

James Chapter 5C

From time to time in our study of the book of James, I pointed out the connections that exist between the writing of James and the words of the Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

- Like the Sermon on the Mount, the writing of James is both sublime and penetrating. At times, it has actually proven to be more penetrating than sublime.
- The piercing Words in this Epistle have taught us that personal holiness is something that we simply cannot attain by human effort alone.
- A simple recap of the commands given by James reveals the fact that we have not yet arrived in a completed state of Sanctification.

He commanded us to be joyful in trials, patient in affliction, immovable in faith, steadfast in temptation, humble and benevolent with the poor and needy, unbiased in our judgments, lively and active in our faith and holy in speech.

- Apart from the Grace of God in Christ, and the continued work of the Holy Spirit in our lives there is no way that we could even begin to obey the commands of God that come through James.
- There are times when these poignant words confront me like the handwriting on the wall in the book of Daniel, “**You have been weighed in the balance and come up wanting.**” UGG!
- This is especially true of the penetrating words regarding the use of our tongue.

James began his assault on the tongue with a simple command in Ch 1.

1:19, **let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;**

- IN the context James is saying that we should be quick to hear the Word of God. God’s Word is sharp and powerful, it renews my mind and dramatically adjusts my attitude.
- At the end of Ch 1 James laid the groundwork for a deeper conviction that was yet to come.

1:26, **If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.**

- Ouch! This verse cuts us to the heart. It brings conviction for the Words that we speak to our spouse in the heat of an argument; those times when we grumble about a brother in the church or discipline our children in anger.
- But James doesn’t let up; He keeps the pressure on in chapter 2.

2:12, **So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.**

- And then in Ch 3 James shocked us with an all-out assault on the misuse of the tongue that, frankly left us wounded and bleeding.

3: 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.

5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind,

8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

- James was right, we all stumble in many ways. Thank God for the renewing of our minds and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit whereby we are being changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ.
 - While no human being can tame the tongue, God is able to do far more than we could ever think or imagine according to the power that is at work within us,
- Moving on to Ch 4, James addresses the practice of “Slander” and “Boasting.”

4: 11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law.

4: 13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

- When you bring together all of the directives that James issues regarding the tongue it is truly eye opening. NO wonder Solomon says:
- Pr 21:23 **Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.**
- Last week we heard yet another command from James

James 5: 9 **Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.**

Now as we arrive at the conclusion of this letter, James, has three final commands for us to consider, Three additional instructions that deal with our speech, Three more directives concerning the use of our tongue.

- The first is found in 5:12 and it deals with swearing, not the kind that you hear on the loading docks but the kind that you hear in a courtroom. (tell the truth..)
- Second, James commands us to pray. To use our speech in both petition and praise God.
- Third we are to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another that we may be healed. (we won't get through all of these today)

James 5: 12 **But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.**

- Above all! The integrity of your speech, the honesty of your words, the reliability of your communications is of great importance.
- Most likely, you have heard that sad but truthful joke, How can you tell when a Politician is lying? His lips are moving.”
- If we were to be perfectly honest, it’s not only Politicians who struggle to speak the truth; since the fall of man in the Garden all men learn how to speak from “The Father of Lies.” (The devil, that old Serpent)
- Jesus describes the “Father of Lies” for us in the Gospel of John.

Joh 8:44 **He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**

- When he speaks, his native tongue it is a lie.

David says that lying is a congenital problem with the wicked in Psalm 58.

Psalm 58:3 **The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.**

This foundational dishonesty that is so prevalent among men has necessitated the establishment of vows and oaths, contracts, treaties and pacts among individuals, among corporations and yes, even among the different nations.

- In international relations and business dealings, legal contracts and peace treaties have become necessary in order to assure honesty and accountability between parties.
- These practices are not new they have been going on for thousands of years.
- The Jewish system of swearing oaths had its roots in the O. T.

In a time when written contracts simply did not exist, oaths served as binding agreements between different people. To take an oath was to attest to the integrity of one’s solemn promise. It called on God as both the witness and the sovereign enforcer of the promises that were made.

- These vows were to be taken very serious because God Himself would judge the one who defaulted.

In a world that is overridden with lies and deception, there are times when vows are necessary

- Oaths are still, widely used today whenever we need to express the seriousness or the solemn nature of our promise.
- We take an oath to tell the truth when we testify in court.
- Presidents take an oath to uphold the constitution.
- We use vows when we ordain officers in the church.

- If you are married, you vowed an oath at the wedding altar.

But Oaths can be misused when they are employed to deceive, when they are used to manipulate or take advantage of someone.

- Oaths are disrespected when they are taken lightly, when they are spoken rashly or flippantly. When we are being disingenuous.

Jephthah in the book of Judges 11 is the poster child for the misuse of an oath.

- When he rode into battle He vowed to God that if he was victorious in battle, He would offer as a burnt offering, the first thing that would come out of his front door when he returned home.
- Maybe he was thinking it would be that pesky dog that he wanted to get rid of,
- To his shock and dismay the first one to come out of his door when he returned home was his one and only child, a beautiful young girl.
 - That didn't end well for his daughter.
 - Here in Ch 5, James is forbidding the misuse of an oath.
 - Whether it is to enhance your religious appearance, to exaggerate your commitment, or to cover up a lie you must not speak an oath foolishly.

BUT there are times when an oath can be very comforting to us. Especially when it is God who is taking the vow. Consider the vow that God spoke to Abraham.

Hebrews 6: 13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." 15 And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.

16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. 17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,

Multiple times throughout the O.T. you hear the phrase, "As I live, declares the Lord."

Again, this is evidence of God affirming the truth of His Word through an oath.

- But God wasn't the only one to affirm essential truth through the swearing of an oath.
- Abraham took an oath to validate the fact that he had dug a certain well. (Genesis 26)
- The two Hebrew spies under Joshua's command gave an oath to protect everyone who took shelter in the house of Rahab when God gave them the city of Jericho. (Joshua 2)
- David swore an oath with Jonathan (1 Samuel 20)

With these things in mind I really don't believe that James is issuing a blanket prohibition against taking any and all oaths as some would say, I believe he is forbidding the foolish practice of swearing falsely. A practice that had become very prevalent in Jewish society.

- The Rabbis taught that the only vows that were binding were vows that were made, **“In the Name of God.”** If you invoke the Name of God, you were bound to fulfill your vow.
- BUT If you swear by Heaven or earth; If you swear by the Temple you could look honest and religious BUT those oaths were not binding.
-
- Think about it this way:
- The Jewish leaders were very much like those little children in the schoolyard who make a pledge and swear foolishly. They might say:
- My dad really is an astronaut! My dad is a spy! **“Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye.”**
- I promise I’ll give you my lunch money next week, And all the while they have their fingers crossed behind their back.
- Next week they say, **“That didn’t count! I had my fingers crossed!”**

If you are a fan of the Show Survivor you hear people taking oaths all the time: Swearing on their mother, their father, their children, making all kinds of false promises to manipulate other players in hopes of winning a million dollars.

- Jesus confronted this corrupt practice in the “Sermon on the Mount” and it is obvious that the words of Jesus lay the foundation for James’ command.

Matthew 5:33 **“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ 34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.**

SO what do we take away from the words of James today?

- How does God want us to affirm the truth of our words ?

James 5: 12b, **let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.**

- James is calling all of us who believe to use simple, straightforward, honest speech with one another at all times.
- We who belong to Christ must be a people of TRUTH. After all He is the Way the Truth and the Life.
- We must be a people of TRUTH because we have dwelling in us, The “Spirit of Truth.”

WHY do we lie anyway?

- Very often distort the truth when we seek to protect someone else’s feelings.

- We tell lies when we are afraid of what other people will think of us. If they really knew the truth, they certainly wouldn't want to be around me.
- We lie when we want to manipulate someone. We will lie to get what we want.
- From a very early age we learn to lie in order to avoid punishment. It didn't work then, it doesn't work now.

NOW that we are IN CHRIST, We have become new creatures, the old is gone and the new has come. We have become partakers of the divine nature and we are called of God to put off the Old Man (with all of His bad habits) and Put on the New Man who is fashioned in the image of Christ.

Ephesians 4: 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

- God help us, We should have no part in lying, we should be characterized as those who have "Laid aside falsehood" (*Set it aside like a filthy garment*) because falsehood is incompatible with the new nature and unacceptable to our Lord.
- Our reputation for truthfulness should be so consistent, so dependable that we really don't need to swear any kind of oath. A simple yes or no should suffice.
- Our speech and our actions should not be motivated by the fear of man but by the fear of God.
- The integrity of our Word should be as trustworthy as a signed contract.

We must learn to trust in the sovereignty of God. When we do, then there is no need to manipulate people, no need to arrange circumstances in order to have things go our way. We don't need to lie to cover up our failures and inadequacies. And when we sin we can run to God, repent of our sin and He will always be faithful and just to cleanse us from all sin.

We can trust in the TRUTH, that God is able to work all things together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

Let's ask the Lord to help us.

- If you do not belong to Christ, If you have never been born of God, Never received the pardon of sin and the gift of the

IF you have been saved from the wrath of God by faith in the sacrifice of Christ.

- Let's ask the Lord for the power of His Spirit to put off the old man with all of his lies and

