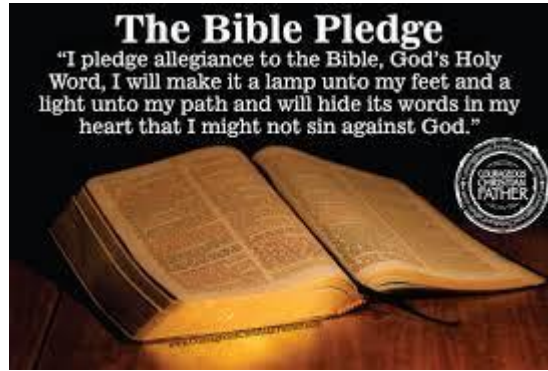


(A Message on Christian Integrity)
"I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE..."



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.*

THESIS: A challenge to spiritual integrity

INTRODUCTION: **A.** "I pledge allegiance...", "I do solemnly swear...", "A man's word is his bond." Sounds good, unfortunately, it is not always so. Thus we have lawyers, contracts, witnesses, etc. Even among God's people things were required to be established "in the mouths of two or three witnesses.

B. Men make all kinds of verbal commitments, but "they know not what they say." Either they are unable to keep their word (like the Disciples trying to cast out demons), or unwilling (like Peter when he counted the cost of standing with the Lord during His trial), or just plain untruthful (like Judas)!

C. Taking an oath swearing that something is true often has the effect of casting suspicion on the accuracy of a statement and or the speaker. Certainly a Christian's word should be his bond. For one who is a child of Jesus, 'the Truth' ought to be trustworthy and have spiritual integrity. But is it so?

ILLUS: Many churches have statements they ask new members to sign or give affirmation to or at least have a "covenant" which all are to ascribe to.

I. OUR PROMISES COMPARED WITH OUR PERFORMANCE:

"Let your yea be yea..." (Performance must match our Promise)

A. A Promise Made at Baptism to live a new life (ROM. 6:3,4)

B. A Promise made at Membership: to be faithful to the church in attendance, tithes and service

1. Check your promises with your performance
2. Is your yea (promise), yea (performance)...?" Cf. 5:2-6

C. Promises Made at the Lord's Supper: confession and forsaking of sin

D. Promises Made during Invitations:

ILLUS: Some have made promises to the Lord during this series of messages regarding Regular Church Attendance, Prayer, Bible Reading, Personal and Family Devotions, etc. **Is your yea, yea?**

E. Promises Made During Prayer: does your performance match your promises?

II. OUR PROHIBITIONS COMPARED WITH OUR PRACTICE:

"And your nay, nay..."(Practice must match our Prohibitions)

A. Toward our Children:

1. Make sure you enforce prohibitions
2. Make sure you are consistent:

- a. Don't say "no" one time and "yea" the next on the same issue.
- b. Don't say "no" to children and be guilty yourself!

ILLUS: Don't forbid movies to children and then go yourself. Don't tell kids they shouldn't drink, smoke, curse, carouse, etc. and do it yourself. Let your nay, be nay! Let your practice match your prohibitions.

3. Don't prohibit what you can't provide:

ILLUS: Don't say "no" unless you are willing to help provide wholesome alternatives.

B. Toward the Lord:

1. We say "no" to the world...supposedly to better serve the Lord

ILLUS: No point in changing your life...quit this or that ...unless you are going to replace it with something better.

2. Make sure when you say "no" to the world, you know why... or you will fail!
3. Make sure when you say "no" to the world, you have no secret mental reservations (like the children of Israel after leaving Egypt, continued to long after the leeks and garlic!)

C. Toward Ourselves: James 1:6-8

1. Our mental and emotional stability depend on our consistency
2. Our faithfulness to the Lord in our commitments to Him will help stabilize us in every area of living

ILLUS: Not only will such consistency strengthen us spiritually, but it will increase our effectiveness. The world wants nothing to do with the worldly Christian. The unsaved person dislikes the "halfway" inconsistent Christian more than the one who is sold out to the Lord. And...he is more apt to respond to an invitation to receive Christ from the yielded, consistent believer.

CONCLUSION: We are speaking today basically of our verbal commitments matching our practice. To make a vow and not to live up to it is nothing less than hypocrisy. Thus there are many "hypocrites in the church" by this standard. They have "pledged their allegiance" and turned back. If they were to realize that God holds them accountable for every idle word, they would be slow to speak". Praise the Lord for those who do not take vows lightly and who match their words with their actions. They have spiritual integrity. Do you?