

DEVOTED
“I Promise”
February 2, 2025

INTRO.: Welcome to our ongoing sermon series, *Devoted*. We’ve been reminded, through participating in communion, of God’s grace and mercy. None of us deserve the gift of salvation. There isn’t one of us who can earn God’s forgiveness. We began this series by looking at how God has shown and is continuing to show His devotion to us, even though we are undeserving. The week after we speak of a characteristic of God’s devotion to us, we will be looking at how we, whom God is making more like Jesus (even though we have a long way to go), are to show that characteristic to others. As a reminder of last week’s theme, I have this picture I took while in Honduras. Can you see what is in the background (picture of a rainbow)? It is a rainbow. We first see this described in the book of Genesis and what was the purpose of God creating the rainbow? After the universal flood this is what God told Noah and his sons.

Genesis 9:8–11 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: **9** “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you **10** and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. **11** I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

What is a covenant? It is a binding promise. What was the sign that God gave them?

Genesis 9:12–17 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: **13** I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. **14** Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, **15** I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. **16** Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” **17** So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

Every time we see a rainbow in the sky, we should thank God that He keeps His promises: every one of them! It actually should provide a time for us to worship God.

The promises of God, past, present, and future are 100% true! It is impossible for God to lie, to go back on His promises. So, what has God called those who know Christ as Savior and Lord to be TO OTHERS, in light of God’s devotion to His promises? This brings us to the theme for today, **I PROMISE**. The three areas we’re going to look at are: **THE EXAMPLE**, **THE EXPLANATION**, and **THE EFFECT**. With each of these points I have some scripture I would like us to read together.

THE EXAMPLE

Psalms 145:1–13 I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

God is faithful to ALL His promises! It is crucial that we keep that example in front of us, for we are to become more and more like Him. None of us have arrived and we are all a work in progress. Our promises matter because God’s promises matter. We can get hung up in trying to be like someone else. They become our hero, our ultimate goal. But what happens when they fail? Look what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

This literally means, “being (present tense command) imitators (where we get the word “mimic”) of me just as I also Christ”

Paul is stressing that our true example, the only perfect example is Christ. God's promises are always true and, as we looked at last week, it is IMPOSSIBLE for God to lie (Hebrews 6:16-20). It goes against His nature and character. He is our example.

THE EXPLANATION

What we are going to read is an interesting passage, and sometimes the point is missed. Let's begin by reading this together.

Matthew 5:33–37 “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ **34** But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 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 swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Jesus is speaking and it is part of what is called “*the Sermon on the Mount.*” He begins this section with, “again, you have heard that it was said.” Jesus says this several times: verses 21, 27, 31, 38, and 43. Sometimes the conclusions the religious leaders came up with were not accurate. At times there was more concern with following the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law. God is far more concerned with our heart because He changes us from the inside out. Just because you and I can get somebody to follow our rules doesn't mean their heart has changed.

This passage is not saying that oaths were bad.

From John MacArthur: God provided for making oaths by His name.

Leviticus 19:12 “ ‘Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

Even God made oaths:

Genesis 22:15–17 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time **16** and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, **17** I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

Jesus made an oath before Caiphas:

Matthew 26:63–64 But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” **64** “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

What Jesus is talking about is people making frivolous oaths that they had no intention of keeping. Instead making an oath in the name of God they would use other things that weren't as authoritative in their minds. Because of this they saw these oaths not as important to keep.

As is mentioned in this passage, they would swear an oath by heaven, by God's throne, by the earth, by Jerusalem, and even by their hair. They felt no urgency or necessity to keep these particular oaths. They even rated the oaths. Don't swear an oath by these things because their source is God.

“by heaven, for it is God's throne”

“by earth, for it is His footstool”

“by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great king”

“by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black”

Jesus is saying, “Stop it! This rating of your oaths, depending upon what you swore them by, is wrong!” You don't need to make these foolish oaths. Then He gives His solution in the form of a present tense command.

“Let your Yes be Yes and your No No.” Let your word speak for itself. If we have to add something to our word to make it more believable that says something about the value of our word. When I was growing up someone might say, to back up their promise:

“I cross my heart and hope to die”

“I will make this promise on a stack of Bibles.”

People should be able to trust what we say. In Ephesians 4 we read about how those who know Christ as Savior and Lord are to put off the old man and put on the new man. He then lists several things believers are to stop doing and what they should be doing instead.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

We are called to be truth tellers, to be promise keepers. We are commanded in this verse to speak truthfully. Our word should be good enough!

God is the example, and the explanation of Jesus’ teaching is that our word should be enough. There is no need to make an elaborate oath. Let our yes be yes and our no no! Why are we making a big deal about this?

THE EFFECT

What difference does it make that we keep our promises, that we be truth tellers? I want to go back to the Sermon on the Mount and look at what Jesus has to say. I will read this myself and ask you to follow along.

Matthew 5:13–14 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. **14** “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:15-16 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

“*you are:*” present tense and the “you” is plural. Jesus is referring to the whole church.

“*salt:*” preserves, brings flavor, is white and could represent purity. It was used to bind a covenant or promise. Salt was also extremely valuable. Our lives should be a powerful influence to those around us and act as a deterrent to ungodliness.

“*light:*” exposes darkness. As we shine the light this should point others to the Lord, the Light of the world. Our lives should be a reflection of the Lord.

Why we should keep our promises?

*we are to be a reflection of Christ

*this affects our testimony and the testimony of the church

*to do otherwise damages relationships

-spouse

-children

-fellow believers

-employer, employees

SO WHAT??

*Have I come to know the Lord, the One who always keeps His promises?

*Do I need to seek forgiveness for not keeping promises?

*Who is my mentor and who am I mentoring?

