

**Wisdom about Oaths, Prayer, and Restoration of Faith (James 5:12-20)**

A. Do not Swear at all. (5:12)

1. Oaths were an essential part of Israelite tradition. People would swear by the gods (1 Kings 20:10) or make a vow according to the name of the Lord (Lev 19:12) or by the heavens or some other object that he or she would do something (Matt 5:33-37).
2. Jesus taught that oaths should be ceased. When obligating oneself, all that was necessary was simply, I will do it or I won't do it (Matt 5:33-37).
3. James repeats the tradition of Jesus regarding oaths. He says, just say you will do it. One does not need to bind oneself by the heavens or by anything else to make something happen. Just try to do it.
4. We swear by so many things, by our children, on the graves of our ancestors, by God himself, that things will happen. Stop doing this and just simply do what you hope to do. Otherwise, you bind yourself supernaturally. This goes back to the caution about stating what one will do or not do (James 4:13-15). We have to be careful with our words, they do have power.

B. Pray, Pray Some More, and Pray with Oil (5:13-18)

1. Prayer is always in order for the purpose of God's counsel. But also to reveal the will of God. James commands praying and singing. These are two aspects of living in the Spirit. People who pray much are in God's presence much and have reasons to sing and make merry in the Lord.
2. The Elders of the church, those who have been chosen by God to lead the community, are equipped to pray for those who are ill. They are able like the disciples (Mark 6:13) to anoint people with oil and see God deliver them. The anointing process goes back to priests (Exod 29:29) and kings (1 Sam 16:13). The oil becomes symbolic of the Spirit's presence. It is an act of faith to suggest that the elder or the healer believes God's Spirit now rests upon the individual. That person should receive healing.
3. In these moments of prayer, forgiveness of sins is given because sin is oftentimes the cause of illnesses. Prayer in this way is intercessory.
4. Elijah and others prayed and believed. Even though they were humans who were flawed. Their faith in God received an answer.

C. Restoring Those who have Fallen Away (5:19-20)

1. People in the church will fall into error. Errors creep in and coax people to start believing errant things.
2. When we are following God's leadership, when we correct someone erring, we restore those people and their sins are put away.