

**WCF 22 – “Of Lawful Oaths and Vows”**  
SSOPC Sunday School • Evangelist Millsaps • July 24, 2022

**I. Why Oaths and Vows?**

a. Historical Context

- i. “It looks strange to modern eyes to see a chapter on oaths and vows in a confession of faith. However, if one were reminded of an oath every Monday morning, as were the members of the assembly, or if one had a high view of the State and of a Christian’s civic duties, a discussion of oaths or vows makes considerable sense.” (CVD, 298)

b. Biblical Context

- i. 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment
- ii. 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment

**II. Oaths (Paragraphs 1-4)**

a. The Meaning of Oaths (Paragraph 1)

- i. a part of religious worship (Deut. 10:20)
- ii. a solemn swearing
- iii. calling on God as witness (Rom. 1:9)

b. The Nature of Oaths (Paragraph 2)

- i. sworn by the name of God (cf. Josh. 23:6-8, Heb. 6:13)
- ii. sworn in fear and reverence (Deuteronomy 6:13)
- iii. sinful, if sworn vainly, rashly, or apart from God (Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12)
- iv. warranted by Scripture on occasion (2 Cor. 1:23)

c. The Lawful Parameters of Oath-taking (Paragraphs 3-4)

- i. only to be used when one is fully persuaded (Lev. 19:12)
- ii. only to be used to bind oneself to that which is good and just and true
- iii. only to be used if accompanied by ability (Eccl. 5:2-5)
- iv. only to be used with sincerity (Ps. 24:3-4)
- v. never to be used to bind oneself to sin (e.g., 1 Samuel 25)
- vi. always to be kept if not sinful (Ps. 15:1-4)

**III. Vows (Paragraphs 5-7)**

a. The Meaning of Vows (Paragraph 5-6)

- i. similar to oaths and made with the same care (Num. 30:2)
- ii. made directly to God rather than to man (Ps. 76:11)
- iii. made voluntarily (Deut. 23:21-23)
  1. on the basis of faith
  2. in service of duty
  3. out of gratitude
  4. in order to obtain what is lacking (e.g., 1 Sam. 1:11)
- iv. binding oneself to carry out duties and lawful activities

b. The Parameters of Vow-Making (Paragraph 7)

- i. never to be used to bind oneself to sin (Acts 23:12-14)
- ii. never to be used in a way that hinders obedience
- iii. never to be used if impossible to keep
- iv. never to be used in isolation from the promises of God
- v. to be made without committing the errors of Rome
  1. e.g., vows of celibacy, poverty, monastic living, etc.