

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 322 – November 18th – James 1:19-2:17

Works frequently referenced in these notes on James

Johnstone, Robert	<i>Lectures on the Epistle of James</i> , Banner of Truth (Reprint of 1871 ed.), Edinburgh, 1977
Martin, R. P.	<i>Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 48: James</i> , Dallas, 1988
Metzger, Bruce M	<i>A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament</i> (Companion Volume to 3 rd Ed. UBS Greek New Testament), United Bible Societies, 1971
Moo, Douglas J	<i>The Letter of James</i> , The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Apollos, Leicester, 2000
Motyer, J Alec	<i>Studies in the Epistle of James</i> , MWE, Croydon, 1968

Verse 19

ἴστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδύς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδύς εἰς ὀργήν,

ἴστε Verb, indic or imperat 2 pl οἶδα
know, understand

NIV 'take note of this'. NASV reads the verb as indicative, 'this you know.' The imperative seems more likely in context.

"Instead of reading the abrupt ἴστε, the Textus Receptus connects the following ἔστε (dropping δε) more closely with verse 18 by substituting ὥστε, in company with a variety of later witnesses ... The reading adopted by the text [of UBS 3rd Ed] is strongly supported by both Alexandrian and Western witnesses." Metzger

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

ἔστω Verb, pres act imperat, 3s εἰμι
ταχύς, εια, υ quick, swift

"The first clue to spiritual growth is to hear the Word of God. It was by the Word that He brought us to new birth and we grow in the Christian life by continuing to pay heed to the same Word." Motyer

βραδύς, εια, υ slow
λαλεω speak, talk

Cf. Prov 17:27-28.

ὀργη, ης f wrath, anger

Cf. Prov 15:1; Col 3:8; Eph 4:26, 31.

Verse 20

ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται.

ἀνιηρ, ἀνδρος m man

δικαιοσύνη, ης f righteousness, justice

Our quick and angry words do not accomplish God's righteous purposes. "James' very simple point is that human anger does not produce behaviour that is pleasing to God." Moo. Martin says that "the sense is that of promoting the divine saving rule." This is James' first mention of sins of speech which he deals with more fully in Chapter 3.

ἐργάζομαι work, perform

Verse 21

διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεῖαν κακίας ἐν πραύτητι δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν.

Moo views this verse as introducing verses 22-27. Verse 21 picks up the theme of v 18, cf. 1 Peter 1:23-2:2.

διὸ therefore

ἀποθέμενοι Verb, 2 aor midd ptc, m nom pl
ἀποτιθημι throw off, be done with

"The word connotes the idea of removing clothes (cf. Acts 7:58), and the imagery is applied metaphorically in the NT to the 'stripping off' of the pre-Christian lifestyle from the believer (see Rom 13:12; Eph 4:22, 25; Col 3:8; Heb 12:1; 1 Pet 2:1)." Moo.

ῥυπαρια, ας f impurity, filthiness

περισσεια, ας abundance

κακια, ας evil, wickedness

Motyer suggests that the phrase means 'every last remaining trace of wickedness'. This sense is reflected in the NASB and NJB but Moo considers that while this meaning is possible it is unlikely. This is the clearing and preparing of the ground which is necessary for reception of the good seed of the Word.

πραύτης, ητος (and πραοτης) f gentleness, humility

The necessary character of the heart that makes it receptive to the word. "Christians who have truly been 'born again' (v 18) demonstrates that the word has transformed them by their humble acceptance of that word as their authority and guide for life." Moo.

δέξασθε Verb, aor midd dep imperat, 2 pl
 δεχομαι receive, accept, welcome
 ἐμφυτος, ον implanted, planted

As with the parable of the Sower, "He does the implanting. But if there is to be fruit, the implanted seed must be deliberately received into an honest and good heart (see Luke 8:15)." Motyer.

δυναμαι can, be able to
 σωζω save, rescue, heal
 ψυχη, ης f self, inmost being, life, 'soul'

Verse 22-25

"Doing' frames vv. 22-25: 'Be *doers* of the word' (the Greek equivalent of these words comes at the beginning of the verse) opens the paragraph, 'blessed in what he *does*' concludes it." Moo.

Verse 22

Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ ἀκροαταὶ μόνον παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοὺς.

ποιητης, ου m one who does or carries out, doer
 μονον adv only, alone
 ακροατης, ου m hearer

Cf. Rom 2:13.

παραλογιζομαι deceive, lead astray

Motyer thinks the sense is 'excusing yourselves.' "As the word is used in the New Testament (e.g. Col 2:4) it conveys the notion of reasons which have an air of correctness but actually have no substance at all... There are a variety of reasons (so-called) whereby we side step the obligations of obeying God's word... Every such 'reason' is a mere excuse... To live below the level of obedience is inexcusable."

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

Verse 23

ὅτι εἴ τις ἀκροατῆς λόγου ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ ποιητής, οὗτος ἔοικεν ἀνδρὶ κατανοοῦντι τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἑσώπτρῳ,

τις, τὶ acc τινά, τὶ gen τινός dat τινί anyone, anything

ἔοικεν see v.6

ἀνηρ, ἀνδρος m see v.8

κατανοεω consider, notice, observe

προσωπον, ου n face, appearance

γενεσις, εως f birth, lineage

τὸ προσωπον τῆς γενέσεως one's 'natural face' – the face one was born with.

ἑσώπτρον, ου n mirror

Martin, following Vouga, says that this is a 'kind of parable', "which recalls the style of stories Jesus told in the Synoptic Gospels: the kingdom of God is like a person who ... (see, e.g., Matt 13; the point of both sets of teaching is exactly that in Matt 7:26–27)."

Verse 24

κατενόησεν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀπελήλυθεν καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ἦν.

"What is seen in a mirror is meant to lead to action, usually regarded as remedial. The face is seen to be dirty (going back to v 21) or blemished and needing attention. Instead the thoughtless person 'goes off and forgets' (gnomic aorists) what he has seen." Martin.

ἀπελήλυθεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s

ἀπερχομαι

ἐπελάθετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἐπιλανθανομαι forget, neglect, overlook

"The key failure of the 'hearer only,' then, is forgetting. We touch here on a pervasive and important biblical theme. The Lord constantly warned the people of Israel not to 'forget' his mighty acts on their behalf but to 'remember' his mercies and his law (Exod 13:3; Num 15:39; Deut 6:12; 8:2; Mal 4:4). In the NT, Peter, for instance, structures the exhortation in his second letter around the theme of memory (2 Pet 1:12-13; 3:1, 8; cf. the contrast with the false teachers who 'forget' in 3:5). To 'remember' God, his acts and his teachings, is to contemplate them in such a way that they make a lasting impression on the heart and the mind. The person who 'forgets' what he has seen in God's word is one who reads or listens superficially, not imprinting the message on the soul." Moo.

ὅποιος, α, ον correlative pronoun of what sort, such as

Motyer says it is like someone looking in the mirror, noticing his hair needs combing but neglecting to do anything about it. He is without excuse precisely because he has looked in the mirror and seen what needed doing. "Equally, we have no excuse for being a second-rate Christian because when we come to the word of God we come to a place where God speaks the word which both commands and empowers."

Verse 25

ὁ δὲ παρακύννας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ παραμείνας, οὐκ ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος ἀλλὰ ποιητῆς ἔργου, οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται

παρακυννω look into, stoop, bend over

Picture of close inspection (cf. Jn 20:5), wishing to miss nothing.

νομος, ου m law

τέλειος, α, ον complete, whole, perfect

The word of God is (in part) law for life, perfectly suited to our nature and condition. Having argued that, for James, 'law' must have reference to the law of Moses, Moo continues, "But we must hesitate before simply equating 'law' for James with the law of Moses. First in chap 2, James's description of the law suggests that he has at least one eye on the 'fulfilment' of that law in the teaching of Jesus... Second, James often bases his own commands to his readers on the teaching of Jesus, quoting the OT only rarely. Third, James nowhere makes clear that he expects his readers to continue to obey the Mosaic laws pertaining to sacrifice and ritual. Fourth, the flow of thought in these verses appears to demand a broader reference. The 'law' of v.25 must be substantially equivalent to the 'word' of vv. 22-23. Yet that 'word' must also be closely related to, if not identical to, the 'word of truth' through which men and women are regenerated to salvation (v. 18). Taken together, these points suggest that James's 'law' does not refer to the law of Moses as such, but to the law of Moses as interpreted and supplemented by Christ. Perhaps, then, the addition of the word 'perfect' connotes the law in its eschatological, 'perfected' form, while the qualification 'that gives freedom' refers to the new covenant promise of the law written on the heart (Jer. 31:31-34 ...), accompanied by a work of the Spirit enabling obedience to that law for the first time."

Martin says that this law is "none other than the 'word implanted' in the hearts of responsive believers. The content of that 'law' will be made clear in 2:1-13. It is the 'law' of love to one's neighbor as well as the law written on the human heart."

ἐλευθερία, ας f freedom, liberty

"The word liberates from the lustful pull of our own nature." Motyer

παραμείνας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

παρᾶμεινω stay, continue, serve

The path of holiness requires not just a beginning but a continuance.

ἐπιλησμονη, ης f forgetfulness

"James's Greek has a stronger rhetorical contrast than the smoothed out NIV rendering: 'not a hearer of forgetfulness but a doer of work.' 'Of forgetfulness' is a typical Semitic construction that means 'forgetful hearer' (cf. NASB), while 'doer of work,' a very awkward phrase in Greek or English, is apparently chosen as a rhetorical counterpart to the first phrase. It could mean 'active doer,' but more likely it means 'one who does work,' for example, one who puts into practice the deeds that the law demands." Moo.

μακάριος, α, ον blessed, fortunate, happy
ποιησις, εως f doing, undertaking
ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι

Verses 26-27

"James has grown progressively more practical and specific in his call to respond appropriately to the word of God. 'Accept the word' (v. 21) becomes 'do the word' (v. 22), which becomes 'do the law.' Verses 26-27 culminate this progression, as James suggests three ways in which believers can do the word/law. These three manifestations of obedience to the word introduce or touch on key ideas that James will return to again in the letter:

- controlling the tongue – (1:19-20); 3:1-12; 4:11-12
- concern for the 'helpless' – 2:1-13, 15-16; cf. 5:1-6
- avoidance of 'worldliness' – 4:4-10

And the idea of these verses – that true religion is manifested in a lifestyle of obedience to God – becomes the leitmotif of the next four chapters. To some extent, then, these verses set the agenda for the rest of the letter." Moo.

Verse 26

Εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκὸς εἶναι μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ, τούτου μάταιος ἡ θρησκεία.

δοκεω think, suppose

θρησκος, ον religious

χαλιναγωγεω control, hold in check

Cf. 3:2. The picture is that of a bridle which, "along with the bit, was the instrument by which the rider controlled his horse, and it is a natural image of both control and direction (see 2 Kings 19:28; Isa 30:28; 37:29)." Moo.

γλωσσα, ης f tongue

ἀπαταω deceive, lead astray

ματαιος, α, ον worthless, futile, useless

θρησκεία, ας f religion, worship

Martin comments, "James is holding up to condemnation the picture of the use of the tongue when it utters merely formal religious platitudes that have no substance evidenced by practical deeds."

Verse 27

θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ θεῷ
καὶ πατρὶ αὐτῆ ἐστίν, ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανούς
καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν
τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου.

καθαρός, α, ον pure, clean
ἀμιαντος, ον pure, undefiled, unstained

James "does not define generally what religion is, but reminds us that religion without the things he mentions is nothing." Calvin.

ἐπισκέπτεσθαι Verb, pres midd/pass dep infin
ἐπισκεπτομαι visit, care for, be
concerned about

ὀρφανός, η, ον orphaned; alone
χήρα, ας f widow

Cf. Ps 10:14; 68:5; Isa 1:10-17. To bear these marks is to show likeness to our heavenly Father and to the character of Jesus in his earthly ministry.

θλίψις, εως f trouble, suffering

"One test of pure religion, therefore, is the degree to which we extend aid to the 'helpless' in our world – whether they be widows and orphans, immigrants trying to adjust to a new life, impoverished third-world dwellers, the handicapped, or the homeless." Moo.

ἄσπιλος, ον pure, spotless
τηρεω keep, observe, maintain

'keep oneself from the world's contaminating influence.' Great wisdom is required to know what this demands of us in practical terms.

James 2:1

Ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε
τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
τῆς δόξης;

προσωπολημψία, ας f favouritism, treating
one person better than another

"The word was apparently invented by NT writers (see also Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; related words are found in Jas 2:9; Acts 10:34; 1 Pet 1:17) as a literal rendering of a Hebrew word for partiality. To 'receive the face' means to make judgments about people based on external appearance." Moo.

πίστις, εως f faith, trust, belief
δόξα, ης f glory

'Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory' or 'our Lord Jesus Christ who is the glory.' τῆς δόξης may either be viewed as a separate title or as qualifying the initial noun του κυριου. 'The Lord of glory' is a common title of God in the OT and is applied to Jesus in 1 Cor 2:8. Motyer comments, "To judge by earthly standards is to fail to see the glory of Jesus as the true criterion." He goes on to point out that the glory of Jesus is connected with his humiliation – his identification with us in our poverty (cf. Heb 2:9; 2 Cor 8:9). "If we do not identify ourselves with the lowly and needy, then how can we claim to believe in Jesus, the Lord of glory?"

Verse 2

ἐὰν γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνὴρ
χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθῆτι λαμπρᾷ, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ
καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ρυπαρᾷ ἐσθῆτι,

"The form of the condition suggests that James is giving a hypothetical example of the kind of behaviour that he warns against. But the sequel to the example (vv. 6-7) makes clear that the readers were engaging in discrimination very much like this." Moo.

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in
συναγωγή, ης f synagogue, assembly,
meeting

Used here in the general sense of 'meeting' or 'assembly.' "This assembly might have been a gathering of the community to adjudicate a dispute between two of its members, or more likely, the weekly meeting for worship and instruction." Moo.

Martin is attracted to the idea of a 'church court' (cf. 1 Cor 6:1-16; Matt 18:15-20). He writes, "The second reason for supposing that this law-court setting is to be preferred lies in the wording of v 6: 'the rich people haul you before tribunals,' which is James' indictment of a division within the community (v 4). The forensic-social language reads more naturally if the scene is one of a church met to consider some legal problem. Then, the folly of the attitude of favoritism, προσωπολημψία (in v 1), is much in prominence as James rebukes it."

χρυσοδακτύλιος, ον wearing a gold ring
ἐσθῆς, ητος f clothing
λαμπρός, α, ον bright, fine, splendid
πτωχός, η, ον poor, pitiful
ρυπαρός, α, ον shabby (of clothing)

"The image James conjures up is of the typical homeless person in our day, dressed in mismatched, stained, and smelly rags." Moo.

Verse 3

ἐπιβλέψατε δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθῆτα
τὴν λαμπρὰν καὶ εἵπητε· Σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς,
καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ εἵπητε· Σὺ στήθι ἢ κάθου ἐκεῖ
ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου,

Martin comments, "The two men who have entered the meeting are probably visitors ... or at least new converts, since it appears that they are unfamiliar with the type of convocation in progress; otherwise they would not have needed instructions as to their respective places."

ἐπιβλεπω look upon with care, pay attention to

This verb is found only here and in Luke 1:48; 9:38. Martin comments, "The earlier verse in Luke is from the Magnificat where Mary praises God because he has 'regarded' the lowly condition of his handmaiden... God is praised for demonstrating his care for the poor and humble. This attitude is evidently unfortunately absent from the congregation to which James writes. It is not that he openly seeks a bias in favor of the poor, but simply pleads for a recognition of equality on their behalf."

φορεω wear

κάθου Verb, pres midd/pass dep imperat, 2 s

καθημαι sit, sit down

ὧδε adv here, in this place

καλῶς adv well

στήθι Verb, 2 aor act imperat, 2 s ἵστημι stand, stop

ἐκεῖ there, in that place, to that place

Some MSS add ὧδε also after the second καθου.

ἢ or

ὑποποδιον, ου n footstool

ὑπο το ὑ. μου literally, 'under my footstool'; generally taken to mean on the floor next to the footstool.

Martin comments, "Whether he stands away from the speaker or at his feet, the poor man has received the brunt of the social snobbery and discrimination of those Christians in the synagogue. It may be conjectured that those (note εἵπητε is plural) who gave the seating instructions probably held some degree of authority in the congregation, though no office such as 'doorkeeper' (*ostiarus*, in the later church) is envisaged. Thus, it is not unfair to say that these speakers set the tone for much, but not all (2:4), of the congregation, which took its cue from those in a role of leadership. It might even be that some of these so-called leaders acted as teachers of the congregation. If so, the unfavorable attitude shown toward those of lower social rank is even more deplorable (3:2). James appears to be talking to a congregation rife with practices of discrimination."

Verse 4

οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ
διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν;

διεκρίθητε Verb, aor pass indic, 2 pl

διακρινω judge, make a distinction between

The sense here would seem to be 'make a distinction' rather than 'waver' as in 1:6. Martin, however, comments, "It may well be that James is tracing the sinful behavior described in vv 2–3 back to its source, namely a divided mind. The double-minded (1:8; 4:8) Christian is the one who fails to love and obey God wholeheartedly. Such a mind is characterized by doubts which are typical of those who lack authentic faith. A divided mind is evidenced by the different treatment meted out to visitors, especially along lines of social class."

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον see 1:22

κριτης, ου m judge

διαλογισμος, ου m thought, reasoning

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

I.e. judging by false or sinful standards – failing to adopt God's standards. Martin translates, 'criminally minded judges.' In judging between people they had usurped the role of God.

Verse 5

ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. οὐχ ὁ θεὸς
ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ πλουσίους
ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς
ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν;

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

ἐξελέξατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἐκλεγομαι choose, select

A lack of regard for the poor marks not only failure to see the glory of Christ, but also, "failure to reflect the mind of God revealed in our salvation." Motyer.

Moo, while emphasising that God's concern is not for the poor *alone*, writes, "God, the NT suggests [cf. Lk 1:51b-53; 1 Cor 1:26-29], delights to shower his grace on those whom the world has discarded and on those who are most keenly aware of their own inadequacy. James calls on the church to embody a similar ethic of special concern for the poor and helpless."

Martin comments, "By the time of James, *πτωχός* was a technical term for the class of pious and humble people who put their trust in God for redemption and not in material wealth."

πλουσιος, α, ου see 1:10
κληρονομος, ου m heir

An echo of Jesus' words in Lk 6:20, cf. Matt 5:3.

ἐπηγγείλατο see 1:12
ἀγαπαω see 1:12

We love him because he has first loved us (1 John 4:19).

Verse 6

ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠτιμάσατε τὸν πτωχόν. οὐχ οἱ πλούσιοι καταδυναστεύουσιν ὑμῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια;

ἀτιμαζω treat shamefully, dishonour
καταδυναστευω oppress

"The strongly marked socioeconomic class distinction presupposed here corresponds closely to what we know of conditions in the first-century Middle East. A small group of wealthy landowners and merchants accumulated more and more power, while large numbers of people were forced from their land and grew even poorer. Most of James's readers probably belonged to this class of poor agricultural labourers. The scenario is one that would be very familiar to readers of the OT.

The prophets frequently denounce (even using the same verb James uses here, *καταδυναστευω*) rich people who 'oppress' the poor (Amos 4:1), including orphans and widows (Ezek 22:7)." Moo.

Martin adds, "James may be saying that those of the church who discriminate against the poor indict themselves because they betray a way of thinking and acting that dissociates them from the poor. This places the audience of James' epistle on dangerous ground, for they are at risk of excluding themselves from the promise to those who inherit the kingdom (see 2:13)."

ἔλκω draw, attract, drag

κριτηριον, ου n court, legal matter
(requiring judgement)

Commenting on *κριτηριον* in 1 Cor 6:2, Leon Morris writes, "It denotes properly the instrument or means of judging, the rules by which one judges. It comes to signify the place of judging, and perhaps the panel of judges (Jas 2:6). The sense 'tribunal', 'court of justice' is common in the papyri."

Moo comments, "These rich people were undoubtedly using their wealth and influence with the courts to secure favourable verdicts against the poor. Practices familiar in every age, such as forcing people to forfeit their land for late payment of mortgages, insisting on ruinous interest rates for any monetary help, and the like, are probably in view."

"But James is not counselling the Christians not to be kind to these rich people; he is simply arguing that they should not give undue deference to them at the expense of the poor. Perhaps some believers were calculating that excessive flattery of rich people who visited the assembly might gain favour for them. If so, James suggests, their calculations are far off." Moo.

Verse 7

οὐκ αὐτοὶ βλασφημοῦσιν τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς;

βλασφημεω speak against, slander, blaspheme

"Because James supplies so little information, we can only speculate about the exact situation here. It may have been Gentiles profanely mocking the God whom believers claimed to worship. It may have been Jews criticising Christian claims about Jesus. Or, more generally, it may have involved unbelievers making fun of Christian morality and worship practice (such as the Lord's Supper)." Moo.

καλος, η, ου good, fine, precious

ὄνομα, τος n name

ἐπικληθὲν Verb, aor pass ptc, n nom/acc s

ἐπικαλεω call, name

"Christ has espoused Himself to us as a bridegroom, He has given us His name, and that is the honourable name by which we are called." Motyer

Verse 8

Εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν, καλῶς ποιεῖτε·

μεντοι but, nevertheless, however

Moo argues that the context here makes it difficult to understand *μεντοι* in the adversative sense it has in all other seven occurrences in the NT (Jn 4:27; 7:13; 12:42; 20:5; 21:4; 2 Tim 2:19; Jude 8). He suggests that it means here 'really' or 'indeed', cf. NIV 'If you really keep the royal law ...'

νομος, ου m law
 τελεω complete, fulfill, carry out
 βασιλικος, η, ον royal, belonging to the king

γραφη, ης f writing, Scripture

'Found in the Scripture' (NIV) is not a good translation since it suggests a single law from within Scripture is being referred to. 'According to the Scriptures' is better. "What James might be suggesting, then, is that completing the sum total of God's will for his people (the moral law) takes place in accordance with conformity to the central demand of that law, love for the neighbour." Moo. Martin similarly writes, "What James is implying is that obedience to the 'love commandment' fulfills the royal law, which refers to the entire will of God, especially as revealed in the teaching of Jesus (which lies in the background here)."

ἀγαπήσεις Verb, fut act indic, 2 s ἀγαπαω
 πλησιον i) prep with gen near; ii) ὁ π.
 neighbour, fellow man.

σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun yourself

Why does James call this law the royal law? Motyer suggests a number of reasons:
 i) Because it is the law of the Kingdom of God;
 ii) Because it proceeds from the King himself who enunciated it as one of the two foundation laws of the people of God (Matt 22:39);
 iii) Because it is the law that rules all laws (Rom 13:8).

Verse 9

εἰ δὲ προσωπολημπτεῖτε, ἀμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε, ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται.

προσωπολημπτεω show favouritism, treat one person better than another

ἀμαρτια, ας f sin

ἐργαζομαι work, do, perform

"Implicit in the logic of James's argument is the assumption, perhaps drawn from Leviticus 19, that favouritism violates the demand of love for the neighbour." Moo.

ἐλεγχω show (someone his) fault, condemn, convict

παραβατης, ου m one who breaks God's law, transgressor

Verse 10

ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσῃ, πταισῇ δὲ ἐν ἐνί, γέγονεν πάντων ἐνοχος.

ὅστις, ἦτις, ὁ τι who, which, whoever, anyone, someone

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, entire

τηρεω keep, observe, maintain

πταιω stumble, go wrong, sin

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one, single

γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γινομαι

ἐνοχος, ον liable, answerable, guilty

Cf. Gal 5:3 for similar argument on the indivisibility of the law, also Matt 22:34-40. Martin adds, "On another level it is this commandment in particular that transcends all others, and so to break it in essence casts one as intentionally rejecting the heart and soul of God's will, namely the love of one's neighbour (in this case, the poor who visit the 'meeting')."

Verse 11

ὁ γὰρ εἰπὼν· Μὴ μοιχεύσῃς εἶπεν καὶ· Μὴ φονεύσῃς· εἰ δὲ οὐ μοιχεύεις φονεύεις δέ, γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου.

The law is one great whole, because it proceeds from a single Lawgiver.

εἶπων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s λεγω

μοιχευω commit adultery

φονευω murder, put to death

Moo suggests that James' reference to murder may here reflect Jesus' words recorded in Matt 5:21-26. "Anger, Jesus taught, is also 'covered' in his reinterpretation of the commandment; and James may see the favouritism being shown in the community as an instance of this kind of anger, or disregard for others, and so tantamount to 'murder.'" Moo.

γέγονας Verb, perf act indic, 2 s γινομαι
 παραβατης, ου m see v.9

On the Christian's relationship with the law, Motyer says, "God brought from Egypt a people redeemed by the blood of the lamb, and the goal of the journey was Mount Sinai... (Ex. 3:12)... Mount Sinai was the appointed immediate objective for the redeemed, and ... their gathering there was the divine seal upon the work of salvation which God had wrought for them. When they came there, God gave them his law. This, then, is the place of God's law in the life of the redeemed people. It is not a ladder by which the unsaved climbs up into salvation. The law of God is the pattern of life which God gives to a redeemed people, and he gives it to them as a reflection of His own nature so that their lives may reflect His holiness. This is true in the New Testament as in the Old (e.g. Lev 19:2; 1 Peter 1:14-16). All the principles which exist in the divine nature have been translated by God into precepts and given to His children for their obedience. We cannot pick and choose therefore. God has given us a law."

Moo, however, emphasises that when James speaks here of the law it is not the OT law as such he has in mind "but the OT as reinterpreted and imposed by Christ on his followers."

Verse 12

οὕτως λαλεῖτε καὶ οὕτως ποιεῖτε ὡς διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες κρίνεσθαι.

οὕτως and οὕτω adv. thus, in this way
λαλεῶ speak, talk
ἐλευθερία, ας f freedom, liberty
μέλλω (before an infin) be going, be destined
κρίνεσθαι Verb, pres pass infin κρίνω

Cf. 2 Cor 5:10. "We stand here before a mysterious thing which Scripture never fully explains: the Judgement Seat of Christ. We shall stand there; we shall be judged there. Our eternal security will not in the least be shaken by what happens there, but we will be judged before Christ and He will search us, whether we have been like Him." Motyer.

Moo comments, "God's gracious acceptance of us does not end our obligation to obey him; it sets it on a new footing. No longer is God's law a threatening, confining burden. For the will of God now confronts us as a *law of liberty* – an obligation we discharge in the joyful knowledge that God has both 'liberated' us from the penalty of sin and given us, in his Spirit, the power to obey his will."

And Martin comments, "The Christian is judged by a law that sets one free, that is, by the supreme law, the law of love (2:8)... To love one's neighbour is the highest form of freedom exercised, and ends in fulfillment of the law. What James is telling his readers is that the Jewish law per se is not the seat of authority (*pace* Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 251–52) but rather it is the law, as understood and interpreted in the Christian sense, which is the norm that guides the life of the follower of Jesus the Christ (Matt 7:12, 21, 24–29; 19:17–21; 22:36–40; 28:20). The antitheses of the Sermon in Matthew 5:21–48 make the same point, namely, that the new law of love sets a higher standard than Torah obedience can demand and produce (e.g., Matt 5:20)... The law of freedom can liberate those who fulfill it but it also serves (as will be seen in 2:13) as a solemn threat of eschatological wrath to those who transgress it."

Verse 13

ἢ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος· κατακαυχᾶται ἔλεος κρίσεως.

κρίσις, εως f judgement, act of judgement
ἀνέλεος, ον merciless
ποιήσαντι Verb, aor act ptc, m dat s ποιῶ
ἔλεος, ος n mercy, compassion

Cf. Matt 5:7; 18:21–35. "Being 'merciful,' as these texts suggest, is not merely a feeling of concern, but involves actively reaching out to show love to others. The discrimination that James's readers are practicing is the opposite of such mercy; and if they continue on this path, they will find at the end of their lives a judgment 'without mercy.'" Moo.

Martin comments, "Those who fail to demonstrate a living and consistent faith are in danger of facing harsh judgment at the end, for they live as though ethical issues were of no consequence. Failure to show mercy to others cuts a person off from a true appreciation of the divine compassion (as emphasized in the dominical parable of the debtor servant and its application, Matt 18:21–35). By the standard of the supreme law, those who fail in love to their neighbour stand condemned. Thus, those who discriminate against the poor are reckoned to be in danger of the same fate as the godless."

κατακαυχᾶσθαι boast against, triumph over

e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

Martin comments, "Though there is an absence of the connective particle, the link between vv 13a and b is clear: God's mercy is stronger than the condemnation passed by the law." Mercy has proved stronger than judgment in the matter of our salvation: it is to be so also in the conduct of our lives.

Verses 14-26

The main theme is repeated in vv. 17, 20 and 26 – faith without deeds/actions is dead/useless. "Critical to understanding the argument of the section and integrating it successfully into a broader biblical perspective is the recognition that James is not arguing that works must be *added* to faith. His point, rather, is that genuine biblical faith will inevitably be characterised by works. Trying to add works to a bogus faith is an exercise in futility, for only by 'accepting the implanted word' (1:21) and experiencing the inner transformation that it brings can one produce works pleasing to God. James, in a sense, proposes for us in these verses a 'test' by which we determine the genuineness of faith: deeds of obedience to the will of God." Moo.

Verse 14

Τί ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πίστιν λέγῃ τις ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;

ὄφελος, ους n gain, benefit

τί τὸ ὄφελος 'What good is it?'

μη with a question indicating the expectation of a negative answer.

δυναμαι can, be able to
σωζω save, rescue

I.e. 'can *such* a faith save him?' (NIV). Martin comments, "The issue at hand is the nature of genuine faith. Is it merely 'right belief' expressed in a confession of doctrine or is it essentially practical, requiring 'deeds' to authenticate its genuineness? The close association of faith and 'works' has led interpreters going back to Luther to view James as in direct conflict with Paul. But such misunderstanding has developed out of the failure to see that Paul and James use two (perhaps three) words – 'faith,' 'justify' (v 21), and 'works' – differently to address various situations... Those who are depicted in 2:1–13 as guilty of discriminating against the poor demonstrate that they do not have the faith required for eschatological salvation." Martin includes a lengthy excursus on Faith and Deeds in 2:14-16.

Verse 15

ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχωσιν καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἡμετέρας τροφῆς,

ἢ or

ἀδελφῆ, ης f sister, female believer

γυμνος, ης, ον naked, poorly dressed

ὑπαρχω be (equivalent to εἰμι)

The use of this verb instead of εἶναι may be designed to show that the poverty was enduring rather than momentary.

λειπω lack, fall short

ἡμετερος, ον daily

Cf. Matt 6:11.

τροφή, ης f food, nourishment

Verse 16

εἴπη δὲ τις αὐτοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν· Ὑπάγετε ἐν εἰρήνῃ, θερμαίνεσθε καὶ χορτάζεσθε, μὴ δῶτε δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τοῦ σώματος, τί ὄφελος;

ὑπαγω go, go one's way, depart

εἰρήνη, ης f peace

θερμαινομαι warm oneself, keep warm

χορτάζω feed, satisfy

"It is not the form of the statement that is reprehensible, but its functioning as a religious cover for the failure to act." Johnson.

ἐπιτηδειος, α, ον necessary, suitable

σωμα, τος n body

ὄφελος, ους n see v.14

Mere words are no good.

Verse 17

οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχη ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστίν καθ' ἑαυτήν.

νεκρος, α, ον dead

Dead in the sense of ineffectual, cf. Rom 7:8; Heb 6:1; 9:14.

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

καθ' ἑαυτήν Moo suggests the meaning is 'in itself' i.e. this kind of faith is inwardly dead. Living faith is evidenced in good works. Cf. Eph 2:8-10.

Martin comments, "A faith without works (by itself) is no more a living faith than a corpse without breath is a living person."