

## James 5:12

### I. Neg: do not take an oath by anything (12a)

#### A. My brothers, first of all, do not take an oath

“first of all” is not in terms of time, but in terms of importance. It could be translated, “above all” or “especially” cf. 1 Pet. 4:8.

To take an oath is to swear by the trustworthiness and authority of something else to establish your own trustworthiness. The problem with doing so may be in involving God in our own (relatively) small concerns, and thereby bringing holy things down to a profane level. Or the problem may be the dishonor we give to God and holy things when we do not keep our oath. But in light of the later context (see below), James says the main problem is that we would be the kind of people who need to make an oath before they are trusted.

#### B. The kinds of oaths to avoid:

1. Neither [swear by] heaven
2. Nor [swear by] the earth
3. Nor [swear] any other oath

### II. Pos: Rather, keep your word, in order to avoid judgment (12b-d)

#### A. Keep your word faithfully and simply (12b-c)

In this, James is just repeating the teaching of Jesus, from Matt. 5:37

In other words, your speech should be so trustworthy that an oath would be unnecessary. This means that God’s people should be so consistently faithful in keeping their word that their trustworthiness will be well established and unquestioned.

1. Let your “yes” be “yes” (12b)
2. And your “no” [be] “no” (12c)

#### B. Purpose: so that you will not fall under judgment (12d)

To be unfaithful and untruthful is a sin, and therefore will bring judgment. To dishonor God by taking an oath in His Name and then breaking it would bring even greater judgment.

The way to avoid this judgment is not only to avoid taking oaths, but also to be a truthful, faithful person who never breaks their word.