

## Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 324 – November 20<sup>th</sup> – James 4:1-17

### 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 <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 1

Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν;

James looks now at the things which militate against harmonious Christian fellowship – things which display an absence of the wisdom that comes from above.

ποθεν interrog adv. from where, how, why  
πολεμος, ου m war, battle, strife, conflict  
μαχη, ης f quarrel, fight

Some suggest that there may have been violent physical conflicts between Christians (see 'kill,' v.2). But the terms are probably used metaphorically of verbal battles and strife. Martin, however, comments, "Since James and his community were situated in a Zealot-infested society and since it is quite conceivable that (at least) some of the Jewish Christians were former Zealots (cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13), the taking of another's life is not out of the realm of possibility for the church members as a response to disagreement... While James' community may have not yet experienced and engaged in literal murder on a mass scale, the contingency is a very real one and must be warned against."

ἐντεῦθεν from here, from this source  
ἡδονη, ης f pleasure, passion

The root of strife is self-gratification.

στρατευομαι wage war, do battle  
μελος, ους n member, bodily part

Could refer to parts of the individual human body, or 'parts' of the body of believers – the church. The former is perhaps the more likely. Cf. 1 Peter 2:11. Martin, however, argues that the focus in 4:1-3 is upon external conflicts – conflicts between members of the church.

"All our desires and passions are like an armed camp within us, and at a moment's notice they are ready to go out to war against anybody who stands in the way of some particular gratification which we want for ourselves." Motyer.

#### Verse 2

ἐπιθυμεῖτε, καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε· φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε, καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν· μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε. οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς·

ἐπιθυμew long for, desire, lust after  
φονευω murder, put to death

Martin thinks that ζηλοῦτε is explicative of φονεύετε, 'you kill out of jealousy.' Moo considers whether φονεύετε can here be understood metaphorically, meaning something like, 'you are murderously angry' (cf. Matt 5:21-26; 1 John 2:15). Moo concludes, "nothing in James's context prepares us for such an interpretation. Perhaps, then, the best alternative is to take 'you kill' in its normal, literal, sense, but as a hypothetical eventuality rather than as an actual occurrence... If covetous zeal goes unrestrained, the danger of actual violence is real."

Martin writes, "It is quite possible that James had thrown his lot in with the needy priests of Jerusalem (some of whom had converted to Christianity), who, in turn, showed sympathy with the Zealot movement. Combine this with the hatred that Zealots had for the wealthy ... and it may easily be imagined that some of the Christians may have had need of correction when they attempted to solve the disagreements within the church. No doubt different positions on the most viable attitude toward Roman rule prompted heated discussion and possible physical confrontation. But it may well be that the prohibition of murder comes in the light of the desire for more material gains (especially in the light of *δαπανᾶν*, 'to spend,' see v 3). And it is germane to note that those who were in the lower strata of society saw the rich to be in partnership with the Romans. Thus, the desire to strike out at the hated Roman government could even have been a cloak to gain material possessions. It is possible that if some of the Christians James wrote to were former Zealots, they might not have been willing too quickly to renounce violence as a way of securing religious freedom. Other suggestions – that James is predicting what might happen in the future (Moo ...) or that he is only referring to what generally happens when desire overtakes a person (Ropes ...) – do not go far enough."

ζηλω *be jealous of*  
 δυναμαι *can, be able to*  
 ἐπιτυχεῖν *Verb, aor act infin ἐπιτυγχανῶ*  
*obtain, receive, attain*  
 μαχομαι *quarrel, fight*  
 πολεμεῶ *wage war, fight*

Moo, along with many modern translations, prefers a two clause structure to the three clauses of the UBS punctuation, NIV and AV, i.e.:

- 'You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder.'
- 'And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts.'

Moo writes, "This fits better into the context, since James has been at pains to show that disorder and evil in the community stem from 'bitter envy and selfish ambition' (3:14-16)."

αἰτεῖσθαι *Verb, pres mid infn αἰτέω ask; mid ask for oneself, request*

Cf. 1:5-7. "There is a glorious liberality in the matter of prayer when we come to the God who will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly (Ps 84:11) but rather, with His only Son, freely gives us all things (Rom 8:32)." Motyer.

### Verse 3

αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε, διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε.

διότι *because, for, therefore*

κακῶς *badly*

ἡδονῆ, ἡς *f see v.1*

δαπαναῶ *spend*

"It is this same uprising of self-centredness which was first seen to disrupt Christian fellowship and now is seen to intrude even into the place of prayer, breaking our harmony with God." Motyer.

Hort comments, "God bestows not gifts only, but the enjoyment of them: but the enjoyment which contributes to nothing beyond itself is not what He gives in answer to prayer; and petitions to Him which have no better end in view are not prayers."

### Verse 4

μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὃς ἐὰν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται.

μοιχαλις, ἰδος *f adulteress, unfaithful*

"We have been espoused to Christ as His bride, for no other metaphor than that of marriage could at all adequately describe the close intimate and personal relationship and openness between Him and us (e.g. Rom 7:1-6; 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7-9; see also Jer 2:1-3; Hos 2:14-20). But when we rush off in love with the world (cf., 2 Tim 4:10, note the alternative object of love in verse 8) the marriage vow is broken and we become adulteresses. Our action reveals all that is sham and superficial in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ." Motyer. For further OT background, cf. Jer 3:20; Isa 57:3; Ezek 16:38; 23:45.

οἶδα *know, understand*

φιλία, ἀς *f love, friendship*

ἐχθρα, ἀς *f enmity, hostility, hatred*

Cf. 1 John 1:15-17. "He is suggesting that some of the readers do not appreciate that their deliberate choice to befriend the world is actually an action that sets them against God." Martin.

ὃς ἐὰν *whoever*

βουληθῆ *Verb, aor pass dep subj, 3 s*

βουλομαι *want, desire, wish, intend*

φίλος, οὐ *m and φιλη, ἡς *f friend**

εἶναι *Verb, pres infin εἶμι*

ἐχθρός, ἀ, οὐ *enemy*

καθίσταται *Verb, pres pass indic, 3 s*

καθιστημι and καθιστανῶ *make, appoint*

It marks a failure to appreciate the saving work of Christ and the meaning of the cross by which we who were enemies of God were reconciled to him through the death of his Son (Rom 5:10).

"We have no evidence that James's readers were overtly disclaiming God and consciously deciding to follow the world instead. But their tendency to imitate the world by discriminating against people (2:1-13), by speaking negatively of others (3:1-12), by exhibiting 'bitter envy' and 'selfish ambition' (3:13-18), and by pursuing their own destructive pleasures (4:1-3) amounted to just that. James, as it were, wants to raise the stakes so that his readers see their compromising conduct for what it really is. God tolerates no rival. When believers behave in a worldly manner, they demonstrate that, at that point, their allegiance is to the world rather than to God." Moo.

#### Verse 5

ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει· Πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατέφικισεν ἐν ἡμῖν;

ἢ οἱ

δοκεῶ think, suppose

κενῶς in vain, to no purpose

γραφῆ, ἡς f writing, Scripture

It is difficult to be certain as to what Scripture James is quoting here. Martin comments, "It may well be that the best we can do is to suggest that he is expressing the theme of God's jealousy as contained in the OT (Moo ...; cf. Exod 34:14; Zech 8:2; Pss 42:1; 84:2; note that ἡ γραφή in John 7:37-39 is only an allusion to an OT scripture)."

φθονος, οἱ m envy, jealousy

ἐπιποθεῶ long for, desire

κατοικίζω place, put

There at several ways of understanding this verse:

- i) James is referring to God's jealousy for his people: 'God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us' (NRSV).
- ii) James is referring to the human tendency to be envious: 'the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely' (NIV).
- iii) The reference is to the Spirit's opposition to envy: 'The Spirit God made to dwell in us opposes envy' (Martin).

Moo admits that it is very difficult to determine which is intended. However, he concludes, "the immediate context provides strong, and, in our opinion, decisive, support for the 'divine jealousy' interpretation." The reference to scripture is then a general reference to scriptural teaching about the jealousy of God (e.g., Ex 20:5; 34:14; Zech 8:2).

Motyer also adopts this reading of the text, commenting, "What a remarkable thought, that God envies the sinful self which we put at the centre of things and which we love so much! How He envies it, because we love it more than Him!"

Martin comments, "God opposes those who fight and war within the church, and he has placed his Spirit within his people to combat that tendency. Therefore, it is God's jealousy that is described in v 5, for he stands waiting for the belligerent to forsake their envy of others and direct their attention back to him."

#### Verses 6-10

What James writes in vv. 6-10 is strikingly similar to 1 Pet. 5:5-9. Peter also quotes Prov 3:34 (v. 5b), following it with commands to 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's almighty hand, that he may exalt you in due time' (v. 6) and resist the devil (v. 9). These parallels suggest that what James says here may reflect a widespread early Christian call to repentance." Moo.

"Verses 6 and 10 are like brackets, and by means of detailed comments in the intervening verses, James once more undertakes the task of practical helpfulness, showing us the details of a humble walk with God." Motyer.

#### Verse 6

μεῖζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν· διὸ λέγει· Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

God's jealous love for his people may seem terrifying, but James reminds us that it is accompanied by never failing grace.

μειζων, ον greater

"His resources are never at an end. His patience is never exhausted, His initiative never stops. 'He gives more grace.'" Motyer. Martin comments, "His demands are strict but his grace ... is more than ample to overcome human deficiencies."

διὸ therefore, for this reason

ὑπερηφανος, ον arrogant, proud

ἀντιτασσομαι oppose, resist

ταπεινος, η, ον humble, lowly

Cf. Prov 3:34.

**Verse 7**

ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ· ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ  
 διαβόλῳ, καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν·

"Verses 7-10 contain a series of commands that flow directly from the quotation of Prov 3:34 in v. 6. If God gives the grace to meet his claim on our lives to those who are humble, then we must be humble if we expect to enjoy that grace." Moo.

ὑποτάγητε Verb, aor pass imperat, 2 pl  
 ὑποτασσω subordinate; pass. be  
 subject, submit to, obey

The series of aorist imperatives underlines the urgency of the task.

ἀντίστητε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl  
 ἀνθιστημι resist, oppose, withstand  
 διαβολος, ου m the devil

We cannot separate these two injunctions. We can only resist the devil by first being subject to God. "His call is for active allegiance: complete submission to His commands in the cause of active service on campaign." Motyer.

φεύξεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s φευγω  
 flee, run away from

Cf. Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

**Verse 8**

ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἔγγιεῖ ὑμῖν· καθαρῖσατε  
 χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας,  
 δίψυχοι.

ἐγγίζω approach, draw near  
 ἐγγιεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἐγγίζω

Cf. Hos 12:6. "We need to beware of the tendency in ourselves to reverse the order. We often think to ourselves how easy it would be to keep a daily time with God if only we had a more vivid sense of his presence. In other words we want the promise to come before the command. Such fellowship does not grow without deliberate cultivation." Motyer.

καθαρίζω cleanse, make clean, purify  
 χεῖρ, χειρος f hand, power  
 ἁμαρτωλος, ου sinful, sinner  
 ἀγνίζω purify, cleanse

"The imagery of both 'washing' and 'purifying' stems from the OT provisions for priestly purity in ministering the things of the Lord (the verbs have this sense in the three verses where they occur together: Num 31:23; 2 Chron 29:15; Isa 66:17). But both verbs had come to be applied more broadly to ethical purity as well. James also reflects the OT in using 'hands' and 'heart' to denote both deeds and disposition. The psalmist required 'clean hands and a pure heart' for those who would stand before the Lord (Ps 24:3-4); James asks the same of those who would 'come to God.'" Moo.

δίψυχος, ου of divided loyalty

Cf. 1:8. Holiness begins with the heart; it requires a single-minded heart that longs after God and his ways (see v.4), rather than being "two-faced with God." (Motyer). But holiness is not a matter of inward reflection, it is displayed in the things we *do* – in clean hands. Martin comments, "The latter term is of special importance in this letter... James had used the term to depict the one who was unstable, who doubted God (1:8). But in our present context the idea is expanded and made more specific, involving the double-nature (or two-world) syndrome... The reader who is double-minded seeks to be friendly with the world and with God (4:4). But such double allegiance is impossible. To befriend the world (i.e., resort to worldly methods to bring in the kingdom) is to oppose God and his way. This is reflected in the inconsistent behaviour in the Jacobean church (3:9–12)."

**Verse 9**

ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε·  
 ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μετατραπήτω καὶ ἡ  
 χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν·

ταλαιπωρεω be sorrowful, lament  
 πενθεω mourn, be sad, grieve over  
 κλαύσατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl κλαιω  
 weep, cry

Cf. Isa 15:2; Jer 4:13; Hos 10:5; Joel 1:9-10;  
 Mic 2:4.

γέλως, ωτος m laughter  
 πένθος, ους n mourning, sorrow  
 μετατραπήτω Verb, aor pass imperat, 3 s  
 μετατρεπω turn, change, alter  
 χαρὰ, ας f joy, gladness, cause of joy  
 κατήφεια, ας f gloom, depression

A description of unfeigned repentance. Cf. Eccles 7:3. "True Christian joy can never be ours if we ignore or tolerate sin; it comes only when we have squarely faced the reality of our sin, brought it before the Lord in repentance and humility, and experienced the cleansing work of the Spirit." Moo.

Martin comments, "These negative attitudes should not be construed as though the preacher were a kill-joy. What the writer is saying is that the actions of (foolish) laughing and (senseless) rejoicing hold no place for Christians who refuse to turn to God's paths... But this reaction is for purposes of restoration. Those who follow such a path will be qualified to laugh and rejoice. Those who come with clean hands and pure hearts will have every reason to 'make merry,' at the time of eschatological reversal to be announced in the next line, and amplified in 5:7-8."

### Verse 10

ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου, καὶ ὑψώσεται ὑμᾶς.

ταπεινωθητε Verb, aor pass imperat, 2 pl  
ταπεινω humble

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before  
ὑψω exalt, lift up, raise

Cf. Luke 18:14, also 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Pet 5:6.

### Verses 11-12 and ff

Martin writes of the relationship between vv 11-12 and the verses which follow, "Our interpretation is based on seeking a historical setting for both sections in the internecine conflicts within the Jewish and Jewish Christian network of relationships at Jerusalem. There could then be a distinction drawn. In 4:11-12 James is confronting his fellow believers, called appropriately ἀδελφοί, and yet reaching out to his compatriots, identified in the word πληθίων, by his advocacy of a policy of peaceful coexistence within the ancestral fold. At 4:13 his invective becomes sharper and more pointed, and is aimed at the mercantile activity of Jewish traders who threaten, on the basis of their acquired wealth (5:1-3) both domestic and foreign (4:13), to exert hostile pressure on the impoverished Jewish Christian fraternity. They also stand behind the murderous activity of the Sadduceean leaders that has already brought James, the Lord's brother, to his death (5:6)."

### Verse 11

Μὴ καταλαλεῖτε ἀλλήλων, ἀδελφοί· ὁ καταλαλῶν ἀδελφοῦ ἢ κρίνων τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καταλαλεῖ νόμου καὶ κρίνει νόμον· εἰ δὲ νόμον κρίνεις, οὐκ εἶ ποιητὴς νόμου ἀλλὰ κριτὴς.

Verses 11 and 12 conclude the section on community conflict and also echo James' earlier words on the use of the tongue.

καταλαλεω speak evil of, slander  
ἀλλήλων, οἱ, οὗς reciprocal pronoun one  
another

Martin comments, "The command for God's people to cease from speaking evil against (see RSV) others of the congregation has well-established precedents (Lev 19:16; Pss 49[50]:20; 100[101]:5; Prov 18:8; 20:13; 26:22...), and evil speech was a problem for the early church (Rom 1:30; 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:1; 2 Pet 2:12; 3:16...). It may very well be that the fighting and wars that had taken place in this church were accompanied by accusations hurled in the heat of debate. James' use of 'brother' (ἀδελφός) is a sudden switch from the naming of sinners and the double-minded person of 4:8, and perhaps he is exemplifying the care in use of the tongue that has been his admonition to his readers."

ἢ οἱ

κρινω judge, pass judgement on

νομος, οὗ m law

ποιητὴς, οὗ m one who does or carries  
out, doer

κριτὴς, οὗ m judge

Instead of seeing ourselves as under the law, in speaking ill of others we set ourselves up as those responsible for enforcing its demands upon others – of equal status with the law-giver. Such behaviour is the opposite of the humility which God requires. Moo suggests that James has in mind particularly the law's demand that we love our neighbour.

### Verse 12

εἷς ἐστὶν νομοθέτης καὶ κριτὴς, ὁ δυνάμενος σῶσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι· σὺ δὲ τίς εἶ, ὁ κρίνων τὸν πλησίον;

εἷς, μίας, ἐν γεν ἑνος, μίας, ἑνος one  
νομοθετης, οὗ m lawgiver

δυναμαι can, be able to

σωζω save, rescue

ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill

πλησιον i) prep with gen near; ii) ὁ π.

neighbour, fellow man.

Cf. Rom 14:1-13, esp. vv 3-4 and 10-13.

Martin adds, "James is not discounting the need for honest discussion and constructive criticism within the body of believers. It may be that he would applaud a removal from the congregation of those who deliberately lead astray the flock with their destructive tongues. The point is, however, that jealous and contemptible language has no place in the church, as James emphasizes in the closing words of 4:12: σὺ δὲ τίς εἶ, ὁ κρίνων τὸν πλησίον; ... This rhetorical question, somewhat sarcastic in nature ... shames those guilty of judging their neighbor (πλησίον), a term that recalls vividly 2:8 (and in turn Lev 19:16–18), and illustrates the use of the royal law as a standard by which to measure conduct... This may also be an exhortation to consider those who are presently outside the church and who would be adversely influenced by the unseemly conduct of Christians."

#### 4:13-5:11

"The underlying issue that brings loose unity to 4:13-5:11 is a clash of worldviews. We find, on the one hand, a worldview that largely leaves God out of account, marked by boastful self-reliance (4:13-17) and selfish indulgence (5:1-6). The reality of God and his ultimate judgment is ignored or scorned. Faithful Christians, James urges, must respond with a resolute reaffirmation of the biblical worldview, marked by God's consistent providential ordering of events (4:15) and the reality of a coming day on which God will reward the faithful and punish the sinful (5:1, 3, 5, 7)." Moo.

#### Verse 13

Ἄγε νῦν οἱ λέγοντες· Σήμερον ἢ αὔριον πορευσόμεθα εἰς τήνδε τὴν πόλιν καὶ ποιήσομεν ἐκεῖ ἐνιαυτὸν καὶ ἐμπορευσόμεθα καὶ κερδήσομεν·

The apostrophe ἄγε νῦν is found only here and at 5:1 in the NT.

σημερον today

ἢ see v.11

αὔριον Adverb αὐριον tomorrow, the next day, in a short while

The Byzantine text reads καὶ αὔριον rather than ἢ αὔριον.

πορευσόμεθα Verb, aor midd dep subj, 1 pl

πορευομαι go, proceed, travel

ὁδε, ἡδε, τοδε this; he, she, it

πολις, εως f city, town

ἐκεῖ there, in that place, to that place

ἐνιαυτος, ου m year

The Byzantine text add ἕνα to ἐνιαυτὸν.

ἐμπορευσόμεθα Verb, aor subj or fut indic, midd dep, 1 pl ἐμπορευομαι be in business

κερδαινω gain, win, profit

"The picture James paints here would be familiar to his first century readers. The period was marked by growing commercial activity, and especially in the Hellenistic cities of Palestine (such as those in the Decapolis). Jews were especially active in these ventures; many had left Palestine to settle in cities throughout the Mediterranean world in pursuit of financial gain. And, of course, the picture is equally familiar to us in the modern world. Modes of transportation and distances have changed, but the 'bottom line' has not. "However, we need to guard against a misinterpretation at this point... As the following verses make clear, James is not rebuking these merchants for their plans or even for their desire to make a profit. He rebukes them rather for the this-worldly self-confidence they exhibit in pursuing these goals." Moo.

It is unclear whether James' words are aimed at Christian or non-Christian merchants. Martin comments that it "does little to affect our exegesis."

#### Verse 14

οἵτινες οὐκ ἐπίστασθε τὸ τῆς αὔριον ποία ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν· ἀτιμὶς γάρ ἐστε ἢ πρὸς ὀλίγον φαινομένη, ἔπειτα καὶ ἀφανιζομένη·

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἡτις, ὁ τι who, which

ἐπίσταμαι know, understand

Cf. Prov 27:1.

ποτος, α, ον interrog pro. what, of what kind

Does ποία begin a supplementary thought (NIV: 'you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life?'), or is it a continuation of the same point (NASB: 'you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow')? The situation is complicated by the fact that many MSS include a conjunction at this point (ποία γαρ). The shorter text (supported by  $\aleph^*$  B *et al*), is probably original, with the γαρ having been introduced to remove ambiguity. Despite acknowledging the secondary nature of γαρ, Moo prefers the NIV punctuation.

ζωη, ης f life

Martin comments, "James is not suggesting that Christians are to go around in fear that disaster will surely take place. What he is requiring his readers to consider is that a trust in God and not a well-thought-out plan for aggrandizement and gain is the only way to face the future. To live in the recognition that God – not the human being – is in control is to choose a Christian life of humility before God; to live as though we ourselves – not God – have the final say is to adopt a proud and haughty attitude."

ἀτμις, ἰδος f vapour, mist

Cf. Job 7:7,9,16; Ps 39:5-6.

ὀλιγος, η, ον little, small; pl. few; adv.

ὀλιγον a little, only a little

φαινω shine; midd. and pass. appear

ἐπειτα then, afterwards

ἀφανιζω ruin, destroy; pass perish, vanish, disappear

Cf. the parable of the rich 'fool' in Lk 12:16-20.

### Verse 15

ἀντι τοῦ λέγειν ὑμᾶς· Ἐὰν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ, καὶ ζήσομεν καὶ ποιήσομεν τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο.

ἀντι prep with gen in place of, because of  
θελήσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s θελω wish, will

"It is not enough, James suggests, to recognise that one's own life is uncertain and transitory (v.14). Such a recognition, after all, is not even specifically religious. What these merchants need to go on to reckon with is that their lives are also in the hands of God." Moo.

ζωω live, be alive

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that

"He does not want us to empty our lives of sensible planning, but he wants us to empty our lives of proud planning that does not fear and bow to the will of God." Motyer. Cf. Paul's planning of his missionary work in Acts 18:21; Rom 1:10; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7 also Heb 6:3.

"James attributes no magical significance to the words themselves. 'If the Lord wills' can become nothing more than a glib formula without any real meaning. James, rather, wants us to adopt the attitude expressed by the words as a fixed perspective from which to view all of life. This perspective should add an element of contingency to all our planning – 'if the Lord allows this to happen.' But it should also force us to evaluate our planning from a biblical ethical perspective – 'if this kind of plan is in accordance with the Lord's will expressed in Scripture for his people.'" Moo.

### Verse 16

νῦν δὲ καυχᾶσθε ἐν ταῖς ἀλαζονείαις ὑμῶν· πᾶσα καύχησις τοιαύτη πονηρὰ ἐστίν.

καυχομαι boast, boast about  
ἀλαζονεια, ας f pride, arrogance, pretention

They boast of their plans as if they were in complete control of their life and future.

καυχησις, εως f boasting

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον such, of such kind

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

"On the view we have taken of this paragraph, we must remember, James is rebuking not people of the world but Christians. He warns, therefore, of the tendency of the world to 'press us into its mould' by leading us, perhaps very subtly, to begin assuming that we control the duration and direction of our lives. Such an attitude is simply inconsistent with a Christian worldview in which there is a God who sovereignly directs the course of human affairs." Moo.

### Verse 17

εἰδότε ὅτι οὐν καλὸν ποιεῖν καὶ μὴ ποιοῦντι, ἁμαρτία αὐτῷ ἐστίν.

The verse seems to be a proverb or well known maxim aptly quoted here by James to sum up what he has been saying.

εἰδότε Verb, perf act ptc, m dat s οἶδα know, understand

καλος, η, ον good, right, proper, fine

ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

"James ... has urged us to take the Lord into consideration in all our planning. We therefore have no excuse in this matter: we know what we are to do. To fail to do it, James wants to make clear, is sin. We cannot take refuge in the plea that we have done nothing positively wrong. As Scripture makes abundantly clear, sins of *omission* are as real and serious as sins of *commission*." Moo.