



12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. 13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. 19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. (James 5:12-20)

Our conversations are the means by which we convey our thoughts and feelings to others, and to God. The vocabulary is vital in framing those thoughts properly. Vain words and cursing's often arise from a deficiency of vocabulary. This is inexcusable for we learn the words we need to accurately express our feelings early in life. If our thoughts and feelings are wicked, then we need rely on a profane and vulgar vocabulary to express those thoughts.

Our very first verse of this passage offers a serious reprimand to organized religion that solicits vows and commitments from its members to satisfy often lavish building programs and salaries. **12 "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."** It is enough to give a simple and direct answer to all appeals of the church and of men. If the church asks me to commit to a building fund offering of \$500 per month, and I so commit myself; I will be guilty of breaking a solemn vow if something happens in my life that precludes my meeting that commitment. In that case, the church would have been responsible for causing me to sin. It is enough to commit yourself to doing your utmost with further stipulation. Answer 'yes' to those things you KNOW are possible; and 'NO' to those things of which doubt exists.

13 "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." So, casual swearing and vowing are not acceptable, so what manner of conversation should we exercise, especially toward the Lord of Heaven? If we are hurt and mistreated, let us use our best line of communication for remedy and to the highest Source of Power – PRAYER to our Lord. When we are overcome with joy and merriment, singing the Psalms or hymns will add to the beauty of the moment. By the way, the same applies for the burdens of a sad heart. I have felt hurt and despondent at the treachery of a friend. But when I remember to sing the classical old hymns, my heart is IMMEDIATELY relieved. There is always a revival of spirit that follows the singing of Psalms and Hymns. The sorrow and hurt that our Lord felt the night of His betrayal is inconceivable to us; however, what was the last thing Jesus did between the Lord's Supper and going into the Garden of Gethsemane? *"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."* (Matt 26:30)

In the traditional Book of Common Prayer, we have services set aside for the sick. The clergy (elders) go to that person's bedside and minister in prayer. They anoint the head of the sick person with oil. There is no magic formula to the oil, but the practice is consistent with Scripture and the oil represents our faithful obedience to God's providence in performing His perfect will to either heal the sick, or allow the illness to proceed according to His own hidden purposes. As His ministers, this anointing is performed in the Name of the Lord, and our hearts should be in conformance with His will.

15 "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." Not all prayers – indeed, perhaps MOST – are not offered out of strong faith but out of mere form. If we pray in true faith, and that faith is also fruitful in the heart of the sick, the Lord shall raise him up – either at the last day, or even presently from his sick bed. The minister should practice the very same triage that our Lord practiced – treat the most serious disease first. The most serious of the human diseases is SIN. *"Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."* (Matt 9:2) and then, *"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."* (Matt 9:6) There is also a provision in the Book of Common Prayer for the absolution of sins for the sick – the priest or officiant does not forgive sins, but pronounces the will of God to forgive all sins repented of. This provision of the Prayer Book is consistent with this next verse of today's text: 16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The babblings of faithless prayer will achieve no favor with the Lord, but fervent prayer of the righteous will result in wonders. The prayers of the unrighteous are not heard in Heaven except the prayer of repentance: *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:"* (Psalms 66:18)

17 "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." God is all-knowing and wise. He knows what will happen tomorrow, and in ten thousand years. He knows the end from the beginning. Our understanding is quite brief. We pray for what we presume is the will of God. But God waits. We continue in prayer, and continue in prayer. Finally, when the time is PERFECT, God may grant our

petitions. Our perseverance is a meter of our faith. Our patience is a measure of our Christian character. Remember the words of Elijah spoken of here: *“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”* (1 Kings 17:1) How could Elijah be so certain of his prediction? Did he have power to stop the rain or dews? Not at all. Elijah exercised great faith in knowing the will of the Lord. The words Elijah spoke were according to the will of the Lord, that is why it came to pass. When we pray God’s will, the result will always follow according to our prayer.

19 “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” Allow me to suggest an illustration given by the Rev. D. L. Moody regarding the importance of the soul’s salvation: *““One afternoon I noticed a lady in services whom I knew to be a Sunday School teacher who should have been teaching a class of boys. After the service I asked her where her class was. “Oh,” said she, I went to the school and found only a little boy, and so cancelled the class.” “Only a little boy!” said I. “Think of the value of one such soul! The fires of a reformation may be slumbering in that tow-headed boy; there may be a young Knox, or a Wesley, or a Whitefield in your class.””*

The value of a single soul is eternal. How can we treat its value with little regard? Suppose you go before the Lord at the last day without a single soul in tow! How will you feel? He may ask, “But where is your sister, or your brother, or your child, or your parents, or your friend.” What will you say?