

Intro:

XVI. Stop Swearing

A. The Distinction - vs 12a

1. But above all

- a. indicates a difference between the exhortations before and after
- b. but is a transition
  - i. there is no contrast between vs 12 and the previous passage
  - ii. Better translate *de* (but) as “now” or “and” introducing a new subject
- c. above all
  - i. showing that this one vs is not to be looked at as “oh yeah, one more little thing”
  - ii. It is a preeminent and pervasive command
- d. Speech has been a topic in each chapter as a sign of one’s salvation being lived out
  - i. Jas 1:26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.
  - ii. Jas 2:12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.
  - iii. Jas 3:9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.
  - iv. Jas 4:11 ¶ Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.
- e. speech is always a sign of what is in the heart
  - i. Mt 12:34-37; Lk 6:43-45
  - ii. False swearing reflects what is in the heart

2. my brethren

- a. shows and attitude of compassion, not condescension
- b. puts himself in the group not above them

B. The Restriction - vs 12b

1. swear

- a. not used as understood in 21st century English
  - i. illicit, dirty jokes, double entendre, unwholesome, four-letter words, etc
  - ii. Paul forbids these in Eph 4:29
- b. refers to taking oaths,
  - i. James is speaking against a developed complex system of swearing oaths that had entered the church
  - ii. Had its roots in the OT
  - iii. Binding oaths used instead of written contracts
  - iv. A way of calling God as a witness to the transaction and judging the one that didn’t live up to their oath
    - the woman suspected of adultery - Nu 5:19-22
    - the Nazirite vow - Nu 6:2ff
  - v. God expects vows to be kept
    - Le 19:12 'And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

- Nu 30:2 "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

- Ps 15:4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

vi. Making wise oaths like God was also important

- God made oaths to Abraham - He 6:13-17; Gen 22:16-18

- Jephthah vowing to sacrifice the first thing he saw when he got home - Jud 11:30-36

c. do not - a blanket prohibition

2. either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath.

a. James is not forbidding swearing in the name of the Lord

b. reiterating the teaching of Jesus in Mt 5:33-37

i. you have heard of old - rabbinical teaching, not OT

ii. Swearing by anything under God's dominion brings Him into the transaction

C. The Instruction - vs 12c

1. the call for simple straight forward honest speech

a. reiteration of Jesus' words

b. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No,"

2. people of integrity

a. have no need to swear an oath to convince people

b. they would not swear falsely to deceive others

3. speaking truth in every situation will make believers shine as lights

D. The Motivation - vs 12d

1. Consequences of swearing falsely

a. Mosaic law - Ex 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

b. Jesus - Mt 23:16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'

2. judgment.

a. **hypokrisis** - acting under a feigned part, deceit ("hypocrisy")!--condemnation, dissimulation, hypocrisy.

i. translated hypocrisy 6 of 7 times used in NKJV

ii. **krisis** - decision, a tribunal; justice (especially, divine law):--accusation, condemnation, damnation, judgment.

iii. Used of God sending unbelievers to hell - Mt 23:33; 2Pe 2:9

b. never used in NT of judging believers

i. chasten - **paideuo** - to train up a child, educate, or discipline (by punishment):--chasten(-ise), instruct, learn, teach.

ii. Word for judgment seat in 2 Co 5:10 - **bema** - a step, foot-breath; a rostrum, a tribunal:--judgment-seat, set (foot) on, throne.

c. Not saying that believers can't fall into this sin

i. Jas 3:2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

ii. Showing the seriousness of not being what God has called us to be