

Do Not Swear

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[0:00] James 5, we'll begin reading in verse 7 and read through verse 12. Be patient then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.

You too be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Lord is standing at the door.

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.

You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. Above all, my brothers, do not swear, not by heaven or by earth or by anything else.

Let your yes be yes and your no, no, or you will be condemned. James, the half-brother of our Lord, is very urgent to have us live holy lives.

[1:08] He's writing to Christians, to the church, scattered throughout the world, and he is calling us to the radical pursuit, the all-out pursuit of holiness. And in this little letter, five chapters, there's something like 50 commands, 5-0.

And these commands are spelling out what the holiness looks like that we are to be pursuing. And if you have found James' description of holiness to be a standard that is above you, that is because it is God's holiness.

And indeed, we all have come short of the holiness of God. That is why he sent his holy son, Christ, into the world to live the holy life that we couldn't live and then to die the cursed death that we deserved for our unholy lives.

And that's why he sends his holy spirit into the heart of every repentant sinner and transforms the life. Because by ourselves, we could never live this way.

And so we come to the book of James again this morning and to the next command that defines holiness. And it's do not swear. Do not swear.

[2:29] We look, first of all, at the importance of this command. Whatever these words mean, we can't help but see the seriousness of this matter by the opening and closing words of verse 12.

The bookends of this verse say this is important. It places stars and yellow marker before and after it. Don't miss this.

Notice the opening words. Above all. Above all, my brothers. Now, if you've been with us for the course of our study in James, you know that he's talked about some pretty serious sins in this letter. Sins of double-mindedness. Being for God at one moment and being for myself and sin the next. He's talked about blaming God for temptation. Showing favoritism.

Anger. Moral filth. Bitter envy. Selfish ambition. Hearing God's word without doing. And what should we say of all the sins of the untamed tongue?

[3:37] Boasting. Speaking evil of our brother. Grumbling. Cursing. Coveting. Coveting that leads to fighting and quarreling and even killing.

We've heard of worldliness that is hatred toward God. And we've heard of hoarding wealth and living in luxury and self-indulgence in the last days. And even murdering innocent men.

These are some pretty heavy sins. Sins. But now James says. Above all. Above all.

Do not swear. Here's something that needs your preeminent care. To avoid above all else. Serious stuff indeed. And then his last words also underscore the preeminent importance of this warning.

When he says. Or. You will be condemned. To not heed this warning and to be unrepentant in this matter is to be damned. James does not mince words with us.

[4:43] Brethren. Judgment awaits those who swear. Swear. And so with its importance. Firmly set before us. Let us ask then its meaning.

What does it mean? Do not swear. Now the word here for swear does not mean to cuss children. It doesn't mean.

What. You often think of as swearing. It rather is a word that means to make an oath. To make an oath. Or a vow. And in an oath.

We appeal to God. The God who knows all things. We appeal to him to be our witness. That what we are about to say is true. And that what we promise.

We will do. And so we swear an oath. The most common form of an oath in the Old Testament was. As surely as the Lord lives.

[5:41] What can be any more sure than that? And they would swear upon the existence. The presence of God. As surely as the Lord lives. I'll be at your house tomorrow and help you with that.

Such was. An oath. That might be taken. In the name of the Lord. It was meant to confirm the truthfulness. Of our word. And to put an end to dispute.

Hebrews 6. 16. God says. Men swear. By someone greater than themselves. And the oath confirms. What is said. And puts an end to all argument.

Now the very presence of oaths. In this world. Proves. That. Falsehood. Abounds. The truth has fallen in the streets.

For if everyone always spoke the truth. If everyone always kept their promise. There would never be a need for taking an oath. And confirming the truthfulness.

[6:40] Of what we said or promised. No need for oaths. Oaths are needed. Because men are dishonest. Don't be naive.

Telling the truth. Is foundational to the well-being of any society. Of our court system. Our business world. Our families. Divorce.

Is the result. Of breaking a promise. And it wreaks havoc. In the family. Business. Business. Depends on people. Telling the truth.

And keeping their word. Where one party fails. To hold up their agreement. They're part of the contract. There's a breaking down.

Of business relations. He said he'd do the job. For so much. And afterward. He bills me. For a third more. Insurance fraud.

[7:37] Is. Is just a form of lying. One. Corporate accountant. Accountants. Can lie. With numbers. And then there's not only the.

The family and business. But our court system. For our courts. To render justice. It is absolutely essential. That judges. And witnesses. Speak the truth.

All interaction. Among men. Relies on truth telling. But when. Truthfulness. Is compromised. The unraveling. Of our society.

Is inevitable. Indeed. It is already at hand. And in such. A fallen world. God instituted. Oaths. On special occasions. To serve. As a spoken.

Guarantee. That what I am about. To say. Or promise. Is true. You can hold me to it. As the Lord lives. It is a reminder.

[8:35] That God is witness. To everything. That we say. Or promise. Now that is a reality. Whether you ever speak. That. Oath or not. And we ought to live. In that reality.

That every time. We speak. God is listening. And knows. If it is a hundred. Percent. True. Whenever I promise. God is watching. To see if I did.

Exactly what I said. I would do. And an oath. Simply. Reminds myself. And my hearer. That I am making this promise. And this statement. In the presence.

Of the all seeing. And hearing God. So it was meant to. To guard. The truth. It was meant. To make us think twice.

Before lying. Or being unfaithful. To a promise. And this would be true. Especially since. There is usually a penalty. For perjury. That is for lying.

[9:29] Under oath. A stiff penalty. So that is the meaning. Of swearing. As the word is found. In your Bible. It is to take an oath. To confirm the truthfulness.

Of what is said. Or promised. And then. We come to its qualification. I think that in this passage. We need to. To. To say. That this does not mean.

That all oath taking. Is sinful. Some have. Have seen this word. From James. Here. And Jesus. Similar words. In Matthew chapter 5. And they've.

They've concluded. That all oaths. Are sinful. We actually have a chapter. In our confession. Of faith. On lawful. Oaths.

And vows. Chapter 23. And it refutes. Such a position. That would say. A Christian. Can never. Under any circumstances. Take an oath. The biblical evidence.

[10:27] Does not let us. Come to that conclusion. Let me quickly. Give us five points. To show that not all. Oaths are sinful. Number one. In the Old Testament. God not only permitted. Oaths.

But even. Commanded. That they be used. In certain situations. Deuteronomy. Chapter 6. In verse 13. Fear the Lord. Your God. Serve him only.

And take your oaths. In his name. That's a command. Take your oaths. In his name. Jeremiah 4. 2. If in a truthful. Just and righteous way.

You swear. As surely as the Lord. Lives. Well then the nations. Will be blessed by him. And in him. They will glory. Jeremiah suggests.

That there is a sinful way. To swear an oath. But that there is also. A truthful. Just and righteous way. To swear an oath. In God's name. Isaiah 65.

[11:21] In verse 16. Some people say. Well that's just the Old Testament. Only. It was only permitted. In the Old Testament. In the New Testament. We have a different law. And we're not to swear. Any oaths at all. Well Isaiah.

Spoke about the New Testament days. He spoke about the day. When Messiah would come. And this is what he says. About Messiah. And his day. In Isaiah 65. 16.

He speaks of that day. When he. He who takes an oath. In the land. Will swear by the God of truth. No more of this. Swearing by Baal. And swearing by this and that.

They will swear by the God of truth. So that's the first reason. That we say. Not all oaths are sinful. God not only permitted. But commanded their use. Secondly.

We find a holy angel. Raising his right hand to heaven. In Revelation chapter 10. And verses 5 and 6. And he swore by him. Who lives forever and ever. That there will be no more delay.

[12:19] Thirdly. We find the apostle Paul. Used oaths in his letters. To assure his readers. Of the truthfulness of his words. Many texts could be cited. Second Corinthians 1.

23. I call God as my witness. That it was in order to spare you. That I did not return to Corinth. It's the language of an oath. To confirm the truthfulness.

Of what he says. Paul does that. In his letters. Reason number four. Our Lord Jesus spoke under oath. When he was on trial. Before the highest Jewish court.

In Matthew 26. The high priest said to him. I charge you under oath. By the living God. Tell us if you are the Christ. The son of God.

And Jesus replied. Under oath. Yes. It is as you say. The Jewish rabbis tell us.

[13:14] That when Jesus responded that way. His words. Under oath. Were just as if. He had taken the oath. On his own lips. Himself. And said. I swear.

In the name of the Lord. Who lives. Yes. It is as you say. Otherwise. He would have had to say. Now wait a minute. I am not swearing an oath. But he goes along. And swears.

To the truth. Under the oath. He is put under. And then lastly. Number five. God himself. Swore an oath. On more than one occasion. Several references. Hebrews 6.

13. When God made his promise. To Abraham. Since there was no one greater. For him to swear by. He swore by himself. Why does God do that? Because he wants Abraham.

And all. Who follow in Abraham's footsteps. Who trust in the Lord. To have. The assurance. That God keeps his word. God keeps his promises.

[14:11] And so he. He lowers himself. To our level. And swears an oath. That would confirm. The truthfulness. Of his promise. I mean to keep. What I say. And so he swore.

By his own name. Because there's no one. Higher than himself. To swear by. So for those five reasons. I say. There. There's other passages.

We could turn to. The Lord has sworn. And will not change his mind. You are a priest forever.

Psalms 110. Quoted in Hebrews 6. 21. And all this proves. That there are rare times. When it is an appropriate.

It is appropriate. For the Christian. To use an oath. From our confession of faith. Paragraph 2. Chapter 23. God's word. Sanctions. The taking of an oath.

When weighty. And momentous. Matters. Are engaging attention. And when truth. Requires confirmation. And an end. To strife.

[15:06] Is desired. It wasn't that long ago. That we saw our president. Sworn in. That's right. He took an oath. Didn't he? He made a promise.

And. Did so under oath. Witnesses in court. Are often called. To. To swear an oath. At weddings. We. We ask the couple. To exchange promises. In the presence. Of God. And these witnesses. We appeal. To God.

To witness. What we're about. To promise. To know. A vow. So that's. The one qualification. I would make. To this passage. And now we.

Come to it. Because something. Is being prohibited here. What is the prohibition? What is. Ruled out. For the Christian. What is James.

[16:01] Telling us. Well what James. Here. And Jesus. In Matthew. Is condemning. Is not all oaths. But the misuse. And abuse. Of oaths. And this was something.

That was very common. In his day. It's why Jesus. Weighs in on it. Many times. In his ministry. Why we find James. And what is perhaps. The first letter. To the. The churches.

Full of it. We find it. Throughout the Old Testament. This was a common problem. Both among Jews. And Gentiles. The abuse. Of taking oaths. And so the prophets.

Had to weigh in on it. Zechariah 8. 17. The Lord hates those. Who love to swear falsely. People were swearing falsely. So many commands.

Are given against. The abuses. Of the oath. And. James. And Jesus. Are pounding. The same drum.

[17:00] James. Is simply teaching here. What. Our Lord Jesus. Had taught him. And what he had heard. From the Lord Jesus. Listen to what Jesus said. About oaths.

In the sermon on the mount. Matthew 5. 33 to 37. Again. You have heard. That it was said. To the people long ago. Do not break your oath. But keep the oaths.

You've made to the Lord. But. I tell you. Do not swear at all. Either by heaven. For it is God's throne. Or by the earth. For it is his footstool.

Or by Jerusalem. For it is the city. Of the great king. And do not swear. By your head. For you cannot. Make even one hair. White or black. Simply let your yes.

Be yes. And your no. No. Anything beyond. This. Comes from the evil one. And then James.

[17:55] As it were. Boils that down. To this. Above all. My brothers. Do not swear. Not by heaven. Or by earth.

Or by anything else. Or you will be condemned. So what are the oaths. Being condemned. Well. First of all.

The overuse. Of oaths. Whereby. Whereas they are to be a rare. Thing. Used on a rare occasion. They had become a part of ordinary conversation.

And when they became that. They became useless. And even worse. Let me explain. And illustrate. What I mean. Two. Two boys are talking. And one just got back from California.

Where he was vacationing. And surfing in the ocean. I swear by God. The waves I searched. Surfing. Were. Were ten feet high. Later in the afternoon.

[18:53] He's playing baseball with the guys. He's got two strikes. And the next pitch. Comes by. And he swings. And it doesn't go anywhere. And they say. You're out. And he says. No. I nicked it. And there's no. No catcher. No referee.

They're just. Pick up game. And to convince them. That he. He's telling the truth. I swear. Promise to God. I nicked it.

And after the game. They go to the Dairy Queen. For a blizzard. He doesn't have any money. With him. So he asks to borrow five dollars. From his friend. And says. Swear to God. I'll pay. I'll pay you back tomorrow. There's all sorts of ways.

That we can abuse. And overuse oaths. And all sorts of ways. That men swear. That what they're saying. And promising. Is true. I swear by my mother's grave.

Cross my heart. Hope to die. Stick a needle in my eye. I'm telling you the truth. You remember that one? That'll date you. Scout's honor. You're swearing upon your scout's honor.

[19:57] Promise to God. All sorts of. And they're all meant to make. A sound more truthful. More convincing. That what we're saying. Is true. Now. Why do we need to say that.

So often. By their overuse. It works just the opposite. Doesn't it? The more one uses an oath. The more he announces. That you cannot trust.

His bare words. If he's always having to swear. To the truth. He's the one you need. To watch out for. He's probably lying.

A lot to you. His truthfulness. Is it best suspect. Why does he need to use those oaths all the time? Does he not always tell us the truth?

When he's at bat. It creates a double standard. It tends to divide. Divide our words into two groups. There are those words that are backed with an oath.

[20 : 54] And there are those words without an oath. Well how are you to take the words when he doesn't swear an oath? Is it less important to tell the truth then? To keep your word then? If multiplied oaths are needed to make our words be believed.

Then we have a problem. With our integrity. People know us. To not be a man of our word. If they need an oath. To always confirm that we're telling the truth.

You see we don't need to constantly make oaths. Because that's all we should be speaking anytime. Is the truth.

Let your yes be yes. And your no no. And your proven track record. Your consistency. Of telling the truth. Will carry.

All the weight. That is needed. I know her. When she speaks. It's gold. If she promises. She'll do.

[21 : 54] That's what you want. And it's the consistent track record. That gives you such weightiness. To your plain words. I would rather have the plain words of some men.

Their plain promise. Than to have other men's signature. On a contract. Made in the presence of witnesses. They'll find a way around this.

But I know him. To be a man of his word. And that's all I need. That's what you want to be. That's what James is telling. You must be. You must become a man. A woman. A boy. A girl. Of your word.

Your word is your bond. Your word should be. All. That is. Needed to be said. Yes. No. Simple. Plain. Speech. Do people know you.

By experience. To be a man of your word. So the overuse. Of oaths. Was one of the abuses. Another abuse. Of the oath. Was that. Men often hid their lies.

[22 : 50] Behind oaths. Now this is really distorted. What's an oath for? To confirm the truthfulness. Of what I'm going to say. And men came to use an oath. To hide a lie behind.

They called on God as witness. Only as a cover. To make it sound like they were telling the truth. When all the while. They knew they were lying. They never meant.

What they promised. And so instead of using an oath. To confirm. To confirm the truthfulness. Of what they said. They used an oath. In order to deceive. The very opposite.

Of the purpose. Of an oath. So men swear by God's name. In order to make it sound. More believable. You say.

Do Christians. Ever do that? Call on God. Appeal to God. To make their. Statement sound.

[23 : 51] More believable. Well there's a. There's a holy apostle. An apostle of Jesus. And he's in the courtyard. Of the high priest. And his master Jesus.

Is inside. Being tried. By the Jews. And he's outside. Warming himself. By the fire. And a servant girl. Looks closely at him. And says. You are. One of them.

You were with. That Nazarene Jesus. But he denied it. I don't know. Or understand. What you're talking about. Just brushed it aside. And then he goes out.

By the entryway. And she sees him there. And looks at him again. And she. Said again. To those standing around. This fellow. Was one of them. And again. He denies it.

After a little while. Those standing. Near. Said to Peter. Surely. You are one of them. For you are a Galilean. Twice.

[24 : 48] He's just said. No. He's just lied. This time. He began. To call down. Curses on himself. And he swore. To them. Doesn't mean he cursed.

It means he took an oath. I call. On the God of heaven. As witness. I don't know. This man. You're talking about. The apostle Peter.

Used an oath. To hide. His lie. To make it sound. Believable. Why did he swear. It didn't.

It wasn't to confirm the truth. It was rather. To facilitate. His lie. It's bad enough. To say he didn't know Christ. It was a multitude.

Times worse. That he swore. An oath to God. That he didn't know Christ. Christ. As if.
[25 : 45] He is a man. Who is governed. By. The presence of God. In whom he speaks. As if that means the most to him. He's a God fearing man.

And if he says. As the Lord lives. And then says something. You know. He means business. No. That's not how he used it.

He used it to hide his life. You're going to lie lie. But don't drag God's name into it. Ten times worse. It increases the gravity of your sin. Of course I don't mean the lie.

But I'm telling you. Peter. Multiplied his guilt. When he swore an oath. And added that to his. Threefold lie. Pretending reverence for God's name.

When he was really just using it. Using God. You see. For his own ungodly purposes. Making God. The accomplice of his crime. Partner.

[26 : 44] In his lie. So men are using God. To pull the wool over men's eyes. To deceive. When they call on God. And.

Swear an oath. They use it to cheat their neighbors. So this was going on. Constantly. In the scriptures. They were. Swearing to God. This this plow is as good as new.

And he knew as well. That. It had been broken. And rewelded. And. Yet he. Swears. An oath. To help make the sale. As the Lord lives.

I'll return your money for this horse. If it dies in a month's time. Never intends to keep his promise. It was a direct sin against God's honor. It was profaning God's name.

It was dragging God. Into a lie. That's profanation. That's. Misusing the name of the Lord. Our God. Do not swear falsely. Leviticus 19.

[27 : 41] 12. Do not swear falsely. By my name. And so profane. The name of your God. I am the Lord. No wonder. James has above all. Above all.

Do not swear. No wonder. Condemnation is coming. For those. Who don't repent. Of this sin. Exodus 20. In verse 7. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

For the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless. Who misuses his name. So what was meant. To confirm the truth. Is now used. To sell.

A lie. And so there's a double standard. For our words. Those. With an oath. Or without. But that soon spills over. Into a double standard.

For our oaths. Now there are oaths. That are binding. And oaths. That are not binding. You see. It just keeps breaking down. And we've got all this. Careful.

[28 : 39] Finagling. Is what it is. Wickedness. And so you've got binding oaths. And non-binding oaths now. Oaths that use God's name. Were binding. But oaths that. Did not use his name.

Were not considered binding. So if they wanted to get out. From under the obligation. To tell the truth. They might swear by heaven. They might swear by earth. They might swear by the temple. They might swear by Jerusalem.

And put something. That is closely associated with God. In the place of God. So two neighboring farmers. Have made a deal. Number one. Farmer number one. If you help me harvest my crops. First. Then. When you're ready. I'll help you harvest your crops. I swear by heaven. That I'll drop whatever I'm doing. And come whenever you need me. The deal is agreed upon.

And farmer one. Has his field. Harvested. And so. Farmer two. Sends. The message. My crops are ready. Come and help.

[29 : 36] And no one comes. Sends another message. No one. He finally goes. And says. Now listen. You. You swore an oath to me. That you would come. And drop whatever you were doing. Well.

I'm building bigger barn. To keep my. Crops in. And. Besides. I. I swore by heaven. I didn't swear by God. Come on.

You've got to be kidding me. You think. You think. To get out from under. The obligation. To tell the truth. Because. You're spinning out. These little word games. Yeah.

Splitting hairs. Was so common. In the days of James. And. And Jesus. Pharisees. Were experts at it. So Jesus. Takes them to task. More than once. Matthew 23.

It's one of the largest sections. In that. Chapter of denouncing. The Pharisees. And scribes. Woe. After woe. After woe. And one of the biggest. Woe sections. Is on. The false.

[30 : 36] Use of. Oaths. Woe to you. Blind guides. You say. If anyone swears. By the temple. It means nothing. It's a non-binding oath. But. If anyone swears. By the gold.

Of the temple. He is bound. By the oath. You also say. If anyone swears. By the altar. It means nothing. But. If anyone swears. By the gift. On it. He is bound.

By his oath. You see. The word games. That they were playing. To get out. From under. Playing. Speaking. Of the truth. And keeping. Their promises.

They were swearing. By all sorts. Of things. By Jerusalem. By. The hair. Of their head. By their head. The. The oath taker. Was conveniently.

The only one. Who knew. The difference. Between a binding. And a non-binding oath. There were so many. That were made. Oh. I. I swore. By. The altar.

[31 : 29] But not by the gold. On the. Where are you reading that? How was I to know that? When. Unsuspecting me. Thought that you were telling me. The truth. Only learns later.

That it wasn't binding. All justified. Because. It's no big deal. To be untrue.

To a non-binding oath. They said. And that was just another way. To nullify the word of God. By their traditions. They abandoned God's standard. Of always speaking the truth.

To your neighbor. And they came up with a system. Whereby they were free to lie. As much as they wanted. As long as they hadn't sworn. What they considered. To be a binding oath.

Now that's the context. In which Jesus and James lived. It's the context. Of much of the Old Testament prophets. Men had become ingenious.

[32 : 27] At inventing new ways. To tell lies. And break promises. To devise intricate ways. Of excusing themselves. For many guilt to do so.

But God in heaven. Considers. Any words that they speak. As binding. As if they. Spoke an oath in his name. And say.

People aren't done. Inventing ways to lie. And ways to cover their lives. No. It's with us. Today.

Our society. Is coming unraveled. And it makes. Oaths. A farce. Because they had become a tool. To do evil. Because they had become a tool.

To deceive people. To cheat. And defraud others. It was like. Making a promise. With. Your fingers crossed. Behind your back. Didn't you promise?

[33 : 29] Give me a break. Since when does this. Give me a license. To lie. To not speak truthfully. With my neighbor. What is. Where did God say that?

What? Well. I've. I've. I've. I've. I've. I've. I've. Come up with that. You know where that comes from? That. Comes from hell.

You know what Jesus said? Simply let your yes. Be yes. And your no. No. Anything.

Beyond this. Comes from the evil one. after all who was he well he is called by jesus and john ate the father of lies the father of lies and he told the first lie that introduced lying into our world these abuses of the oath are from him he traffics in lies and he tempts others to do the same and ever since men fell into believing his first lie they've become what jesus calls children of the devil who show that they are children of the devil by their likeness to their fathers he lies they lie that's just one likeness anything more than this comes from the evil one anything more than simple plain spoken truthfulness comes from the evil one psalm 58 3 even from birth the wicked go astray from the womb they are wayward and speak lies they come out of the womb already on a track to speak lies because they've got a bad heart that they receive from their father and their father and therefore all the way back to adam who when he sinned by believing satan's lie came a fallen creature himself and gave birth to other fallen human hearts and so has been proper propagated liars liars fill the earth so these are the ways that the oaths were being abused in jesus day perverting the oath from serving the truth to actually promoting lies well what's the answer the answer to this mess we're in james and jesus says is quit your oath taking do not swear neither by heaven nor by earth or anything else let your yes be yes your no be no it's enough and for all ordinary day-to-day conversation the christian should be known for just that plain straightforward unadorned truthful speech and your plain word should carry the weight of a sworn testimony in the law courts just your yes yes your your no you should be so honest and truthful that people know you'll keep your word even to your own hurt psalm 15 lord who may dwell in your sanctuary who may live on your holy hill he who speaks the truth from his heart who keeps his oath even when it hurts yes you gave that estimate yes you gave that agreement you gave that you gave your word that you would do it for so much and you found out later it costs you more price of gas went up or price of materials went up well hopefully the homeowner or the person would understand that but if they don't you keep your word even to your hurt psalm 15 says we are to be that much a people of the truth and known to be such that we would rather lose money on a deal than to ever act in a way contrary to our promises.

Yes, if we've got into trouble by our promise, we need to go and to plead for mercy. But we don't just say, well, had my fingers crossed, price of gas went up. I didn't say God. I said heaven. None of that. Yes. Then let your yes of

promise be followed by your yes of performance. Let your no of promise be followed by your no of performance. Make sure the two match. That's the answer. Well, what's the crucial point? What's it all about, James? Why the big concern? Why are we here in 2009 studying this passage, written some 2000 years ago? What's the big deal, James, that you're making in this verse? It's this, that your truthfulness matters to God, perhaps more than you realize. Your truthfulness matters to God. [38:39] Having commanded us to speak the plain truth, he finishes by saying, or you will be condemned. That gives urgency to James' message. We find it throughout his letter, don't we? Chapter 2 and verse 12. Speak and act as those who will be judged by the law that gives freedom. So speak and promise and speak truth in a way that realize I'm going to be judged by the law.

And remember, he says, don't grumble because the judge is standing at the door. Verse 9. And now in verse 12 again, do not swear or you will be judged.

Damnation awaits the impenitent liar, the impenitent promise breaker. God's just that serious about you telling the truth and keeping your promises.

And it's not just James. It's not just that James has this high view of truth telling. Jesus does. And the spirit of God who inspired the apostle John to write in Revelation does.

In Revelation 21, he takes us to that great white throne and him who sits upon it and he describes the scene. And he says this about the judgments rendered there.

[40:09] Just having spoken of those who will enter into life, he now says, verse 8, but the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

All liars. He doesn't say that about any other category. He doesn't say all unbelievers, all cowardly, all vile. No, but when he comes to liars, he says all liars. I find that interesting. It suggests to me that that men have devised different lies that they tell and different ways that they lie and they think less of them because they're not as bad as some others. Some are bald-faced liars and they know they're telling the truth while they they they speak a lie to your face. That's lying. But that's just one kind of liar. Others tell half the truth as if it were the whole truth.

That's another way to lie. Where were you, daughter? Well, I went here. And that's it.

It may be half truth, but you told the half truth as if it were the whole truth. That's another way to lie. Some lie with oaths. We've seen that. Others lie without oaths.

Some lie by what they think are non-binding oaths. Some lie by not keeping their promises. Others lie by living a lie.

[42:01] Pretending to be something that they are not. And a whole lot of people tell little white lies. You know that kind of liar? Just little things.

But what they said was not true. It was wrong. It was not honest. It was not right. It wasn't true. But it's just a little thing. It doesn't hurt anybody.

And so they're constantly speaking falsehoods. Little white lies. Others tell big black lies. And John says of them all, all liars will have their part in the lake of fire.

This is the second death. You see, there is no little white lie in the sight of the holy, holy God.

It doesn't exist. all liars have their part in the lake of fire. God is called the God of truth in Scripture.

[43:10] He's the God of truth. That means He is truth. He never lies. He never breaks His promise. God is not a man that He should lie nor a son of man that He should change His mind.

That's man's ways. Lying, changing their mind, making promises, backing out of them. God is not like a man. Does He speak and not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?

Numbers 23, 19. No, all that He says He will do. And all that He promises He makes good. Not a word will fall from His lips to the ground without being fulfilled.

And so, to sin against the truth is to sin against the God of truth. It's a strike against His holy character. for no matter how many promises God has made, they are all yes and amen in Christ. Whatever promises He's made, they find their greatest fulfillment in Christ. Christ who says, I am the truth. The Holy Spirit who is called the Spirit of truth.

[44:19] And God, our Father, who is called the living and true God. God, this God has a people, this true God has a people and one of the marks of these people is that they're truth tellers, they're

truth lovers.

They believe the truth, they love the truth, they live the truth, they speak the truth. No lies, no broken promises, no broken appointments that you just walk away from, no broken agreements that you just cop out on, big or small, only broken if you go and ask for that permission.

They're known as people of the word, their word, and that glorifies God. Do you know how it glorifies God when He has a people who always tell the truth?

They don't have to keep adding oaths to what they're saying, they just say the truth and then they keep their word. And they do that in a world that's full of liars. Isn't that glorifying to God?

In a world full of falsehood, when anybody will use a falsehood, a lie, if it'll get them out of trouble, if it'll work their situation to the better, He has a people who will tell the truth even if it hurts their cause.

[45:39] Wow! Who is their God? Oh, He's the God of truth. He sent His Son who is the truth Himself.

It matters much to God whether or not you're true to your word. Have you broken promises? Have you lied? Well, the good news is we have a Savior for liars and promise breakers.

Because we're all in that category. And we all should be in that lake of fire. But there was one who never lied, who always spoke the truth and always kept His promises.

Even that promise, you know, after the resurrection, I'm going to meet you in Galilee. See you there, He says to the twelve. He showed up, didn't He? Even though He had to come up through the grave, He made His way to His appointment.

He's faithful. He's true to His word. And there He is on the inside of the Sanhedrin court. And while Peter outside is denying that he even knows Jesus, swearing to it falsely, Jesus is inside swearing to the truth even though it will mean His crucifixion.

[47:05] Are you the Christ? Christ, swear to us. Are you? All He needed to do was swear falsely. No, and He'd have been out of trouble with this Jewish nation.

But He swears to the truth even though it was to His hurt. But my friend, that was the way by which us liars could be forgiven because He told the truth every time and worked out a righteousness perfect before God's eyes to give to every liar who confesses and trusts in Him.

So trust in Him. And if you say, I am trusting Him, oh, but I broke a promise. I backed out of that and I spoke untruthfully, then come back to this Savior and confess it and He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

What's the verse that goes before? He is full of compassion and mercy. And you'll find Him to be such if you come to Him. He would far rather show mercy and compassion on you than to show condemnation upon you.

Then why will you die? Why will you not come to Him and live? Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near. Let the evil man forsake His ways, His lies, His deception.

[48:29] And the wicked man forsake his thoughts and let him turn to the Lord and He will freely pardon. He's just that gracious. We have found Him to be so.

Let's go to Him in prayer together. Our Lord, Your Word has again held the standard high because You are high and exalted in Your holiness.

There's none like You. We do not pretend to have never lied or been deceptive. We would rather come into Your presence confessing we're liars and we're deceivers and we need the blood of Jesus to come between us and Your holy judgment.

Look on Him and pardon us. Thank You that You're so full of mercy. Thank You that You would rather punish Your Son in our place that we might be spared from that second death that we deserve in the lake of fire.

Thank You for pouring out that fire of Your wrath on our Savior. Make Him more precious to us. Make the truth more precious to us. Make us to hate all lies and create in us a spirit without deceit.

[49:47] We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.