has it that a man must answer simply yes or no, "anything more than this comes from evil." What does that mean? It can mean one of two things.

(a) If it is necessary to take an oath from a man, that necessity arises from the evil that is in man. If there was no evil in man, no oath would be necessary. That is to say, the fact that it is sometimes necessary to make a man take an oath is a demonstration of the evil in Christless human nature.

(b) The fact that it is necessary to put men on oath on certain occasions arises from the fact that this is an evil world. In a perfect world, in a world which was the Kingdom of God, no taking of oaths would ever be necessary. It is necessary only because of the evil of the world.

What Jesus is saying is this--the truly good man will never need to take an oath; the truth of his sayings and the reality of his promises need no such guarantee. But the fact that oaths are still sometimes necessary is the proof that men are not good men and that this is not a good world.

So, then, this saying of Jesus leaves two obligations upon us. It leaves upon us the obligation to make ourselves such that men will so see our transparent goodness that they will never ask an oath from us; and it leaves upon us the obligation to seek to make this world such a world that falsehood and infidelity will be so eliminated from it that the necessity for oaths will be abolished. (**William Barclay's Daily Study Bible - Matthew 5**)

Dr. Helmut Thielicke, who resisted compromising his integrity during the Hitler era, made an interesting observation regarding oaths writing that "Whenever I utter the formula "**I swear by God**," I am really saying, "Now I'm going to mark off an area of absolute truth and put walls around it to cut it off from the muddy floods of untruthfulness and irresponsibility that ordinarily overruns my speech." In fact, I am saying even more than this. I am saying that people are expecting me to lie from the start. And just because

they are counting on my lying I have to bring up these big guns of oaths and words of honor. (Helmut Thielicke, Life Can Begin Again)

Matthew 5:37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil (NASB: Lockman)

> **Greek**: esto (3SPAM) de o logos humon nai nai, ou ou; to de perisson touton ek tou ponerou estin. (3SPAI)
>
> **Amplified**: Let your Yes be simply Yes, and your No be simply No; anything more than that comes from the evil one. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)
>
> **NLT**: Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Your word is enough. To strengthen your promise with a vow shows that something is wrong. (NLT - Tyndale House)
>
> **Philips**: Whatever you have to say let your 'yes' be a plain 'yes' and your 'no' a plain 'no' - anything more than this has a taint of evil. (New Testament in Modern English)
>
> **Wuest**: but let your word be, Yes, Yes, No, No; and that which is more than these things is of the evil which is in active opposition to the good.
>
> Young's Literal: but let your word be, Yes, Yes, No, No, and that which is more than these is of the evil.

BUT LET YOUR STATEMENT BE, 'YES, YES' OR 'NO, NO': esto (3SPAM) de o logos umon nai nai, ou ou

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- **2Corinthians 1:17, 18, 19, 20; Colossians 4:6; James 5:12)**

See also William Barclay's comments at the end of the previous verse.

See **F B Meyer's** related comments **Simplicity in Speech**

Let… be - The **present imperative** is a command calling for this to be the believer's lifestyle.

Jesus is saying in essence that all our speech should continually be as if we were under an oath to tell the truth. When he wishes to affirm something let him then simply say, "**Yes**"; and when he desires to deny something let him simply say, "**No**." Anything "stronger" than that is from the evil one, Satan himself (see below)

Dwight Pentecost summarizes what Jesus is saying "Let your character, your reputation for honesty, your word be so obviously true and undefiled and without duplicity, that no man would think it necessary to put you under an oath because he suspects you are of deception… Some words can have a double meaning, and some words can be interpreted in two different ways. But there is only one possible way of interpreting ***yes***. Yes does not mean no. There is only one way you can interpret ***no***. You can never interpret that as meaning consent. When you say ***yes***, it means yes; when you say ***no***, it means no. The Lord demanded that one's speech be so trustworthy that men would not have to debate what was meant and interpret what was said. They would know what was meant because he was an honest man.' (Pentecost, J. D. Design for living: Lessons in Holiness from the Sermon on the Mount. Kregel Publications)

The **Believer's Study Bible** has a good summary note "Complete honesty should be typical of the kingdom citizen, so that no oath is necessary to guarantee trustworthiness for one's "yes" or "no." The law regarding oaths was based upon the third Commandment. False testimony resulted in severe consequences, since it consisted of taking God's name in vain (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:11, 12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 19:16-20). The rabbis taught that oaths which omitted God's name could be broken and were not binding. Jesus maintains that God is involved in heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and all things. Hence, all oaths are binding, and any attempt to avoid an oath while pretending to keep it profanes the divine name. The reference is neither to taking oaths in court nor to profanity. (Believer's Study Bible. Thomas Nelson)

ANYTHING BEYOND THESE IS OF EVIL: to de perisson touton ek tou ponerou estin (3SPAI)

- **Mt 13:19; 15:19; John 8:44; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9; James 5:12**

A good prayer to avoid anything beyond yes and no is that of David…

Set a guard, 0 LORD, over my mouth;

Keep watch over the door of my lips. (Psalm 141:3)

The phrase "**of evil**" is rendered "**of the evil one**" in some of the translations (NIV, NKJV, NET). The NET Bible adds that The term ("**evil**") may be understood as specific and personified, referring to the devil, or possibly as a general reference to evil. It is most likely personified, however, since it is articular (i.e, it has a definite article "***the***" preceding it).

It therefore seems very reasonable to translate and interpret this as a reference to the devil who is the master deceiver and whose pattern of guileful, manipulative speech is to be scrupulously avoided by all citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In John we read that **Jesus** declares to a group of unbelieving Jews that "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because **there is no truth in him**.**Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature**; for **he is a liar**, and **the father of lies**. (John 8:44)

James has a warning explaining why it is better to simply speak the truth "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; **so that** (here's the reason one should simply speak the truth without oaths) **you may not fall under judgment**. (James 5:12) James is not forbidding the taking of a solemn oath per se (see discussion below). Jesus and James are stressing the need for integrity in speech, and the sinfulness of carelessly or flippantly using God's name or a sacred object to guarantee truthful speech.

Beyond (4053)(**perissos** from **peri** - around, all-around, over and above) properly means "all around, more than (abundantly). Beyond what is anticipated. Exceeding expectation. Going past the expected limit. Exceeding some number or measure, more than enough, more than is necessary, superadded. Superabundance, extraordinary, profuse, abundant.

Perissos - primarily, "what is above and over, super-added," hence came to denote "what is superior and advantageous," Romans 3:1 , in a comparison between Jew and Gentile; only here with this meaning. (Vine)

Perissos is the root of Paul's word in Eph 3:20 **huperekperissou** which is one of the numerous compounds of ***huper***- beyond, over and above, of which Paul is fond. Of twenty-eight words compounded with this preposition in the New Testament, Paul alone uses twenty.

For Liddell-Scott-Jones - click and scroll down. Also includes Thayer's.

Friberg - (1) of what exceeds usual expectation extraordinary, remarkable (Mt 5.47); neuter as a substantive = the advantage (Ro 3.1); adverbially = exceedingly, greatly (Mk 6.51); (2) of what exceeds necessity abundant; have abundantly (Jn 10.10); (3) superfluous, unnecessary (2Cor 9.1); (4) as a colloquial substitute for comparative - what is more than, what goes beyond (Mt 5.37); (5) comparative perissoteros, tera, on used as a popular substitute for pleion (more) and mallon (more, rather); (a) as adding a degree of intensity to a noun greater, more severe, more excellent, more abundant, etc. (Mk 12.40; 1C 12.23); (b) perissoteron with the genitive of comparison much more than, even more than (Mk 12.33; Lk 7.26); (c) neuter singular perissoteron - as an adverb even more, exceedingly, more abundantly (Heb 6.17) (Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament- Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Mille Timothy Friberg-)

Zodhiates - (I) Particularly as exceeding a certain measure, with the gen. meaning more than (Matt. 5:37, “what is beyond” [author’s translation] or more than these [cf. Sept.: Ex. 10:5; 2Kgs. 25:11; 1Sa 30:9]). In the sense of superfluous (2Cor. 9:1).

(II) Generally, superabundant, abundant, much, great.

(A) Positive, only as advantage used in the neut. perissón abundant, in superabundance (John 10:10, “that they might have it more abundantly”). With the prep. ek (1537), by means of, or expressing measure followed by the gen. perissoú, beyond measure, vehemently (Mark 6:51; 14:31).

(B) By implication, in a comparative sense, more abundant, distinguished, excellent, better (Matt. 5:47). The art. and the neut. tó perrissón, excellence, preeminence (Rom. 3:1 [cf. Matt. 11:9; Luke 7:26]; Sept. Dan. 5:12; 6:4). (Complete Word Study Dictionary-New Testament)

Barclay - Newman - (1) adj. more (utterly, completely Mk 6.51); unnecessary (2 Cor 9.1); (2) adv. to the full (Jn 10.10); (3) advantage (Ro 3.1) (Newman, B. M. Concise Greek-English dictionary of the New Testament).

Classical Greek - There are two primary uses of perissos—a simple, adjectival and a comparative use. Many meanings appear in every category of classical and Biblical Greek. In classical Greek perissos can mean “over and above, superfluous, in every possible way, a more than sufficient amount, extraordinary, excessive, uncommon,” etc. (Moulton-Milligan; Liddell-Scott). Other usages denote charges that are strict and extra animals which are for sale (Moulton-Milligan). (Gilbrant)

Perissos - 24v - **NAS usage** - abounds all the more(1), abundantly(1), advantage(1), all the more(2), beyond(1), especially(2), even more(2), excessive(1), further(1), greater(3), more(5), more abundant(2), more extremely(1), much more(1), superfluous(1), utterly* (1), widely(1).

Matthew 5:37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes ' or 'No, no'; anything **beyond** these is of evil.

Matthew 5:47 "If you greet only your brothers, what **more** are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Matthew 11:9 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is**more** than a prophet.

Matthew 23:14 ["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive **greater** condemnation.]

Mark 6:51 YLT And he went up unto them to the boat, and the wind lulled, and greatly out of**measure** were they amazed in themselves, and were wondering,

Mark 7:36 And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more**widely** they continued to proclaim it.

Mark 12:33 AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is **much more** than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Mark 12:40 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive **greater** condemnation."

Luke 7:26 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is**more** than a prophet.

Luke 20:47 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive **greater** condemnation."

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it **abundantly**.

Romans 3:1 Then what **advantage** has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?

1 Corinthians 12:23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow **more abundant** honor, and our less presentable members become much **more** presentable, **24** whereas our **more** presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving**more abundant** honor to that member which lacked,

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored **even more** than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and **especially** toward you.

2 Corinthians 2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have **especially** for you.

2 Corinthians 2:7 so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by **excessive** sorrow.

2 Corinthians 7:15 His affection **abounds all the more** toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

2 Corinthians 9:1 For it is **superfluous** for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints;

2 Corinthians 10:8 For even if I boast somewhat**further** about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame,

Galatians 1:14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being **more extremely** zealous for my ancestral traditions.

1 Thessalonians 2:17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while-- in person, not in spirit-- were **all the more** eager with great desire to see your face.

> Hebrews 6:17 In the same way God, desiring **even more** to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

Perissos -

> Ex 10:5; Nu 4:26; Jdg 21:7, 16; 1 Sam 30:9; 2 Kgs 25:11; Pr 14:23; Eccl 2:15; 6:11; 7:16; 12:9, 11; Ezek 48:15, 18, 21, 23; Dan 3:22; 4:36; 5:12, 14; 6:3; Matt 5:37, 47; 11:9; Mark 6:51; 7:36; 12:33, 40; Luke 7:26; 12:4, 48; 20:47; John 10:10; Rom 3:1; 1 Cor 12:23f; 15:10; 2 Cor 2:7; 9:1; 10:8; Heb 6:17; 7:15

Let's be honest. We all find it difficult to be truthful. **George MacDonald** put it this way "I always try—I think I do—to be truthful. All the same I tell a great many petty lies, e.g. things that mean one thing to myself though another to other people. But I do not think lightly of it. Where I am more often wrong is in tacitly pretending I hear things which I do not, especially jokes and good stories, the point of which I always miss; but, seeing every one laugh, I laugh too, for the sake of not looking a fool. My respect for the world's opinion is my greatest stumbling-block, I fear. (G Macdonald, Reminiscences of a Specialist)

Paul made a statement that is **in the form of an oath** in Romans when he declared that "God, Whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. (see notes Romans 1:9; 1:10).

Paul's phrase "**God… is my Witness**" is an appeal to God, and therefore is in the form of an oath, probably because he was personally unknown to the Roman saints and they to him. They might doubt his affection to them, a case which was only known to God and himself, and hence his appeal to God for the truth of it.

J Vernon McGee quips that "When a man says to me, *"I'd swear on a stack of Bibles a mile high*," that is the fellow I do not believe because I think the lie he's telling is a mile high. (McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

Evil (4190) (**poneros** from **pónos** = labor, sorrow, pain) refers to evil in active opposition to good. It refers to that which is actively harmful. The idea is one who is pernicious, which means highly injurious or destructive, exceedingly harmful, and vicious.

Someone suggested the top ten lies told in America: 10) Your table will be ready in a minute. 9) One size fits all. 8) This will hurt me more than it hurts you. 7) I'm sorry I'm late; I got stuck in traffic. 6) The check is in the mail. 5) This offer is limited to the first 50 callers. 4) It's not the money; it's the principle of the thing. 3) I need just five minutes of your time. 2) I'll start my diet tomorrow. 1) I'm from the IRS and I'm here to help you. Our culture doesn't place much value on integrity, but Scripture does. (Morgan, R. J. Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook : 2004 Edition Page 132. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers)

> What would others say about your word?
>
> Are you a person of your word? Is it "as good as gold"?
>
> If you say you will do something do you follow through?
>
> Is your word perfect as your heavenly Father's word is perfect?
>
> Do you exaggerate or embellish? (If so what does that say about the truthfulness of your word)?
>
> Do you tell someone "*I'll pray for you*" and then you fail to follow through (only to be reminded of your promise by their phone call "*God answered. Thanks so much for praying!*" And you say "*Uh… Sure… you're welcome*", when you know you did not really pray for them! Sin begets more sin.)
>
> As Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, who will one day give account for every word we have uttered, we must choose to be men and women of integrity.

Why should kingdom citizens tell the truth all the time? As Jesus taught elsewhere our words are a barometer of the condition of our heart…

> "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? **For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.** "The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. "And I say to you, that **every** (all, no exceptions!) **careless** word that men shall speak (read that warning again - **careless** is the Greek word *argos* from "*a*" = without + "*ergon*" = work which literally means "not working, idle, ineffective"!) , they shall **render account** (pay back, implying a debt = carries the idea of obligation and responsibility for something, in this case "careless" words!) **for it in the day of judgment**(beloved did you ever realize that every word you ever speak is "headed for eternity so to speak"?!). (Matthew 12:34-36)

Kent Hughes has some poignant thoughts on what proceeds our of our mouth…

> The avoidance of one small fib… may be a stronger confession of faith than a whole 'Christian philosophy' championed in lengthy, forceful discussion." When people know that you do not lie, your testimony will have more effect than all the theology you could ram at them. What a difference a truthful life can make! (Hughes, R. K. Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom. Crossway Books)

A prayer that I frequently utter is that of David…

> Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. (**Psalm 141:3**)
>
> (Spurgeon comments - Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth. That mouth had been used in prayer, it would be a pity it should ever be defiled with untruth, or pride, or wrath; yet so it will become unless carefully watched, for these intruders are ever lurking about the door. David feels that with all his own watchfulness he may be surprised into sin, and so he begs the Lord himself to keep him. When Jehovah sets the watch the city is well guarded: when the Lord becomes the guard of our mouth the whole man is well garrisoned. Keep the door of my lips. God has made our lips the door of the mouth, but we cannot keep that door of ourselves, therefore do we entreat the Lord to take the rule of it. O that the Lord would both open and shut our lips, for we can do neither the one nor the other aright if left to ourselves. In times of persecution by ungodly men we are peculiarly liable to speak hastily, or evasively, and therefore we should be specially anxious to be preserved in that direction from every form of sin. How condescending is the Lord! We are ennobled by being door keepers for him, and yet he deigns to be a door keeper for us.)

Samuel Johnson had wise advise for parents writing…

> Accustom your children constantly to this [the telling of the truth]; if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end… It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world.

Matthew Henry has an excellent comment summarizing the use of oaths writing that…

> "The worse men are, the less they are bound by oaths; the better they are, the less there is need for them. Our Lord does not enjoin the precise terms wherein we are to affirm or deny, but such a constant regard to truth as would render oaths unnecessary."

Today in the Word has the following devotional on Mt 5:33-37 and James 5:12 (see above)…

> In the 18th century, when commerce was developing very fast, merchants had no need for written documents to complete a business deal. Big money transactions were made just on the basis of the parties' 'word of honor' and a handshake. When nowadays we listen to public figures toss words around, it becomes clear that in the 1990s, words can mean whatever the speaker wants them to mean. A simple 'yes' or 'no' is not enough. We need contracts signed in the presence of lawyers, notarized documents, oaths in courts. And even all this may not be a guarantee of complete truthfulness of words and intent. People break contracts, renege on their agreements, and commit perjuries.
>
> Yes, the world has become more complex and our lives more hectic at the end of the 20th century. We do things differently now. But there are some principles of God's Kingdom that don't change for the followers of Jesus no matter when they live. Can you imagine the apostle James engaging in deliberate doublespeak to cloud his true intent? Neither can we! This straight-talking spokesman for God had no tolerance for false words of any kind, especially those that were cloaked in the guise of a solemn oath… People in James' day had developed an elaborate system of oath-taking to avoid invoking God's name, which would make the pledge binding. They would swear by almost anything else to leave themselves a hole through which they could wriggle and not keep their word. The Bible does not disapprove of making oaths. God 'swore by Himself' when He made His covenant with Abraham (Heb. 6:13). In a world of liars, people are often asked to swear to the truthfulness of their words. But the apostle's point, which echoed perfectly the teaching of Jesus, was that for God's people a simple yes or no should do the job. The intent behind our words should be so transparent we don't need to call heaven and earth to witness that we're telling the truth. Keep it simple, James says, or expect God's judgment. He doesn't tolerate liars.
>
> Here's an exercise in truth-telling that you can do with the family or a group of friends this weekend. Sit down together and brainstorm a list of situations in which people are asked to take vows or swear to the truthfulness of information (for example, a wedding, a courtroom, applying for a license or other legal document). Talk about the consequences a person might suffer for lying in these cases, and then discuss God's demand for

honesty on the part of His people.

Jawbone Credit - In 1878, a merchant in Bozeman, Montana, extended to Andrew Garcia what was called "jawbone credit." Without putting anything into writing, he gave Garcia $300 worth of supplies for a hunting and trapping expedition. The trapper promised to return and pay his debt with hides and pelts from his expedition.

While Garcia was away, hostile Indians moved into the area around Bozeman. Weather conditions got bad. Fellow trappers told him to forget about returning to Bozeman, but Garcia wouldn't hear of it. After a series of harrowing experiences, he returned to the merchant with hides and pelts to pay his debt. He kept his word.

We usually can't put that much stock in verbal promises these days. Many people make pledges but fail to keep them. Every divorce means at least one person has broken a sacred vow. People in trouble with the law may promise to change their ways if only they can have another chance. But when they receive clemency, they often forget the vows they had made.

God too makes vows, but He always keeps His word. If He didn't, we would have no basis for hope. Let's thank Him for being a God of integrity and resolve that we will be people whose word can be trusted. --H V Lugt (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Integrity is what we gain
By walking in the light;
More valuable than precious gold,
It's built on truth and right.
-- D J DeHaan

People who trust God's Word
should be people who can be trusted.

Be True To Your Word - Shortly before his death, the Duke of Burgundy was presiding over the Cabinet Council of France. A proposal was made that would violate an existing treaty but would secure important advantages for the country. Many "good" reasons were offered to justify this action. The Duke listened in silence. When all had spoken, he closed the conference without giving approval. Placing his hand on a copy of the original agreement, he said with firmness in his voice, "Gentlemen, we have a treaty!"

It's a strong temptation these days to abandon our word in favor of personal advantage or financial gain. As believers in Christ, however, our responsibility is to remain true to our word so that our Lord is glorified.

So, when you give your word, keep it! "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'" (Mt. 5:37). If you make a commitment, honor it! If you take on an obligation, fulfill it! Your honesty and reliability should be so evident that you can be trusted for any contract you make. If non-Christians can trust you in business matters, they will be more likely to believe you when you speak about the gospel.

When we're tempted to break a promise, let's think again of these words: "Gentlemen, we have a treaty!" --R W De Haan Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Lord, by Your Spirit grant to me
A deep desire for honesty,
That when I simply give my word
No one will doubt what they have heard. --DJD

When you give your word, keep it.

Reverend Fred Holloman, chaplain of the Kansas Senate had an interesting prayer before an opening session…

> Omniscient Father: Help us to know who is telling the truth. One side tells us one thing, and the other just the opposite. And if neither side is telling the truth, we would like to know that, too. And if each side is telling half the truth, give us the wisdom to put the right halves together. In Jesus' name, Amen.