

*swear by his name."*

- 4) Using an oath in conversation overlooks God's demand for honesty. We should not need to add oaths to our statements. That brings us to our third point.

### 3. The Correction

#### a. James assures us there is a better way to talk.

- 1) James states, "*but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay.*" What does that mean? Well, "yea" and "nay" are old English words for "yes" and "no".
- 2) When you say "yes" then make sure that the answer is truthfully "yes". Always tell the truth! If you always tell the truth, you will never need to swear an oath to support your words. (Colossians 3:9) "*Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*"
- 3) Be a trustworthy person. (Ephesians 4:25) "*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*"
- 4) During trials and troubles, "Prayer, not cursing and swearing, is the right method of finding relief." Expositor's Bible

#### b. James includes a motivation for change.

- 1) He writes, "*lest ye fall into condemnation.*" Those who continue to use oaths in their conversations will face judgment. (Exodus 20:7) "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*"
- 2) Christians who curse or swear are hypocrites. They claim to know and love the Lord, but they shame or blaspheme the Lord with their mouths. This is not right!

**Conclusion:** If you have had a habit of using oaths, cursing, swearing or even euphemisms in your conversations it is time to stop. Such words do not please the Lord. Breaking the bad habit will not be easy, but through prayer and self-discipline you can change. Avoid listening to corrupt words as much as possible. Censor your TV and video viewing. Change your music. Keep your mind clean. Determine to speak the truth.

**Song:** Cleanse Me - 166

# Swear Not!

22 January 2017 AM - James 5:12 - Jas16 - Scott Childs

**Introduction:** I doubt that there has ever been a time in history when so many men, women and children of our world used so much filthy talk, profanity, cussing, swearing and blasphemy of every sort. In the book of 2 Timothy 3:1-2 we read, "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*" While swearing and blasphemy is certainly not new, its use may be at an all-time high. **Read James 5:12.**

**Transition:** This morning we are going to dissect this verse on swearing by looking at the context, the command and then the correction.

## 1. The Context

### a. Opinions differ

- 1) Some Bible teachers think that this verse is not connected to the previous verses but is the beginning of a series of closing comments.
- 2) A few believe that James was returning briefly once again to the theme of the tongue.
- 3) Others see it as related to enduring afflictions. Though we cannot be certain, it seems likely that the context does play a part in this verse.

### b. The context is enduring afflictions.

- 1) How does swearing fit in a context of afflictions and suffering? Warren Wiersbe states, "*If you have ever suffered, you know the answer: it is easy to say things you do not mean, and even make bargains with God, when you are going through difficulties.*"
- 2) In the previous verse, James uses Job as an illustration of enduring afflictions. (Job 1:21) "*And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*" (Job 1:22) "*In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*" Job did not curse or swear or blame God for his afflictions.
- 3) However, James places his emphasis not on profanity or

blaming God, but on using vain oaths to affirm the truth of a statement even if it was not true. This too could be connected to enduring afflictions and persecution. It is like Peter when he denied Christ. He swore to affirm the truth of his lie that he did not know Christ. (Mark 14:71) *"But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak."*

## 2. The Command

The command is simply "Do not swear!"

### a. What does the command mean?

- 1) In English, the word "*swear*" can refer to profanity.
  - a) The Bible strictly forbids using the name of the Lord in any profane way. (Exodus 20:7) *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."*
  - b) Because God is holy and sensitive, I believe this includes the use of **euphemisms** which are **inoffensive expression that replaces an offensive one**. Note what the Oxford Dictionary states about the following words: "golly" is a euphemism for God; "gosh" is used as a euphemism for God.
  - c) Though cursing is not using God's name in vain, Christians ought not to curse either. Words like hell, bloody and ass if used for emphasis are curse words. These and the other foul curse words of our day should **never** come for the lips of a Christian. This includes other euphemisms like "darn" which is a euphemism for damn; "heck" which is a euphemistic alteration of hell.
- 2) The word "*swear*" can also refer to an oath. The Greek definition means, to affirm, promise, or threaten with an oath. This is how it is frequently used in the Bible. I believe this is the primary use that James had in mind.
- 3) James was repeating what Jesus had stated in his Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5:34-37) *"But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:"*

*(35) "Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King." (36) "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black." (37) "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."*

- 4) Jews of the first century frequently used various oaths to back up their statements. They were careful though not to use the name of God in their oaths, lest they blaspheme God. <sup>Wiersbe</sup> Jesus said that using things that God created (e.g., heaven, earth, your head) in an oath was no less an offence to Him than using His name.
- 5) The Jews claimed that swearing oaths were okay as long as they did not include God's name. **David Guzik** in his commentary states, "The Jews of James' time made distinctions between "binding oaths" and 'non-binding oaths.' Oaths that did not include the name of God were considered non-binding, and to use such oaths was a way of 'crossing your fingers' behind your back when telling a lie. It is these kinds of oaths that James condemns."

### b. What then does this command forbid?

- 1) James prefaces this command with the words "*above all things*". By this, he gives this command a place of importance.
- 2) Clearly, James (and Jesus) forbade making oaths in daily conversation which used things God created to emphasize one's truthfulness.
- 3) However, does this forbid taking an oath in a court of law? I don't believe so. Here is why. Abraham made such oaths (Ge 21:24). Jacob swore oaths (Ge 50:5). The O.T. Law prescribed such swearing. (Deuteronomy 6:13) *"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name."* Other examples: (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*