

Clough Deuteronomy Session 50
Deuteronomy 23:19-23 - The Rights of Economic Freedom & Promise
Expectation
Fellowship Chapel; 5 April 2011

We didn't quite finish, last time, chapter 23, but that's because that was the end of a section, so we're going to start, as you can see on the handout, another chunk of material, so we're going to start there in verse 19, of chapter 23, and this, if you follow the commentators who argue that you can sort through these chunks of case law by sequencing the Ten Commandments so that chunks of these things kind of act as though they are the expression of one of the Ten Commandments. I find that a little hard to do, but I've tried to maintain, as you can see on the outline, 19:1 to 21:23, with the sixth commandment that dealt with "Thou shalt not murder, and it was really expanded to control the use of lethal force, which is the tool of the state. Then in chapter 22 through 23:18 it sort of goes along with "Thou shalt not commit adultery, it's the idea that there's form and boundaries to the human institutions. So now tonight we're going to come to this section, which will be the 8th commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," and we'll get partway through that.

This seems very abrupt but chapter 23, verse 18, we were talking about the idea that at the end there was not to be any wages of prostitution brought into the temple as an offering. And so that sort of concluded that section. Now beginning in verse 19, all of a sudden it shifts to something economic. So we're back now, if we're dealing with economics we're dealing with money, if we're dealing with money we're dealing with value, and value has to do with labor because the only way you get value is through labor, so we're back once again into that kind of area. And of course the 8th commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," which we'll see tonight and also later, is expanded.

Now I keep saying these commandments are expanded because what I'm trying to show is that when Moses tries to go through all of society with this law, this law, this law, this case law, this case law, what he's showing us is what was intended as the meaning of each of those Ten Commandments. And it's very easy to read the Ten Commandments and think you know them because you can repeat them, they're simple, they're easy, but you miss the fact that they really were all encompassing. And tonight as we go through these two sections we'll conclude with how Jesus goes back and He exegetes the Ten Commandments. So these Ten Commandments are like tips of an iceberg, they look very simple on the top end but then you start seeing what they imply about life and about the details of the society of the theocracy and by application to our society. So if you'll follow on the outline, right at the part where I have the chart, on chapter 23, verses 19-20 is a right of economic freedom. And we'll try to justify that.

And then in verses 20-23 the right of a promised seed to expect performance, and that's that section on oaths, and we come up to this section of oaths relating it to "Thou shalt not steal" and it's kind of an oddity that there would be a connection there. So, in the first little dot after the outline I have an idea that I'm using to try to tie this together.

This section deals with the breadth of implications of "Thou shalt not steal," Stealing, and I think this is the point of all this passage here, Stealing doesn't just refer to taking property; it also can refer to taking away the freedom that God has given, and so that is an infringement and a form of theft. And we'll see another form of theft when we get into oath taking. So you can have a very restricted view of stealing, and it's just stealing something material and physical but it seems that the Holy Spirit is directing our attention to go into a wider, more comprehensive idea of what theft is all about.

So that leads us to the second point that I have there, and that is very contemporary, and we want to look at that, we'll come back to that next time also: today, in our culture, you see this all the time, we refer to certain rights as "property rights," or "animal rights," the United Nations just last week announced... Bolivia is trying to come to the U.N. to form a global declaration that mother earth has as many rights as the human race. And then they go into this thing about we have exploited earth; yes, in some cases we have, but I'm sorry but the Word of God places humans above nature, not under nature. And that's going to be a fundamental conflict, this is a fundamental cultural conflict and there's no middle ground here; you either accept the fact that human kind is more valuable than nature or you're going to have to go along with the idea that nature is more valuable than man, in which case it's the attack on having babies because of the (quote) "carbon footprints," so behind all of the details up here in the political realm, down underneath there's a fundamental collision over which is higher, man or nature. And the Bible is very clear, there's no ambiguity in the Scriptures. But there's a tremendous power in our culture today to place nature above man. As Dr. Beisner pointed out on Fox News not two months ago that anyone can be put in jail for breaking an eagle egg, but you don't go to jail for destroying a human fetus. So obviously nature is already more important than human beings in the large scale.

But the point I'm making in that second point is property rights, animal rights, gay rights, plant rights, but then watch the italics. We've got to really think this through because our culture is not thinking it through:. but there are no such "rights" objectively unless those rights exist prior to man's decision to recognize them. A very important point; if a right doesn't exist until a human, like the U.N. in New York grants the right, then that right comes out of man; man has invented that right.

So the issue here, as we go to point 3 is Epistemologically," that is with knowledge, we discover prior existing truths, we don't invent truths out of the resources of our minds. If we invent, if all truth come out of here, then we are ultimately subjectivists, and that's the dilemma of the non-Christian. We have all these people arguing that science says... science doesn't say a thing if it's coming out of your head, then you're saying that no truth exists unless you personally have invented it, or the human race has collectively invented it. But that's to say there wasn't any truth prior to human beings doing that, which then denies, essentially, that the Creator of the universe exists. Similarly, ethically we recognize "human right" given by God, we don't grant them as though we create them and then give them to others.

Now this is a fundamental point; this is fundamental! Where do rights come from? Are they there and we're discovering those rights, or are

those rights made up by man, because someone gets 51% of the vote, or we swing the U.N. councils and so forth, and we get them to convince us of that. So it's a fundamental point, and the point I'm making at point three is that this is not being discussed. If you listen to the culture, you listen to the media, you read the editorials, everybody assumes that, well, I got a right. Well, wait a minute, wait, wait, wait! What do you mean you've got a right? Where do you get a right from? Now the founding fathers very clearly declared it, didn't they, in the Declaration of Independence: our Creator has given us inalienable rights. And they used the word "inalienable." Now why do you suppose they used the word "inalienable," the adjective, with rights? Because if God gives them then man can't take them away. And that was fundamental to the whole politics of the American Revolution. If the rights exist prior to the King of England, then the King of England can't take them away, and if I have the right I'm here and I don't care what the king says, because I have that right.

So these are big, big, basic ideas and we need to really get our heads together and help out our neighbors and our friends in the work place that don't ever seem to think these things through. It is just not being thought through. So, stealing is seen in this section to include taking away God-given rights; not just taking away property, but taking away God-given rights. That is a form of theft.

So now let's look at the first section, verses 19-20. This is parallel to Deuteronomy 15, which we've already gone through. "You shall not charge interest to your brother-interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest. [20] To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess."

Now what is going on here. Up front, remember, from Deuteronomy 13, we are not talking about business loans here; we are talking about charitable loans, we're talking about loans, not to all Jewish people, but to the poor. So that's the context of this. And the idea there, as I point out on the bottom of your hand out, the economy of theocratic Israel demonstrated what redemption means; citizens were not to be debt slaves. Remember, Israel was to, in their politics, in their sociology, in their legislation, in their daily lives, that nation, if they would adhere to the Mosaic Law, was to drama, it was like a play, like you're coming to see theater, it was a laboratory theater to the human race of what redemption looks like. So you can't see redemption in heaven, it's invisible. So you have to have a visible form of redemption. And the visible, physical, observable form of redemption was freedom from debt. That's what the word redeem means, it means to buy out of being in debt.

So that's the big idea, and the slavery that's mentioned here in the Scriptures, in the confederate cause they're always talking about slavery is justified in Scriptures, well, that's a little farcical, the slavery in the Scripture isn't kidnapping people and treating them like property, slavery in the Scriptures meant debt slavery. You know, show me a passage in the Scripture where a slave isn't in the economic context. Every single place it's always an economic situation. We're not talking about the slavery in the Colonial era, 1700, 1800, 1900, that's a different form

of slavery. That would have been a capital punishment under the Old Testament, Numbers chapter 1, anybody that kidnapped somebody, it's a capital offense. So there's a difference in the slavery.

Well, this slavery here, Proverbs 22:7, very simple, "The rich rules over the poor and the borrower is slave to the lender." Now at this point, I don't have a handout up here so I can't see where the blanks are; have I covered all blanks yet? I'll try to guess where they are. Okay, the event, the picture of redemption in the Bible that undergirds these passages like you're looking at, what do you suppose is the historic event that pictures redemption, collectively? Exodus. They were slaves to Egypt and they were redeemed. What does that mean? They were free, they were brought out of their slavery in Egypt. So that's a picture of redemption. God didn't want them to be going back to that sort of thing again. So that's why He had this kind of lifestyle and why He wanted them to act in a {?}.

Now I have a point there, you with a people group, and that's our diagram here, and this shows you that the rule that we're looking at in these two verses, verses 19-20, this rule applied only to those who were theocratic citizens. You're going to see a discrimination here, yes there is a discrimination, an economic discrimination. And you have to ask, why is that discrimination here? Because we look here, and remember, the Israelites, the people group fully responsible for obedience to Yahweh's law out of gratitude for deliverance in Egypt, full inheritance title to the tribal land. The nokree, down below, that's the foreigner, the Nokree was a Gentile who lived temporarily in Israel, probably due to business, and did not receive "contract" blessings. So there's a discrimination in this application of this rule; it goes only to the theocratic citizens, not to the Gentiles outside the theocracy. Why is that? Because inside the theocracy was this drama of what redemption looks like and God wanted His people to act in a certain way, different than the Gentile. So that's why He wanted them to obey this rule.

Now, we already covered Deuteronomy 15:1-8, and we pointed out that it applies to the poor. This is not a general socialism policy and I'm emphasizing that because there's guys, like the fellow who's acting as a spiritual counselor to our President, Jim Wallace, who is an "evangelical" (in quotes) but he's a socialist and he's prepping the government by going back into passages like this and saying this justified socialism. Well, it doesn't, and they're unfortunately so Scripturally illiterate that they can't tell the difference. But if you look at the context here, we're not talking about socialism, we're talking about charitable loans to poor people.

So let's look, then, at the issue. It says you will not charge interest to these people. Now let's deal with the matter of interest; this is economics, obviously it's making a claim, do not charge interest. Now it's not saying giving money to the poor, this is a loan. The poor have to pay the loan back, so keep that in mind, this is not a charity thing here, in one sense it's a charity thing, it's trying to help out the poor people, but there are several things that have to go through our minds, is who the poor are and how they are defined, how did they sense that someone was poor here. And then second, what are the economics of interest? What controls interest rates? You've seen this diagram back in chapter 15 but

it's good to review this. This is how interest rates are set. Interest rates, and pretend you're the banker now, this is how to understand interest rates, it's your money and you're going to loan your money out to somebody else.

Now the problem is if you're loaning your money out to someone else, you obviously don't have use of that money while it's being loaned to someone else. So now what happens. Well, you want a little charge back for that, for several reasons, and there are three reasons. The first reason why you want money back is to cover a risk of default; you're giving a thousand dollars out to someone, it's not 100% certain you're going to get a thousand dollars back, so you've got to add something to that person you're loaning to cover the risk of default. Now in a godly society, domestic Israel versus the foreign nations, which do you think had the lowest risk of default? Obviously the godly society. Now this is something that people don't understand today because the whole world, and the whole society thinks the solution to a problem is education. That's a Greek idea, by the way, Aristotle and Plato thought that, the Greeks thought you could solve all social problems by education. There's a big idea collision here folks, it's not in the Bible. The Bible says it's an ethical problem, not an educational problem. The Bible is not against education, but education is not sufficient to form an economically successful society, because you need ethical behavior.

So here's the point, then, that the interest risk, the risk of default is lower, due to higher personal integrity, in a godly society than in an ungodly society. This is another example of the fact that sin costs money, something never discussed today, absolutely avoided, in business courses and economic courses, the cost of sin, it figures in the interest rates. If you have a sinful society your interest rates are going to be higher because the risk of default is greater.

Then you come down to here, another problem, and that is, if you loan out a thousand dollars, you're forfeiting the present use of your money, so you're pushing the use of your money off into the future. Now the problem you have there is what is the future going to look like when you get the thousand dollars back? What kind of history is there? If you're pessimistic and you think the world is going to end tomorrow are you going to charge a higher interest rate or a low one. You're going to charge a higher interest rate, right. So the idea, then, if you are pessimistic about the future, which paganism is, then you're going to jack up the interest rates because you can't tell what's going to happen tomorrow. If you can't forecast the future because you don't have any confidence in progress, then you're going to charge a higher interest rate. On the Christian basis, in Israel, they were optimistic about the future, of course they didn't obey God, their future wasn't optimistic, but the idea was that if you obey Yahweh the future would be blessing, the future would be better than the present. That's not because they were educated, it was because they were obedient to God. And within the theocracy, remember, moral cause/effect is dramatized by an immediate reaction that you can see. That's number two.

Now number three, what is going to be the state of the currency; you give a thousand dollars out there, now ten years from now, five years from now, when you get the thousand dollars back, are those thousand dollars back

that you get going to buy the same amount of material that they could buy today? Not if prices are increasing. Right now, for example, we see gold and silver and the commodities jacking up all over the place, all over the world, and it's because all the world is using paper money, and the paper money is decreasing in value. It gives you the illusion that gold and silver are really more valuable; no they're not, the currencies are less valuable. That's what's driving the gold and the silver price up, plus a few other things. But the idea here is if you have an inflation, which really in one sense it's a wrong word to use because the dollar isn't inflating, it's deflating. The dollar is decreasing in its purchasing power, so that's the inflation situation.

Now what was the form of money in Israel? Was it paper or was it metal? It was metal, silver and gold. Now how you... on a dollar you have it printed, this is one dollar, five dollars, ten dollars, twenty dollars, how do you deal with silver and gold. You weigh them, which gets into weights and balances. Now what was the Mosaic rule on weights and balances? You don't tamper with them. Now the idea of untamperable weights and balances meant what as far as the currency goes? It was stable, it didn't inflate, you couldn't inflate it because a shekel was a shekel. You weighed it. So that's why the Mosaic Law had very tight restrictions on weights and measure. That was the guarantee that you would not have an inflated currency. Now inflation was ubiquitous in the ancient world and they had all kinds of ways of doing it. The first one was coin clipping, and the Romans did this, the Greeks did this. What'd they do is they'd clip a little part of the metal off the coin so that there was less and less metal; on, say a one shekel coin they'd clip a little bit off of it. Now what did that do to the weight of the shekel? It was now less.

So the shekel was decreasing in value. And that's what's happening to our dollar bill, and it's not just ours, it's the Euro and everybody else, all the currencies are in a race to see who can get the least valuable currency because all governments are doing the same thing. Now politicians like this, this is the escape mechanism that politicians use to pay off debt. The way you pay off debt is to inflate the currency so you can pay off all these big debts. In other words if you pay off a thousand dollars and you decrease the buying power, when you go to pay off you can pay the thousand dollars back but they're not worth what the thousand dollars was worth when you made the loan.

Here's a simple example to think about inflation; you have, say, two thousand, twenty-five hundred square feet in your house. And you know, you have an extra {?} so you want three thousand square feet in your home. Well, it's very simple, shrink the ruler, doesn't that produce three thousand new square feet. But the point is, in reality, in the real world it hasn't done anything. So the idea of prices going up, this is just an arithmetic problem with printing paper money, it has nothing to do with real wealth. And you know that very well because today compare what your salary is today with what it was twenty years ago. Isn't it higher, much higher? Are you any better off than you would have been twenty years ago with the same salary, everything else being equal? No, so what's changed. The wealth hasn't changed, the dollar has changed. And the dollar has to change because you can't get rid of trillions of dollars of deficit without either defaulting, which nobody wants to face that, where the

dollar is worth nothing, or you let the air out of the balloon gradually. And that's what's going to have to happen because Europe can't do it, Greece can't do it, Spain can't do it, Italy can't do it, the United States can't do it. And then the problem becomes who wants to buy your debt if you're deflating the currency; nobody wants to buy your debt. So in order to sell your bond, what do you have to do? Raise the interest rate because nobody else is going to loan you money. So guess who is going to have all the interest when the dollar collapses? The Chinese.

So you're watching a major shift in our whole country. And you know what's going to be destroyed? Christian missions, because missionaries have to use the American dollar in foreign lands, and the American dollar is decreasing. What happens to the missionary abroad in foreign countries? Already folks trying to set up a radio center, what are they going to do there? Honduras, what are you going to do there with three children. Thirty dollars isn't going to cut it in three or four more years. Thirty dollars won't buy beans. And so there goes Christian missions. So this is the insidious result of politicians that keep selling programs because we want this program, we want that program, and so forth, debts don't matter. Oh yes they do! The birds come home to roost.

So here is the idea that when you loan money in the theocracy, where you had stable money, you were not to charge interest. Now there was a cost then, if you couldn't charge interest who made up the difference. Well, look at the purpose clause at the end of verse 20, what does God promises. See, there's a promise associated with this, "that the LORD your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land," and what's he talking about? He's talking about labor, right, "set your hand in the land" is their agricultural economy. So God promises to compensate for the risk of giving charitable loans to the poor.

So let's look now on the outline, there are three things here, the qualification for a charitable loan, the obligations of the borrower, and the promise to the lender. The qualification for a charitable loan. The person must be poor, now there's a little deception going on today in how we define the poor. And the Bible indicates, and I quoted there, "an insufficiency of the material necessities of life; having little or no means to support oneself." I think we all can understand that. In the 19th century that's what the definition of poor was, but that is no longer the definition of poor in our economy. Think of the bell-shaped curve. The way the poor are defined today is a wing of the bell-shaped curve. Now what's the fallacy involved here? You could have a progressive society with everybody getting wealthier, the bell-shaped curve is moving this way, but the poor aren't going away, because they're always defined relative to the average. And when you do that you can invent massive amounts of poor people by simply shaving greater portions off one of the wings of the bell-shaped curve. So this is how poverty is defined, and you hear all these people talking about poverty, you want to stop and say how are you defining poverty, please, I want your definition. And inevitably your answer will be, oh well, it's the lower ten percent or something like that, or relative to the national average.

Obligations of the borrower, now the borrower, that is the poor person that received this charitable loan, there was obligations. The first one is he must pay it off as much as possible before the Sabbatical year,

remember, every six years these loans went away, and so, you know, as you get to year one, okay, I only have five years left; year two, another four years left; year three, I only got three years left, it was harder to give charitable loans as you got closer to the Sabbatical year. And that's why, remember back in Deuteronomy 15, hey, wait a minute, you see a poor person don't say in your heart, oh, gee, it's the fifth year, if I loan money I'm not going to get much back. That was a temptation, and God, what did He say? He said I will bless you to compensate for that. You've got to trust Me to do this; see, this involves, ultimately, faith because Yahweh promised... well, Yahweh's not stupid, He knows when He made this rule that people were going to think, hey, wait a minute now, man, this is the fifth year pal, and you're asking me to give a charitable loan, I've got one year pay back. And they risked servitude because remember, the person if he defaulted on the loan during that six year period had to work off the debt, and he'd be a debt slave. So all this was on the shoulders of the borrower, this was not free money, it was money to be paid back. And then promise to the lender, as I just said, God will bless him.

Now there was an error in the medieval church; the medieval church argued that all usury was evil, therefore, they prohibited all interest, including business loans. Well, what do you suppose that did to the business economy in the Middle Ages. The Christians weren't loaning money, but guess who was loaning money? The Jews. That's how the Jewish people became bankers and Hitler comes along, oh, the Jews own the banking business. Yes, stupid, who drove them into the banking business? A thousand years of Christians that argued that usury was wrong, and then blame the Jews for being bankers; they were just shrewd people that took advantage of the stupidity of the believers, the Christian church. Don't blame Jews for that. So that was an error, and hopefully people understand the difference between charitable loans and business loans.

Now it says, you say there's no exception here, oh yes there is, verse 20, see the exception; here's your discrimination, here's economic discrimination. "To a foreigner you may charge interest," that's the nokree, that's the Gentile, and the Gentile who was a poor person, yeah, he would be charged an interest rate, and in the going Gentile culture and economics, remember we went to Deuteronomy 15, there was 20-50% interest rate. That's the kind of interest rates we are talking about. You say oh, geez, why was it 20-50% interest rates? Because they were Gentile cultures and the risk was high, so the interest rates were high. So that's how the whole thing was.

So the summary then is the "redeemed" are not to be enslaved; when circumstances threaten their well-being they are to be "delivered" by a loan. Their redemption gives them the right of economic freedom, which is not given to those outside of the Kingdom because economic reality reveals spiritual reality. Okay, have I missed any underlines. Up at the top, expecting interest is not different is not different, this is an illustration, is not different than expecting rent. Expecting interest is not different than expecting rent, both involve borrowing an asset for a time period; the borrower is getting to use someone else's property. Rent is like interest, and it was peculiar because people that fuss about usury, they go ahead and rent, not seeing the fact that logically they're equivalent.

Next blank, qualification for charitable loans, must be poor, defined absolutely as "an insufficiency of material necessities of life; having no means to support oneself" not relatively compared to national wealth, as is done to day to justify growth of a government. There's a difference here, that's why you want to be careful because you're going to have evangelicals that will point these texts out to you and use them, carelessly and hastily to justify some sort of socialist program. That's what I'm trying to guard you against here by giving you the context and letting you see and really understanding these texts. The next blank, one living as a redeemed one. Anything else; okay, the error of the medieval church: failing to distinguish between charitable and business loans, they didn't see the difference because they got hung up on the issue of usury, and usury was involved in both of them, so they knocked both of them out.

Now down at the bottom, you'll see where I've got 1 John 3:16-19, that's the New Testament version of this Old Testament spirit of charitable helps. "Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his bowels from him," bowels are considered to be where the emotions of the body are expressed economically, how does the love of God abide in him? . . . by this, and John then goes on to say is "by this," that is, by giving a brother in need, "by this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him." That's sort of like the James text, see, the assurance that we're in fellowship with the Lord comes by our willingness to deal with those situations. So John connects our fellowship with how we're dealing with our brother that's in deep need. And then the action, those three things I have under that, the action is analogous to God rescuing us from the servitude to sin and Satan, you see the point; someone who is just so burdened and crushed economically, you come to their aid as God did to you; He ought you out of sin, He brought you out of bondage, so there's an analogy between the spiritual unseen and the economically seen thing. The action is directed toward fellow believers, not the world at large, notice. This is addressed to believers.

So just like there was that discrimination between the theocratic citizen and the nokree, so even in 1 John 3 you see the direction is toward the Christians. That these believers are genuinely poor without family support and unable to work. The qualifying passages are 1 Timothy 5:3-4 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10. That's where deacons and local churches have to go into those passages, because, believe me, there are panhandlers that come from church to church to church, just milking them dry. These people are professional moochers, and you have to qualify this because the Lord holds deacons responsible and the churches responsible for money that was given in the Lord's name and to promiscuously dissipate those funds is another form of theft. So church administrators have to be very careful about qualifying this. All right, so much for that, those two verses.

So we get into the economics and basically what we said it's guarding against theft of the right to live as a redeemed person, to want to steal from that person's right. Now we get into this oath thing. And here we get into really an amazing thing. So verse 21, 22 and 23. When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. [22] But if you abstain from vowing, it will not be sin to you. [23] That which

has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth." Now what is this doing in a section that deals with theft?

Here's the way I see it. There's an analogy that's going to develop here, and this passage looks only on one half the analogy. The relationship between us and God with respect to vows has an analog in everyday contractual relationships. So you have an analogy going on. Now here's the analogy. When we promise God that we are going to do something, we place a debt on ourselves, we have to produce. Now you say, well what's the transfer here, I don't understand the transfer of value. In other words, the one making the oath inherits a debt; he's got a performance debt, he's got to take and complete that vow. Now why is this a form of theft to not complete a vow? Because the person to whom you vowed is going to make choices that involve costs and if you default on the promise you have cost that person, and therefore you've stolen from him, because on your promise he made life-changing decisions, and you don't come through, you've caused a cost. So it's a form of theft here. Now we'll unravel this as we go in here.

First, let's look at the Abrahamic Covenant, we all know that, we won't need to turn to the text but Genesis 15, that was that scene where God put Abraham to sleep, and there was the burning light that went in between them, and you remember, before Abraham went to sleep he cut the heifer in half, and the light went between the two pieces of heifer. Now that is technically called in the Old Testament an "oath of malediction." Now an oath of malediction, malediction means bad saying, an oath of bad saying, or a malediction is calling judgment upon myself if I don't do my oath. Now the stunning thing about that text in Genesis 15 is God, in street language, what God is telling Abraham is I'll be damned if I'm not going to come through with this oath for you, Abraham. Now why would God give an oath to Himself like this? Because the Abrahamic contract is the rest of history, thousands and millions of people are going to have to make decisions to trust, just like Abraham trusted in the Lord. And they're going to make life-changing decisions in order to do that. And if God isn't going to come through, there's millions of people out there that have been stolen from.

So that's why up front, the Abrahamic Covenant that is the ground covenant of all covenant of all the other biblical covenants, God swears and oath by Himself, that I will bring this to pass. And that's a picture of divine election. If you want to see what divine election looks like, God is promising this, how He pulls this off through human responsibility we haven't got a clue. But we do know that it's not God in committee with man that's guaranteeing this thing; it's God and God alone that is guaranteeing that that covenant is going to be fulfilled. And so that's the basis for the stability of it.

Now, Hebrews 6, we don't have time to go to that but if you study Hebrews 6:16-18, the author of Hebrews picks up on this and he points out that it was precisely the oath in the Abrahamic Covenant that gave endurance to the Jewish people. It was that which gave them that confidence that there would be a performance of the promise.

Now we want to an analogy and a famous study, if you turn to Joshua 9, the next book, we're going to see what an oath did over 400 years. So in the next ten minutes we're going to cover four hundred years of history.

Joshua 9 is going to show us of an example of a contract between men. In chapter 9, the Gibeonites, who are Canaanites, fool Joshua. And if you look there, it's called the treaty with the Gibeonites, it says in verse 3, "But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai," they were scared. So they wanted to protect themselves. So they deceive, they get old sacks, they disguise their identity, [6] And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal," and they say, oh, "We have come from a far country," well, they hadn't, it was down the road from where Joshua was. [7] "Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, 'Perhaps you dwell among us, so how can we make a covenant with you?' [8] But they said to Joshua, 'We are your servants.' And Joshua said who are you, and where do you come from?" And they told a big story and so forth and so on, they were so fearful of what's going to happen. Then verse 14, this is what happened, this is how this contract got started. "Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD, [15] So Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them to let them live."

What had God said not to do with the Canaanites? Don't make covenants with them, and here they go ahead, you know, they're just at the beginning of the conquest, and boom, already screwed up. And they did so because they entered into this thing hastily, they didn't stop, they didn't pray about it, they didn't say oops. We all do that, this is a case of.... I've made stupid decisions and they're always decisions made quickly, without thinking through, without praying about it. So here Joshua gets the whole nation involved in this thing.

So now in verse 16 it says, "And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them." So now they've got a big problem because now they know they're in conflict. Watch the dynamics here. God told them not to make a covenant, they make a covenant and it's a sworn covenant by oath. So what happens, does the covenant go away? Let's look. [17] "Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon," and so forth. [18] But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the ruler of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers. [19] Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, 'We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them. [20] This we will do: We will let them live lest the wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them."

So now here's an example, they have sworn an oath that was out of the will of God, but they have to stick with it. Stupid thing but now they're locked into something here because they swore in the name of God. They shouldn't have done this. [21] "And the rulers said to them, Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them." And so they become servants. Well, that's nice, until we get to chapter 10 and since these guys were really Canaanites, and they weren't from a far off land, guess

what the other Canaanites around the Gibeonites found out? Oh, these guys have aligned themselves with the Israelites, now we're going to fix their little wagon. So now they start a war with the Gibeonites. So now what happens?

Now we've got verse 6 of chapter 10, the war started, the other Canaanites are going after the Gibeonites, and then in verse 6, "And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, 'Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered against us.'" So now Israel gets sucked into a war because of this treaty that was established with an oath to God. And of course this chapter goes on, and those of you who are familiar with the Scriptures here know what happened. This is the famous thing where all of a sudden they go after these people, verse 10, "So the LORD routed them before Israel, killed them," this is the bad guys, "with a great slaughter at Gibeon," not the Gibeonites but the people attacking them at Gibeon, "chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah." I drove that little road and it's quite a little way and when you're on that road and you realize that this was going on toward the end of the battle, these guys were tired.

[11] "And it happened, as they fled before Israel," and watch what the Lord does here, "the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with sword." You want to talk about ballistic trajectories, this targeted munitions, and so they killed them. And [12] Joshua spoke to the LORD," because now he needs illumination, he doesn't have our illuminating flares that we use, so, "Sun, stand still over Gibeon;" and the moon and sun stood still. This is one of the most famous incidents in all the Word of God. And if you look at the end, verse 14, there's a textual comment about what happened. And it says, "There has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of man; for the LORD fought for Israel."

An unnecessary battle because the nation Israel entered into a contract but they swore the contract in Yahweh's name, and Yahweh honored that, because they said we swore it, we're sorry Lord, we stuck with this thing, but we swore it in Your name, we're not going to desecrate Your name, so we're going to stick with our word. And look what the Lord did to come get them out of a jam; I mean, it's just amazing, the Lord stopped the sun and the moon when these people honored a treaty that they vowed I God's name. I think that's a powerful story. But that's not the end of the story.

Turn to 2 Samuel 21, 400 years later, still dealing with the oath with the Gibeonites, the oath that was not in the will of God. Now this verse, you'll have to, when we get into the end of Deuteronomy we get into the cursings and the blessings, but 2 Samuel 21:1, "Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD." Why do you suppose David inquired of the Lord? What would a famine be doing to the economy of the nation? Wrecking it. What had God promised was going to be true for the nation's economy? It should be blessed. Well, David is sitting here, saying whoa, there's something wrong here, we're not being blessed. So if God isn't blessing us He must be

displeased with us so what's the deal. It took them three years to wake up but nevertheless, David finally did and the Lord answered. Now whether he went to... he probably went to a prophet to find out but we're not told here in the verse, so he does an investigation, because the contract of God says that. So "the LORD answered, 'It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.'" Oh-oh, who are the Gibeonites? The people that were sworn to be protected by Israel, and Saul, the first monarch, the first centralized government, he goes in and he kills the Gibeonites.

[2] "So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them." So now David is having to deal with the survivors of Saul's attempted massacre, and so he gets them back and he says oh-oh, now what do we do. "Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites;" so there they are, they're Canaanites, and then the story of 2 Samuel gives us a little note, "the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah." So here's a guy, a religious hotshot who wasn't paying attention to his own history. And obviously forgot or ignored the oath that had been promised, but God hadn't. So that oath is 400... think of that, 400 years, I mean subtract 400 years from now, this is 2011, minus 400 years is 1611, this would be like something happened in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Bradford, and these guys on the Plymouth colony had made some vow to God and we're getting held accountable for it in 2011; this gives you some idea of 400 years have come and gone to this thing.

So now [3] "David said to the Gibeonites, 'What shall I do for you? And what shall I make atonement for, that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?" The idea here, David is arguing, is that I need my country blessed, and I'm not going to get them blessed if God is angry with us, so what can I do to right the wrong, and the wrong is a violation of an oath made in Yahweh's name. [4] "And the Gibeonites said to him, 'We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house; nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us.'" So again, looking at your outline, where I have Deuteronomy 21:4-6, focus upon the family life of Saul, not on their economic assets. Now notice what the Gibeonites are arguing here. They're not going to be bought off; there's an issue here of justice, and people have died because of this. And what the Gibeonites in effect are saying is our people who were killed are worth more than silver and gold. You don't put a price on what he's done to our people. So now we're dealing with some lex taliones, and eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

So the descendants, now, you say well why should the descendants be hauled up and killed? The answer appears to be that the descendants of Saul who were cognizant of this did not break an disassociate themselves from the Saulide Dynasty. They were still... of course, for economic reason they didn't disassociate themselves from the Saulide Dynasty because the Saulide Dynasty had gold and silver and that was their economic sustenance. So there was an economic incentive not to, you know, just kind of look the other way on the issues because after all, I want to keep my social security check coming. And they didn't disassociate themselves. God doesn't randomly kill people here these people are considered to be guilty of being part the Saulide Dynasty.

[5] "So they said to the king, As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel, [6] let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD chose." Very interesting, notice where they're going to be hung, they're going to be hung right in Gibeah, which was near where Saul lived, which was also where the Gibeonites were. So it's going to be obvious to the local people that live there, that justice has been rendered. "And the king said, 'I will give them.' [7] But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan," now there are two Mephibosheth's here, and every once in a while you get some Bible critic, oh ha-ha, there's a conflict in Scripture because there's two Mephibosheth. Well, there are two guys with the name of Mephibosheth, "But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan," that's because again, "the son of Saul because of the LORD's oath that was between them," so now we got a second oath that figures into all this. So because of the oath that David swore with Jonathan, they can't break that either. So Mephibosheth is saved, [8] "So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, and five sons" and the text is ambiguous here whether it's Merab, which I think it is, not Michal, because Michal is said to be childless, "the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai," and so forth. He goes on, [9] "and delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD. So they fall, all seven together, and they were put to death in the days of the harvest." So it is a public demonstration that justice has been rendered. The Saulide Dynasty has been judged.

Okay, that's an oath, now we have to say what about the implications of this. So we're going to run about five minutes over but I want to get to the last sheet on your outline and maybe in the Q and A we can fill in some blanks and stuff. The theft here is, if you look at the italicized, I've tried to summarize this in two sentences. A promise given is a debt owed. The promise given is a debt owed and why is that? Because the promisee, that's the one to whom the promise is made, makes economically important decisions assuming certainty of performance. If the performance fails, then he is owed for the added costs of acting on the promise. Look at the last sentence carefully; this is why theft is involved in this process. If the performance fails, think of a company, your company, you enter into a contract with someone and the guy promises to do this thing and you make all these decisions assuming, you know, the thing is going to come to pass and it doesn't. Who's hung out to dry here economically? You are. So, if the performance fails, then he is owed for the added costs of acting on the promise. So the idea is, this passage centers on what we owe to God but it carries implications throughout the whole society of Israel. And I want to show three slides from Dr. Gary North's commentary because he brings out this economic side; it's very, very important because this strikes at the ethical basis of business. This is not some theological abstraction here, every economic relationship depends on these truths, and when it doesn't work, interest rates rise, litigation arises, and the economy falters.

"After a man speaks, his subsequent actions are supposed to confirm his words, for God's actions

invariably confirm His words. A man's actions are to testify to the reliability of his words." A great sentence. "The more reliably he speaks," now watch the economics here, "the greater his productivity because of his greater value to others." Do you value someone who's reliable more than you value someone who is unreliable. Well obviously, everybody knows that. "Other men can make plans confidently in terms of his words. Greater predictability makes cooperation less expensive. . . Where

the price of something drops, more of it will be demanded. . . .Contracts lower the costs of cooperation, thereby increasing the amount of cooperation demanded." In other words, you start getting a flow of business going here because people trust one another now because people are reliable in what they say.

And then his next commentary, "The social division of labor," in other words, that's why you enter into contractual agreements in the business world because you can't do as efficiently as the guy that you're in contract with, he can do that more efficiently so you contract that out so you're free to do what you can do efficiently, that's he means by division of labor. You can't have a division of labor if you're not going to have reliable contracts; you have to do it yourself and then you've got a big learning curve.

"The social division of labor increases as a result of the predictability of men's words. . . .Increased social cooperation increases the division of labor and therefore increases men's individual productivity and income. . . .Individual output per unit of input increases. Men grow wealthier. Greater wealth makes the tools of dominion more affordable."

So we finally wind up going back to this old slide on God's design, and what did we say was the heart of business? Labor and property, integrity of communication. That's what this is all about. You can't have this efficient, this labor and property thing, efficient unless you first have an integrity of communication. And that's what we've seen in this oath. That's why I believe God made such an issue out of these oaths, because they enter into personal social relationships, and He wanted it clear from the start that His relationship was reliable. So it is a model.

So conclusion then, at the end of your outline, you go to Matthew 5:34 and when Jesus said, "You have heard it said to those of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord." Remember what Jesus is doing now on the Sermon on the Mount, He quotes what the Pharisees are saying, and then He says but this is what I say, "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' 'No'. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one." Now we want to understand what He's saying, He's not saying you can't make an oath when it's appropriate because I give you two examples when Jesus did it Himself, when He was in a court trial and the High priest said I adjure by the living God, Jesus didn't say oh, you can't do that. In other words, there was a formal use of an oath in Jesus own trial in the middle of a court situation, which was acceptable. What He's getting at is what the Pharisees were doing.

So we have to understand, what's going on here, where did the Pharisees screw up on their idea of oath taking.

Okay go down to the Pharisaical teaching. They reduced sin to just overt behavior, so they didn't take into account the heart attitude, they didn't take into account social implications. They were just interested in a rigorous legal definition based on behavior. Example: not guilty of killing if you don't commit overt murder, ignores inner mental attitude before God of hatred of those made in God's image and the social implications which we spelled out in Deuteronomy 19:1-21:23. "Thou shalt not kill" has a lot more to do than just restraining from overt murder. So there's two, there's the inside that Jesus deals with, there's the social side that Moses deals with and both Jesus and Moses are saying hey guys, there's more to this than just saying don't murder because you're going to get caught. That's actually what the Pharisees are saying, he who murders is in danger of getting arrested. Well, no kidding, that's not the spirit of why you don't want to murder, because you spend time in jail. Of course some people think that way.

But now the Pharisees on oaths. Notice what Jesus quotes; the idea here is, and I'm quoting Lloyd-Jones commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, which is one of the great commentaries, by the way, on the Sermon on the Mount. The Pharisees had two false ideas in that first sentence of Jesus; the first one, "thou shalt not swear falsely," what they were thinking about was perjury, the ninth commandment, not the eight, they were just saying oh, it's just a mechanical thing, you know, when you make an oath, don't pretend, as long as you don't pretend it's okay, you can use it for anything. That's a trivial idea.

And then the second one is, "perform you oaths to the Lord," was restricted to certain kinds of oaths. So this is the background, why Jesus talks about hair, and the temple and everything else. Here's what the Pharisees were doing. "[The Pharisees] drew a distinction between various oaths, saying that some were binding while others were not. If you took an oath by the temple, that was not binding; but if you took an oath by the gold of the temple, that was binding. If you took an oath by the altar you need not keep it; but if you took an oath by the gift that was on the altar then it was absolutely binding." [Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, I, 266]

You see what they were doing? They had this rigorous thing about how you could do it and it manipulated, and Jesus said wait a minute, Jesus is saying, you missed the whole point of the oath; the oath is to enter into serious thing, not every day things. When people use an oath over and over and over it's because they must be lying and they have to use an oath because everybody thinks they're lying unless they make an oath. So Jesus said let's get the rider on the horse here.

So we conclude, Jesus deals with the inner mental attitude: Oaths are not needed in ordinary conversation if integrity of language exists... Oaths are not needed in ordinary conversation if integrity of language exists; oaths can become a substitute for unreliable speech (neither Jesus nor the apostles abstained from oath-taking for important matters, Matt. 26:63 and how Paul used oaths in his epistles, when it was appropriate and they did it to make a point where people would have to rely completely on this.

So, that's the idea of charity given to someone in order not to steal their theocratic right to live as redeemed people. The oath things is not to get yourself indebted to other people when you can't fulfill the oath. That's what Jesus... you can't change... don't get yourselves involved in that kind of a situation if you can't perform. We're going to close and we'll have some time afterward.

Question, can't hear. This question is about something in Judges, I'd have to read the context before I mouth off about that, but I don't want to give a hip shoot thing on that without studying the passage carefully, but it's good that you spot that, but you'll see that there's a very serious attitude toward oath taking in Hebrew history; this wasn't taken lightly at all. It got to be trivial in the days of the Pharisees because they basically inherited a Gentile type thing. But I think we need to appreciate the thing that... and that's why I quoted Dr. North, as an economist he senses this. I think we need to appreciate that this is not a little religious text with a few verses that's kind of irrelevant to my daily life. This is fundamental to civilization functioning in any economically viable fashion. It illustrates precisely the fact that it's not that we solve our problems with a government program or we solve our problems with everybody getting a PhD, the solution goes back to an ethical character. If you had an ethical performance think of the millions and millions of dollars that would be saved in the economy.

It's just amazing; I mean, that's why it would be wonderful to see a revival of thousands and thousands of people getting very serious about spiritual things with the Lord. And I think you would see an amazing effect economically in society. And I think it would blow away people that had never even thought about the connection between economics and Christianity. And you can sit there and tell it until the rapture, and it wouldn't make a dent, unless it was somehow people could see this working. And I think we need to, when we can get evidences, like I pointed out, that Institute of American Values thing and anything else that you can grab onto to show people the fact that basically godliness is cheaper, because I think it's an area to come at that is absolutely unpredictable to them, they've never heard it before, they never thought it through before. But certainly these texts in the Scriptures are there for a very important purpose. And this oath thing is smack-dab in the middle of loaning money, and that's why, you know, you connect the two and you say wait a minute, of course, because oaths were used to solidify relationships.

[question asked] That's a good point she's raising about the Asian economies that work well, the Asians are very well educated, but I think there's the case... so how does that figure ethically, well obviously they wouldn't be as prosperous as they are unless they were honoring contracts. In other words, there's an honor in Asia; you don't mess... I mean, consider what they do when they're humiliated, they'll kill themselves, there's a sense of shame. Now I can't trace that credibly back to the Scriptures but my guess is that there survives in an Asian culture some remnant of truth, their respect and honor for their parents, which is collapsing by the way, the more they get exposed to us. I talked to my Japanese daughter-in-law about this, the more they get exposed to us, I mean the young people are getting obese, like our young people, they begin to get "I don't care" attitudes, a certain disrespect for their parents,

unfortunately these are trends. And it's sad that it's being exported from us, not just us as a country but Western civilization. But your question is good, but I think the answer to it is yes, education is important, I mean obviously, to be productive you need to know more about God's creation. The problem is if that is not accompanied by an ethical character it cannot be economically productive, because like North points out, how do you get division of labor if you can't trust one another. And I think you know another example outside of the economy is the collapse of marriage. In marriage you've got a division of labor between man and woman, and where do you see the trust and honor for marriage today? It's going down and down and down, so we can make a prediction, as the trust in marriage goes down and down, trust in general is going down and down and you can't produce an economy that's viable because you've got that risk. The risk eats your lunch economically. So the sobering side of that is that it's really amazing how the Asian culture has survived there. It'd be interesting to study that, where did they get the ethical solidarity. Next time we're going to get onto the issue of property.