

## Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 323 – November 19<sup>th</sup> – James 2:18-3:18

### 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 <sup>rd</sup> 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 18

Ἄλλ' ἐρεῖ τις· Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις καὶ ἔργα ἔχω.  
δειξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων,  
καὶ ἔγω σοι δείξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν.

James now adopts a diatribe style – dialogue with a supposed opponent. It is difficult to know where the objector's quotation ends.

ἐρεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s λεγω  
καὶ ἔγω a compound word = και ἔγω

Martin outlines the problems associated with understanding this verse and the associated interpretations:

- i) Some think that the words are those of an ally of James since this seems reflected in the pronouns – 'you have faith and I have works.' But this does not do justice to the adversative force of ἀλλά.
- ii) If the words are those of an opponent, quite apart from the strange use of the pronouns, where do the opponents words end?
- iii) "A third way of understanding the opening statement is to connect the 'You' and 'I' not to James and his opponent but rather to representative positions within the church. That is, an imaginary objector points out that some people have faith and others have works. This may be seen as a reference to Pauline teaching that each Christian has been endowed with particular gifts (1 Cor 12), one of which is faith (1 Cor 12:9; Rom 12:3). Then James' contention that faith and works are inseparable is met by the objection that a person with faith is just as religious as a person with works: both are exercising their gifts." But this would make the grammatical construction awkward.

Martin concludes, "No one interpretation is free from problems, but it seems that the third interpretation is the least likely. Of the first two, the latter fits better with the tone of the argument... It may be that even though the thoughts of v 18a are not of James, he has recast them in his own words. The actual words of the objector are: 'I have faith; You [James] have deeds'; but James has echoed that argument from his own standpoint: he has become the 'I' of the clause and his opponent has become the 'You.' Such a position does justice to the use of ἀλλά as adversative, is consistent in its use of the pronouns (σύ, ἐγώ), and keeps the tension between v 18a and vv 18b–26."

δειξόν Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s δεικνυμι  
show  
χωρὶς prep with gen without, apart from

#### Verse 19

σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός; καλῶς ποιεῖς·  
καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστευουσιν καὶ φρίσσουσιν.

πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)  
εἷς, μια, ἐν γεν ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

MSS variants make it unclear whether the verbal profession here is 'there is one God' (εἷς θεός ἐστιν) or 'God is one' (εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός). The variants do not affect James' argument. A second issue is whether the initial clause is a question (as punctuated above) or a statement. It makes no difference to the shape of James' argument.

καλῶς adv well  
δαιμονιον, ου n demon, evil spirit  
φρίσσω tremble with fear

"It is a good thing to possess an accurate theology, but it is unsatisfactory unless that good theology also possesses us." Mitton.

"James might be implying, as demons, knowing something of the true God, yet lacking true faith, shudder in fear of judgment, so also ought people whose verbal profession is not followed up with actions." Moo.

### Verse 20

θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι, ὃ ἄνθρωπε κενέ, ὅτι ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστιν;

A direct address to the supposed opponent is typical of the diatribe style, cf. Rom 2:1; 9:20.

θελω wish, will

γινῶναι Verb, aor act infin γινωσκω

ὦ O!

κενος, η, ον empty, to no purpose

Here the sense is 'foolish.' Martin translates ὃ ἄνθρωπε κενέ as 'you empty headed person.' But it also bears the moral sense of 'foolish' as of the 'fool' of the Psalms who denies God, cf. Ps 53:1-3.

ἀργος, η, ον idle; ineffective, useless

The TR here reads νεκρα, conforming the text to 2:26.

Martin comments that ἀργος is derived from ἀ + ἔργος, i.e. literally 'without work' (cf. Matt 20:3, 6). He writes, "We have a play on words here: 'faith that has no works does not work'."

### Verse 21

Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἀνεύγκας Ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον;

Martin writes, "James, by recalling the example of Abraham, epitomizes 'faith-with-works,' that is, hyphenated faith, as the only proper lifestyle of a Christian."

ἐδικαιώθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s δικαιοω justify, acquit, declare & treat as righteous

Moo argues that we should not begin from the Pauline use of the verb δικαιοω in seeking to understand James. Looking at the use of this verb in the OT and in Judaism, and in the teaching of Jesus, two meanings appear more likely here:

- i) 'vindicate in the judgment' or 'declare right in accordance with the facts' – so Mic 6:11. In a similar manner, 'righteousness' is used to describe the character of life demanded of one who belongs to the people of God, cf. Matt 5:20; 12:37. Of this sense Moo writes, "So 'justify' in Paul refers to how a person gets into relationship with God, while in James it connotes what that relationship must ultimately look like to receive God's final approval."

- ii) In a few passages the verb has the sense 'demonstrate to be right,' 'vindicate,' cf. Matt 11:19 and par Lk 7:35, also Lk 10:29; 16:15.

Moo prefers the first of these alternatives. Martin says that here "a mainly demonstrative sense lies behind δικαιουῖν. Such an understanding stresses that works are the only means of demonstrating one's righteousness... This use has lexical support (Gen 44:16; Luke 7:29–35...)." Righteousness is seen in terms of covenant fidelity or obedience.

ἀνεύγκας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

ἀναφέρω offer (of sacrifice)

θυσιαστήριον, ου n altar

### Verse 22

βλέπετε ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη,

βλεπω see, look, be able to see, beware of συνεργεω work with, work together with ἔργον, ου n work, deed, task

"Both the NASB and NIV (*were working together*) bring out the continuous force of the tense that James uses with this verb (the imperfect). He therefore emphasises that Abraham's faith was not confined to a mental reorientation at the time of his 'conversion' or to an occasional verbal profession but that it was an active force, constantly at work along with his deeds." Moo.

Martin again stresses the play on words, "Abraham's faith (the first explicit mention of the patriarch's faith, though it was assumed by James in 2:21) 'worked' with works to produce a 'working faith'."

ἐτελειώθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s τελειωω make perfect, complete

Cf. 1 Jn 4:12 for a similar construction. The sense of the verb here is 'come to full expression' or 'reach its intended goal.'

"Abraham is, in fact the perfect illustration of that progress to maturity which James insisted on in chapter 1:3,4. Faith must be challenged; if, in the face of the challenge, it is victorious, then it makes progress towards a fixed characteristic of life, and moves to genuine maturity. Abraham came to maturity when the faith he expressed in Genesis 15:6 proved victorious in the face of Genesis 22:1." Moyter.

### Verse 23

καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφή ἢ λέγουσα·

Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη.

πληρωω fulfill, bring about, accomplish

γραφη, ης f writing, Scripture  
 ἐλογίσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3s λογιζομαι  
 reckon, count, credit  
 δικαιοσύνη, ης f righteousness

The reference is to Gen 15:6. Moo writes, "What he is suggesting is that Abraham's faith, in its relationship to righteousness, found its ultimate significance and meaning in Abraham's life of obedience. When Abraham 'put faith in' the Lord, God gave him, then and there, the status of a right relationship with him: *before* he had done works, *before* he was circumcised. This is Paul's point about Abraham (Rom 4:1-17). But the faith of Abraham and God's verdict of acquittal were 'filled up,' given their ultimate significance, when Abraham 'perfected' his faith with works. It is after the greatest of those works, cited by James in v. 21, that the angel of the Lord reasserted God's verdict: 'now I know that you fear God' (Gen 22:12)..."

"Abraham's works, especially his offering of Isaac, reveal the character of his faith, a faith that is crediting for righteousness. When that righteousness is conferred is simply not an issue for James here.

"James is therefore not using Gen 15:6 in a way contradictory to that of Paul. They address different issues from different backgrounds and need to make different points about Abraham's paradigmatic experience with the Lord. And so, without necessarily disagreeing about the basic sense of the verse, they set Gen 15:6 in different biblical-theological contexts and derive different conclusions from their contextual readings. Paul seizes on the chronological placement of Gen 15:6 and cites it as evidence of the initial declaration of righteousness that Abraham attained from God solely on the basis of faith. James views the same verse more as a 'motto' applicable to Abraham's life as a whole."

φίλος, ου m and φίλη, ης f friend

Cf. 2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8. Abraham is "the supreme example of what it means to have 'friendship with God' rather than 'friendship with the world'" [Jas 4:4]. Johnson. Martin comments, "The tribute is not found in the canonical OT, although it is similar to the designation 'the one loved by God' (2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; cf. Isa 51:2 and Dan 3:35 LXX), and common to writings outside the OT."

#### Verse 24

ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.

ὁραω see, observe, perceive, recognise  
 δικαιοῦται Verb, pres pass indic, 3s δικαιοω  
 μόνον adv only, alone

The inclusion of μόνον is critical to James' argument. He is summing up the whole of his preceding argument with the assertion that mere *profession* of faith is not saving faith, cf. vv. 17,20,26.

"Not that in any sense Abraham worked for his justification before God, or merited it by personal acts of piety but that his works and his acts of obedience were the demonstration that the faith he professed for salvation was the genuine article." Motyer.

Calvin summarises the matter well saying, "As Paul contends that we are justified apart from the help of works, so James does not allow those who lack good works to be reckoned righteous."

#### Verse 25

ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἑτέρα ὁδοῦ ἐκβαλοῦσα;

ὁμοίως likewise, in the same way

Refers back to v.21, as with Abraham.

πορνη, ης f prostitute

ἐδικαιώθη see v.21

ὑποδεξαμένη Verb, aor midd dep ptc, f nom s

ὑποδεχομαι receive, welcome

ἄγγελος here = messenger

Some MSS here read καταδκόπους, 'spies', in place of ἀγγέλους.

ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different

ὁδος, ου f way, path, road, journey

ἐκβαλοῦσα Verb, aor act ptc, f nom s

ἐκβαλλω throw out, cast out; here = send out

#### Verse 26

ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρόν ἐστίν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.

ὥσπερ as, even as, just as

σῶμα, τος n body

χωρὶς without, apart from

νεκρός, α, ον dead

οὕτως adv. thus, in this way

The illustration here is telling. Just as the body is dead apart from the spirit, so a faith which is of purely human origin and which is apart from the working of the Spirit of God is dead. Such dead faith shows itself in a lifeless body which is not active in the work of faith (see 1 Thess 1:3).

Motyer illustrates this point from the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14 and the case of the man without a wedding garment. The man was without excuse and was put out of the feast. "But who is this man? He is a man with a testimony which is not confirmed by any visible change in his life. If the king had invited testimonies at the wedding breakfast, our friend could have given an impeccable testimony. He could have said, On such and such a date when I was so many years old, someone came to me as I stood at the cross-roads of life and said, Will you come and join the great king in his wedding feast? And I said, Yes ... There is nothing wrong with that testimony. But he had no wedding garment. He had none of the fine linen which is the righteous deeds of the saints (Rev 19:8). That is what James is against; that is what James warns us about. He warns us against leaving our standing in Christ as a matter of expressed opinion."

### Postscript

Martin concludes this section with a couple of quotes. He writes, "In summary, as the Puritan John Owen phrased the antinomy, faith alone saves – but saving faith is never alone; it 'completes' itself in deeds (v 26).

The same reminder comes from Bonhoeffer...: 'We must never forget the indissoluble unity of the two (faith, obedience); we must place the one proposition that only he who believes is obedient alongside the other, that only he who is obedient believes. In the one case faith is the condition of obedience, and in the other obedience is the condition of faith.

'Only those who believe obey' is what we say to that part of a believer's soul which obeys, and 'only those who obey believe' is what we say to that part of the soul of the obedient which believes. If the first half of the proposition stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of cheap grace, which is another word for damnation. If the second half stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of salvation through works, which is another word for damnation."

### James 3:1-12

Martin argues that the focus in this section is not use of the tongue by the individual believer but on the use of the tongue by those who speak in the congregation at worship. He argues that the 'body' in question in these verses is the congregation, not the individual. He continues, "If 3:9–10 are interpreted in a liturgical setting in which 'praising God' is the chief component, it becomes feasible to see an even more nuanced application. James is directing his shafts of criticism against the misuse of the tongue in worship – in a manner that indirectly recalls 1 Cor 12–14, especially 12:3; 14:27–39 – and is concerned for the 'good order' or οἰκονομία of the church in a way akin to the Pauline maxim of 1 Cor 14:40: 'let everything (you do) be done in a seemly manner and in good order'."

James views the church as a 'house of instruction' (a Jewish description of the synagogue). He sets his sights on teachers who are causing dissent and division when they should be controlling and guiding the church's life and destiny – as a bridle guiding a horse or a rudder a ship. Instead, the spark of their words is in danger of setting the whole community ablaze and destroying it.

### Verse 1

Μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα:

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ γεν πολλου, ης, ου  
much, many

διδασκαλος, ου m teacher

"*Teachers* (διδασκαλοι) were prominent in the life of the early church from the beginning. The office of teacher was roughly equivalent of the rabbi in the Jewish community (cf. Matt 23:8; Jn 1:38). Paul ranked the gift of teaching very high on the list of gifts the Spirit bestows on the church (1 Cor 12:28; see also Acts 13:1; Rom 12:7; Eph 4:11). Unlike the prophet, who transmitted to the community revelations received from the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 14:30), the teacher had the task of expounding the truth of the gospel on the basis of the growing Christian tradition (cf., e.g., 2 Tim 2:2)... Too many were seeking the status of teacher without the necessary moral (and perhaps also intellectual) qualifications. Perhaps, indeed, unfit teachers were a major cause of the bitter partisan spirit (cf. 3:13-18), quarrelling (4:1), and unkind, critical speech (4:11) that seemed to characterise the community. James therefore begins his admonition about the tongue with a practical illustration of the problem uncontrolled speech can create." Moo.

εἰδότες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl οἶδα  
know, understand  
μειζων, ον greater; adv. μειζον all the  
more  
κριμα, τος n judgement  
λημψόμεθα Verb, fut midd dep indic, 1 pl  
λαμβάνω

Moo suggests that the meaning is that, "teachers, because their ministry involves speech, the hardest of all parts of the body to control, expose themselves to greater *danger* of judgment. Their constant use of the tongue means they can sin very easily, leading others astray at the same time."

Martin writes, "The context makes it clear that in this epistle teachers had aspired to an office that they were using to lead others astray. Hence the reminder of a stricter accountability, since a false teacher is held responsible for influencing others. So teachers must weigh their words carefully (Matt 12:36–37...)... The problem of 'unfit' teachers appears to have been acute in the early church (1 John 3:7; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 4:3; Jude...)"

### Verse 2

πολλά γάρ πταίομεν ἅπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ  
πταίει, οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ, δυνατὸς  
χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα.

"A concern about people wanting to teach leads James into a general warning about the tongue." Moo. On the other hand, Martin writes, "The γάρ would suggest that 3:2 is linked to the thought of 3:1. But though James never explicitly mentions teachers in the present verse it is a fair inference that he has them in mind both here and throughout the chapter."

The initial πολλά here probably has the sense, 'in many ways.'

πταίω stumble, go wrong, sin  
ἅπας, ασα, αν (alternative form of πᾶς) all,  
whole; pl everyone, everything  
τέλειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

"The tongue is a key factor in holy living. The tongue enters at the very beginning into every one of the tests of life, even if it is nothing more than the groan with which it greets the ringing of the telephone." Motyer.

ἀνὴρ, ἀνδρὸς m man  
δυνατός, η, ον possible, strong, able  
χαλιναγωγέω control, hold in check

Cf. 1:26. It requires overcoming the tendency of the mouth "to stay open when it were more profitably closed." Moo.

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire  
σῶμα, τος n body

Martin comments, "More than intemperate speech seems in view here; it is the unrestrained use of the tongue to lead others away from the truth that is condemned. The τέλειος ἀνὴρ is the teacher whose λόγος (in the double sense of speech and behavior) is sound... When the tongue itself is out of control it can wreak havoc on that which it was meant to help; and an unrestrained teacher can adversely affect the entire community of faith."

### Verse 3

εἰ δὲ τῶν ἵππων τοὺς χαλινοὺς εἰς τὰ στόματα  
βάλλομεν εἰς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν, καὶ  
ὅλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μετάγομεν.

Many MSS read ἴδε rather than εἰ δε. Moo writes, "The similarity in spelling between the two explains how one reading could easily have evolved from the other. And εἰ δε is more likely to be the original text, for two reasons: (1) it has stronger manuscript support; and (2) it could easily have been changed by an early scribe who, perhaps unconsciously, assimilated the beginning of v. 3 to the opening of v. 4 (ἴδου, 'behold')."

ἵππος, ου f horse  
χαλινός, ου m bit, bridle  
στόμα, τος n mouth  
βάλλω throw, place  
πείθεσθαι Verb, pres pass infin πειθῶ  
persuade; pass obey

ἡμῖν a dative of advantage, 'persuade them for our benefit.'

μετάγω guide, direct, control

"This tiny factor, the bridle in the mouth, is the means of controlling the immense forces and capacities that the horse possesses. So also in us, the control of the tongue is the means of bridling the whole body also." Motyer. Martin, however, comments, "James' intention is to show that the tongue is the means by which a body of great size ... – namely, the church – is controlled by a separate part of much smaller size, namely, the teachers who are decisively influential out of proportion to their number, as they control ('guide,' μετάγειν) the direction of the whole body (ὅλον τὸ σῶμα; see 3:2)."

### Verse 4

ἴδου καὶ τὰ πλοῖα, τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ  
ἀνέμων σκληρῶν ἐλαυνόμενα, μετάγεται ὑπὸ  
ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ ὀρμὴ τοῦ  
εὐθύνοντος βούλεται.

ἴδου καὶ τὰ πλοῖα The NIV has a nice paraphrase, 'Or take ships as an example.'

πλοιον, ου n boat, ship  
 τηλικουτος, αυτη, ουτο so great, so large  
 ανεμος, ου m wind  
 σκληρος, α, ον hard; strong (wind)  
 ελαυνω drive  
 ελαχιστος, η, ον (superl of μικρος) least,  
 smallest, insignificant  
 πηδαλιον, ου n rudder  
 οπου adv. where  
 ορμη, ης f impulse, mind, will  
 ευθυνω make straight; ο ευθυνων  
 helmsman or pilot (of a ship)  
 βουλομαι want, desire, intend

A small member controls a far larger object – even in the face of strong outside forces. Martin comments, "Taken together, the first two instruments of bit and rudder do not correspond exactly with the tongue and its relationship to the human body. The bit and the rudder control the larger bodies, but the tongue does not control the human body. However, if we assume that the body is the church congregation then we have a point of agreement because all three instruments may be characterized under the rubric of *pars pro toto*, exercising influence over the larger body of which they form a significant part. With respect to the tongue, the text is not saying that the church at large is controlled by the tongue; rather it is saying that if we can control the latter then it will prove much easier to control the former (Adamson, 143); or better, if teachers who use their tongue to influence others are kept in firm check, the health and condition of the congregation will be assured thereby... Just as the charioteer guides the horse with bit and bridle and the helmsman steers (μετάγεται, see 3:3) the ship by means of the rudder, so the teaching corps directs the body through the tongue. However, a tongue that is out of control (see vv 5–12) betokens an undisciplined and uncontrolled body. This is especially pertinent to the author's readers if by the thought of strong winds (υπο ανεμων σκληρων: Prov 27:16 LXX) driving (ελαυνόμενα: used of demonic pressure in Luke 8:29, thus suggesting possibly an assault on the church; see 2:6–7 for outside hostility; cf. the imagery in Eph 4:14 of false teaching) the ship, the author highlights the need of control during a storm."

#### Verse 5

οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ  
 μεγάλα ἀρχεῖ.  
 Ἴδὸν ἡλικὸν πῦρ ἡλικίην ὕλην ἀνάπτει·  
 οὕτως see 2:26  
 γλωσσα, ης f tongue  
 μελος, ους n member, bodily part

μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great  
 αρχεω boast, make wild claims

Cf. Ps 73:9.

ἡλικος, η, ον how great, how large, how  
 small

πυρ, ος n fire  
 ὕλη, ης f forest; amount of wood  
 ἀναπτω kindle, set ablaze

The idea of destructiveness is now added. A mere spark can start a forest fire that will burn out of control, consuming all in its path. "James might then be referring not so much to a 'forest' (a rare feature of Near Eastern topography in James's day) but to the brush that covers so many Palestinian hills and which, in that dry Mediterranean climate, could so easily and disastrously burst into flame." Moo. Cf. Pss 10:7; 39:1-3; 83:14; 120:2-4; Prov 16:27; 26:21; Isa 30:27. Martin comments, "Such a description of the tongue enforces the idea that great destruction is but a short distance away when teachers are allowed to sway the congregation and introduce dissension (see on 3:13–18)."

#### Verse 6

καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ, ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας ἡ  
 γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, ἡ  
 σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα καὶ φλογίζουσα τὸν  
 τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς  
 γεέννης.

The verse is difficult due to lack of verbs and uncertainty as to how the various elements relate to one another.

ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας 'a world of evil.'

καθίσταται Verb, pres pass indic, 3 s  
 καθιστημι and καθιστανω put in  
 charge, appoint

"Though a small member of the body, it 'appoints' itself as the 'unrighteous world'; that is, the tongue, by virtue of being the most difficult of all parts of the body to control, becomes the conduit by which all the evil of the world around us comes to expression in us." Moo. Cf. Matt 15:11, 18-19.

σπιλωω spot, stain, pollute  
 ὁλος, η, ον see v.2

'It corrupts the whole person.' Martin comments, "The implication is that by the irresponsible speech of errant teachers the whole church is 'stained.' This is in line with the thought of 3:2, 3, 4, in which it was stated that the small instruments (bit, rudder) determine the course of the entire body."

φλογιζω set on fire  
 τροχος, ου m wheel, cycle

γενεσις, εως f birth, lineage

τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως 'course of existence,' 'course of life.' The tongue affects all of life, from the beginning to the end. "For James, the tongue sets on fire everything that comes into contact with it, namely, the entire human existence." Martin.

γεεννα, ης f hell

"The power of Satan himself, the chief denizen of hell, gives the tongue its great destructive potential." Moo. Motyer contrasts tongue of fallen man, animated by Satan, with the "Day of Pentecost when fire came down from heaven ... to mobilise the tongue for God." He also points out that this description applies not just to angry or immoral speech, it was true also of Peter's words when he spoke out of best motives and from the best of his knowledge and understanding (see Matt 16:21-23). Martin comments, "Such a verdict would characterize a church beset by teachers who create strife and speak evil and falsehood (4:11). Here was also a reason to resist the devil (4:7). In short, v 6 pronounces the tongue as evil – quite capable of doing deadly (i.e., Satanic) harm to the body of believers – because it emanates from the evil one; and there may be a link with the Gospel tradition about leading others astray (Mark 9:42–50) as well as living in harmony. But in enunciating this truth, James has joined together several phrases in v 6 in such a way that its exegesis is appreciated more for the impression it conveys than for its clarity of presentation."

### Verse 7

πᾶσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν ἑρπετῶν τε καὶ ἐναλίων δαμάζεται καὶ δεδάμασται τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ·

φυσις, εως f nature, here = kind, species  
θηριον, ου n animal, beast, wild animal  
τε enclitic particle and; τε και and also  
πετεινον, ου n bird  
ἑρπετον, ου n reptile  
ἐναλιον, ου n sea creature

"Although the words are not exactly the same, this fourfold division of the animal kingdom clearly reflects the Genesis creation account... (Gen. 1:26)... Allusion to creation shows that James is making a general theological assertion about the nature of the world. Human ability to 'tame' the animal world, suggests James, is inherent in the image of God and the divine mandate to 'subdue' the world." Moo.

δαμάζω subdue, tame; control

δεδάμασται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s

δαμάζω subdue, tame; control

ἀνθρωπινος, η, ον human, characteristic of mankind

'by the native power of mankind'

### Verse 8

τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δαμάσαι δύναται ἀνθρώπων· ἀκατάστατον κακόν, μεστή ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου.

οὐδεις, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν no one, nothing  
δυναμαι can, be able to, be capable of  
ἀκαταστατος, ον unstable; uncontrollable  
(tongue)

"We evidently have a solecism (an impropriety or irregularity in grammar) here ... with ἀκατάστατον κακόν as an ejaculatory nominative." Martin.

Cf. 1:8. It will accept for a moment restrictions that have been placed upon it, but then suddenly it will break out again. It defies the power of man to tame. "Consequently, if the Christian brings his tongue into a bridle (1:27) then he has a mark on his life which cannot be explained in terms of merely human capacity. He has the mark of the supernatural." Motyer. Cf. Is 53:9 and James 3:2.

κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm

μεστος, η, ον full

ιος, ου m poison, venom, rust

θανατηφορος, ον deadly, causing death

Cf. Job 5:15; Ps 140:3; Rom 3:13.

### Verse 9

ἐν αὐτῇ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν κύριον καὶ πατέρα, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας·

"The inconsistency of the tongue is a very clear indication of the 'restless evil' (v. 8) that it is." Moo.

εὐλογεω speak well of, bless

Martin draws attention to the fact that, "The Jewish Eighteen Benedictions, which contains liturgical formulas to be recited daily, concludes each of its parts with a blessing of God: 'Blessed art Thou, O God'." He continues, "What seems more likely – in the light of the use of a liturgical blessing in vv 9, 10 – is that the use (and misuse) of the tongue is related primarily to the worship setting of the church as a body. If this is true, it makes what follows even more blameworthy. From one side of the worshiper's mouth comes praise to God; from the other side of the same mouth come curses aimed at another fellow worshiper."

TR, following most minuscules, has θεόν rather than κύριον.

καταραομαι curse, place a curse upon  
ὁμοιωσις, εως f likeness

Martin comments, "It is an appeal to all who in the name of professed religion – whether Jewish, Christian, or Islamic – measure the strength of their zeal for God by the intensity of their hatred of their fellow human beings on the West Bank or in Northern Ireland or in Beirut or in Tehran."

### Verse 10

ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ στόματος ἐξέρχεται εὐλογία καὶ κατάρα. οὐ χρή, ἀδελφοί μου, ταῦτα οὕτως γίνεσθαι.

στομα, τος n mouth  
εὐλογία, ας f blessing, praise  
καταρα, ας f curse  
χρη impers verb it ought, it should

It is evidence of a fundamental inconsistency. "Christians who have transformed by the Spirit of God should manifest the wholeness and purity of the heart is consistency and purity of speech." Moo.

Martin comments, "Like Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, James understands a person's speech to be a 'barometer' of spirituality ... cf. Matt 12:33–37)."

### Verse 11

μήτι ἡ πηγή ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρῦει τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρὸν;

μητι Negative particle, used in questions to indicate the expectation of a negative answer

πηγη, ης f spring, fountain; well  
ὀπη, ης f opening, hole  
βρωω pour out, gush  
γλυκυσ, εια, υ sweet  
πικρος, α, ον bitter

In context, probably means 'salty.' The bitter makes the whole sour: our worship is made sour by our disparagement of our fellow men.

### Verse 12

μὴ δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, συκῆ ἐλαίας ποιῆσαι ἢ ἄμπελος σῦκα; οὔτε ἄλυκόν γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ.

συκη, ης f fig tree  
ἐλαια, ας f olive tree  
ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεω  
ἢ or  
ἄμπελος, ου f vine, grapevine  
συκον, ου n fig

The fruit is evidence of the nature of that which bears it. The tongue is evidence of the condition of the heart (cf. Matt 7:16; 12:34).

Before οὔτε ἄλυκόν many texts (including κ C<sup>2</sup> K L P it<sup>ff</sup> vg syr cop<sup>bo</sup>) have the adverb οὕτως or οὕτως οὐδενία πηγὴν ἄλυκόν καὶ (K L P).

The reading οὔτε ἄλυκόν is supported by A B C\* and found in Nestle26. It is argued for by Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, in defence of the UBS<sup>3</sup> text, which has this preferred shorter reading on textual and contextual grounds.

Dauids concludes that the TR is an attempt to smooth out difficulties by making v 12b repeat v 11, and it is only the shorter text that "carries the thought on toward 3:13–18"

οὔτε not, nor

ἄλυκος, η, ον salty

Here meaning 'salt spring.'

ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n water

### Verse 13

Τίς σοφὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμων ἐν ὑμῖν; δεῖξάτω ἐκ τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἐν πραύτητι σοφίας.

The focus shifts from the tongue to the more general theme of Christian character. The two are related: the tongue is expressive of the heart and a sanctified heart results in a bridled tongue.

Martin, however, argues that there is a link with what has gone before. The context is the life of the church and the focus is particularly upon those who take on a teaching role. What is the source of their wisdom and what is its effect upon the life of the body? He comments, "The problem seems to be that some self-styled chief people, thinking they were endowed with superior wisdom and understanding, had divided the church because of their teaching, which betrayed a misuse of the tongue. Such a scenario was not uncommon in the early church (Rom 16:17–18; 2 Cor 2:17; Gal 1:7–9; Eph 4:14; and the reference to ἑτεροδιδασκαλιῶν in 1 Tim 1:3–7)." Though he adds that church members at large are not totally out of the picture.

σοφος, η, ον wise, experienced

ἐπιστημων, ον gen ονος understanding

δειξάτω Verb, aor act imperat, 3 s δεικνυμι  
show

"The 'let him show' challenge reminds us of James's challenge in 2:18 to the 'believer' who thinks works and faith can be separated: 'Show me your faith without deeds'. Indeed, the test of true wisdom that James applies here picks up key ideas he touches on earlier in the letter: the importance of humility (1:21) and good works (2:14-26). 'Good conduct,' James insists, is the basis on which one can demonstrate wisdom." Moo.

καλος, η, ον good, right, fine, beautiful

ἀναστροφή, ης f manner of life, conduct  
πραΰτης, ητος (and πραοτης) f gentleness,  
humility

σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence

Gentleness, humility or meekness is to be one of the chief characteristics of the Christian (Matt 5:3; Rom 12:3; Eph 4:1; Phil 2:3). It is evidence of true spiritual wisdom for it is the character of him who is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30; Matt 11:29 – cf. v.15, the wisdom 'come down from above').

#### Verse 14

εἰ δὲ ζῆλον πικρὸν ἔχετε καὶ ἐριθείαν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν, μὴ κατακαυχᾶσθε καὶ ψεύδεσθε κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας.

ζηλος, ου m, and ους n zeal, jealousy  
πικρος, α, ον bitter

A jealousy that makes the person bitter. The paranoia that transforms leaders into party-spirited tyrants.

ἐριθεια, ας f selfishness, selfish ambition

Compare the character of Christ displayed in Phil 2:6-8.

καρδία, ας f heart  
κατακαυχασθαι boast against, be proud

Cf. Jer 9:23-24.

ψευδομαι lie, speak untruth, deceive  
ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

The life which does not display the gospel professed is a lie against the truth – if we possess the truth we must *live* it. "To boast about wisdom when one is displaying jealousy and selfish ambition is, in effect, to give the lie to the truth about what wisdom is and does. For wisdom must always be accompanied by humility." Moo.

Martin comments, "But if the guilty parties will not cease from having things their own way, James urges that they at least refrain from describing their bitter zeal and party spirit as the result of God's wisdom."

#### Verse 15

οὐκ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ σοφία ἄνωθεν κατερχομένη, ἀλλὰ ἐπίγειος, ψυχικὴ, δαιμονιώδης:

ἀνωθεν from above

Cf 1:5 The wisdom that comes from God in response to prayer.

κατερχομαι come down  
ἐπίγειος, ον earthly, of the earth

"The word does not always have a negative connotation, sometimes simply denoting that which is typical of, and belongs to, the earthly sphere (e.g., John 3:12; 1 Cor 15:40; 2 Cor 5:1; Phil 2:10). But when used in the sense of thinking or behaviour, 'earthly' has a negative nuance, suggesting a narrow perspective that fails to consider God's realm and will (cf. Phil 3:19): 'earthbound' is a good rendering." Moo. Compare the conduct described in 2:1-7, "where we have the congregation looking more like the world at large than the people of God." Martin.

ψυχικος, η, ον unspiritual, physical

"The word always has a negative sense in the NT, in all five of its occurrences being placed in explicit opposition to 'spirit' or 'spiritual' see also 1 Cor 2:14; 15:44,46; Jude 19)." Moo.

δαιμονιωδης, ες demonic

"In sum then, this false wisdom, which does not lead to good works and humility (v. 13), is characterised by 'the world, the flesh, and the devil.' In each of these ways, it is the direct antithesis of 'the wisdom that comes from above' – heavenly in nature, spiritual in essence, and divine in origin." Moo.

#### Verse 16

ὅπου γὰρ ζῆλος καὶ ἐριθεία, ἐκεῖ ἀκαταστασία καὶ πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα.

ὅπου where, whereas, while

ζηλος, ου m, and ους n see v.14

ἐκεῖ there, in that place

ἀκαταστασια, ας f disorder, insurrection

Cf. 1:8. "The noun that James uses connotes a restless, unsettled state. Luke uses it to describe the 'tumults,' the uprisings and revolutions, that will typify the period preceding the *parousia* (Luke 21:9). And Paul, pleading with the Corinthians to refrain from an unbridled, unorganised display of individual spiritual gifts in the assembly, reminds them that 'God is not a God of disorder (ἀκαταστασις) but of peace' (1 Cor 14:33; cf. also 2 Cor 6:5 and 12:20). The same 'disorder' is bound to break out in churches where people are pursuing their own selfish concerns and partisan causes rather than the good of the body as a whole." Moo.

φαυλος, η, ον evil, wrong, bad

πραγμα, τος n matter, thing, event, deed

**Verse 17**

ἡ δὲ ἄνωθεν σοφία πρῶτον μὲν ἀγνή ἐστιν,  
ἔπειτα εἰρηνική, ἐπιεικής, εὐπειθής, μεστή  
ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἀδιάκριτος,  
ἀνυπόκριτος·

James deals with the *origin, characteristics* and *results* of this wisdom. There are similarities here with Paul's delineation of the 'fruit of the Spirit' in Gal 5:22-23.

Martin comments, "What follows in 3:17 is the picture of how the church's aims should be set, and that includes Christians living a life under the wise rule of God. The result is a body that is united and is walking with one accord by aiming at the ideals of peace (cf. v 18)."

πρῶτον adv. first, in the first place, first of all

ἀγνος, ἡ, ον pure, holy, innocent

A characteristic of God's word, Ps 12:6; cf. 19:8. Woe betide those who fracture the church in the name of purity.

ἔπειτα then, afterwards

εἰρηνικός, ἡ, ον peaceful; peace-loving

Cf. Matt 5:9. "The Bible has very little room for the person who insists on speaking his mind irrespective of the consequences." Motyer.

ἐπιεικής, ες gentle, forbearing, considerate

εὐπειθής, ες open to reason, willing to give in (to someone else)

"The believer who is characterised by these three traits – *peace loving, considerate, submissive* – is the exact opposite of the envious, selfish, and ambitious person who is driven by demonic wisdom (vv. 15-16)." Moo.

μεστός, ἡ, ον full

ἐλεός, ος ἡ mercy, compassion

καρπός, ος ἡ fruit, harvest, outcome

ἀγαθός, ἡ, ον good, useful, fitting

ἀδιάκριτος, ον without prejudice or favouritism

Occurs here only in the NT. Moo thinks that the sense is 'undivided' in loyalty to God, cf. James' use of the verb in 1:6 and 2:4. Martin says that it is included here "to counteract party spirit in the church."

ἀνυπόκριτος, ον sincere, genuine

The two together signify a life that has a single focus and is transparently lived from and to God.

**Verse 18**

καρπὸς δὲ δικαιοσύνης ἐν εἰρήνῃ σπείρεται  
τοῖς ποιῶσιν εἰρήνην.

James may here be quoting a proverbial saying well known among the Christians to whom he writes.

δικαιοσύνη, ἡς f righteousness

εἰρήνη, ἡς f peace

σπείρω sow

εἰρήνη, ἡς f peace

This saying may mean either:

- i) 'Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness' (NIV, cf. NASB, REB, TEV); or
- ii) 'And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.'

The first is a statement of what peacemakers *produce*, the second of the reward that awaits them. Moo, while acknowledging that the latter has a "stronger grammatical basis and is supported by a good number of commentators," prefers the former which he thinks fits the context better. He concludes, "*Righteousness* in Jas 1:20 meant that conduct which is pleasing to God, and this is the 'fruit' intended here also. It includes all the virtues listed in v.17 and is the opposite, as we have suggested, of 'every evil practice' (v. 16). This righteousness cannot be produced in the context of human anger (1:20); but it *can* grow and flourish in the atmosphere of peace. Those who create such an atmosphere are assured by their Lord of their reward: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God' (Matt 5:9)."

This leads into the subject of strife, taken up at the beginning of the following chapter.