

STOP SWEARING **(James 5:12)**

I. The distinction.

- A. James says, "But above all..."
 - 1. This is a separate idea from what he had just written about.
 - 2. This is a totally separate paragraph in most Bibles.
- B. James draws attention to this distinctive command by basically saying, "Above all else, don't swear."
- C. James wrote a lot about speech and this is another example.
- D. The mouth is probably our greatest spiritual problem and that is why James focused so much on it.
- E. James calls attention to the distinction of this command.

II. The restriction.

- A. Stop swearing by heaven, earth or any other thing.
- B. We are not talking, necessarily about cussing or dirty language.
 - 1. The Bible is clear that we should avoid that because it is a sin.
 - 2. Filthy communication is a sin (Ephesians 4:29).
 - 3. James is talking about a specific sin called swearing.
- C. Taking the Lord's name in vain falls into this category because you are calling for God as your witness by using His name.
 - 1. We hear God this and Lord that, and Jesus Christ this.
 - 2. Misusing His name or profaning His name is using His name for some purpose that calls Him as a witness.
- D. Among the Jews, there was a very complex system of swearing.
 - 1. It had three parts: it was attesting to the truth of what was said, called God as a witness and invoked God's punishment if it was not the truth.
 - 2. I swear to God is heard a lot and an example of this.
- E. They didn't have contracts back then so many resorted to some elaborate swearing with God's name for truthfulness to be assured.
- F. There were many of these in the Old Testament.
 - 1. Genesis 24:3 - Abraham swore;
 - 2. Genesis 26:26-31 - Isaac did the same;
 - 3. 2 Samuel 19:23 - David did it;
 - 4. Nehemiah 10:29 - all Israel did it.
- G. Paul had a vow, which is a type of oath in 2 Corinthians 11:31.
- H. God commanded some oaths (Exodus 22:10-11; Numbers 5:19; Deuteronomy 6:13).
- I. It was regulated by Numbers 30:2 - it was extremely serious to make one of these oaths.
- J. When God's name is used it is extremely serious - Paul did it on one occasion to stress the seriousness of what he was saying (2 Corinthians 1:23).
- K. There are times God made an oath (Genesis 9; Psalm 16:10; Hebrews 6:13).

1. God did this on occasion for one reason.
 2. To show men how an oath was to be kept, not because He needed something to hold Him to the truth.
- L. We make oaths:
1. If you are ever called to a witness stand;
 2. Whenever you get married.
 3. These are serious occasions that must be met with the highest amount of dignity and must be kept.
- M. Notice that James does not say, "Don't swear in the name of the Lord."
- N. This all stems from the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:33-37).
1. The Jews had taken the stand that as long as you did not mention God's name you could swear and not keep it.
 2. This was evasive swearing to hide their evil hearts.
- O. Notice Matthew 23:16-22.
1. Who made these distinctions: the Pharisees, not God.
 2. Swearing by something close to God was supposed to make the person more trustworthy.
- P. It's like us saying, I swear on a stack of Bibles and then saying I didn't swear on the name of God so I don't have to keep it.
- Q. The overall idea was that as long as God's name is not used He is not a partner in the transaction or a witness.
- R. James says cut this nonsense out.
- S. There are times when it is right to invoke God's name.
1. When you perform a marriage you call God as a witness.
 2. Every time I preach, I am calling God as a witness that what I'm saying is in line with His word..
- T. Now how foolish is it to say: "For God's sake this" or "For Christ's sake that?"

III. The instruction.

- A. Simply say yes or no when asked something.
- B. Simple, completely honest speech is the instruction.
 1. We shouldn't have to have elaborate oaths to keep us truthful.
 2. Anything beyond that is from Satan according to Jesus.
- C. When we become Christians we are to change.
 1. This involves our dealings with truth as well.
 2. We should be people of integrity, where our word means exactly what we say it means.
- D. Speaking the truth in every situation sets us apart from the world.
- E. Simply say yes or no and mean what you say.

IV. The motivation.

- A. Why not get involved in these elaborate swearings and oaths?
- B. We will fall into condemnation if we do.
- C. The word for condemnation is the same word as judgment in 2:13.
 1. We will be lost for eternity if we use these oaths.
 2. This word is always used in the New Testament in reference to the

final passing of sentence by God on man.

- D. James is simply saying: "Don't be continuing to blaspheme God's name by lying oaths or you will be condemned to hell."

From a sermon by John MacArthur