

Text - James 5:12 *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

Introduction: Within the last week in Nigeria, many are disillusioned with those who have promised and swore to provide several things but failed, from politicians who campaigned to make life easier 2+ years ago but are showing the populace Sege-Pro-Max, to the JAMB registrar who ate the humble pie about conducting seamless exams only to acknowledge technical glitch. We should only address what is within our capacity to effect and should always give room for uncertainty about nature and others action or intent which may not be as desired.

Thesis: Variations between *Promise* (induced or free commitment, often conditional), *Pledge* (formal, serious promise), and *Oath* (Swear or public pledge). The oath or swearing is the strictest. Fallible men, mere mortals ought to be wary of this as it either invokes creation or a deity (the Creator).

OT: God warned the nation of Israel about swearing and oath-taking and its consequences. They were only permitted to swear in His name but were NOT required to. To swear falsely would amount to calling the LORD's name in vain. - **Leviticus 19:12** *And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.* [**Deuteronomy 10:20** *Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.*]

Numbers 30:2 *If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

NT: Jesus knew that the just shall live by faith and not by the works of the law. Thus, He contrasts what was said by the religious leaders and tradition with what God really wants us to practice.

Matthew 5:33-37 *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

Matthew 23:16-32 *Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*

Even fulfilling an oath made while in desperation or euphoria, or erotic passion could be dangerous e.g. Jephthah's (Judges 11), Saul's oath for Israelites not to eat during a battle (1 Samuel 14:24-45), David's oath (2 Samuel 12:5f), Herod's oath to Herodias daughter (Mark 6:18-26), etc. Let your words be few!

2 Corinthians 1:17-20 *When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.* [**Ephesians 4:25** *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*]

Conclusion: Do not make promises you do not intend to fulfill. Do not hold another up unto a promise for which you have not met the associated condition. Do not swear or bind yourself to an oath as that is unnecessary and you don't have absolute power to be able to invoke. One loses face/reputation when he fails on any of these. Do not bargain with God that "if You do this for me, I will do that for You." Simply serve, trust and thank Him.

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