

Introduction to James

The Author

The author identifies himself simply as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." (1:1). There are two men named James found within the pages of the New Testament who were of sufficient reputation to need no further identification in a letter such as this one. The first was the apostle James, son of Zebedee and brother of John, but he was put to death in about 44 AD, too early to make him a likely author of this letter. The second was James the brother of the Lord mentioned in the Gospels (Matt 13:55; Mk 6:3) who became a follower of Jesus only after the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:7 and John 7:5). He later became the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 1:19; 2:9,12). Christians have traditionally identified James the brother of the Lord as the author of this letter. G. H. Rendell writes, "Apart from Paul and Peter, no figure in the church of the first days plays a more substantial part upon the historic and legendary stage than James, first Bishop of Jerusalem" (*The Epistle of St. James and Judaic Christianity*).

Though James was personally loyal to the *torah* and sought to maintain ties between the emerging early Christian movement and Judaism, his first loyalty was to Jesus Christ. Early sources suggest that he was stoned to death by the scribes and Pharisees in about 62 AD for refusing to renounce his allegiance to Jesus as the Christ.

The readers

The readers seem to have been Jewish Christians who have left their homes in Palestine and are facing economic distress, including persecution at the hands of wealthy landowners. The situation described in Acts 11:19 may provide a background to this letter.

Moo argues that the letter was probably written *before* James became acquainted with Paul's teaching at the Apostolic Council in AD 48 or 49 (Acts 15). "The historic scenario we suggest is that Paul's preaching in Tarsus from c. 36 (Acts 9:30; Gal 1:21) and in Antioch from c. 45 (Acts 11:25-26) on had been misunderstood by some who heard him. They were apparently using the slogan 'justification by faith alone' as an excuse for neglecting a commitment to discipleship and practical Christian living. It is this 'perverted Paulinism' that James attacks in chap 2. James probably did not even know that Paul's teaching was the jumping-off point for the view he is opposing. He would have attacked such a perversion, of course, at any date. But had he known what Paul truly preached (as he would have after AD 48), he would have put matters differently than he did." The absence of any awareness of the controversy concerning the *torah* that emerged in the early church also suggests an early date for the letter. Moo suggests it was written in the middle 40s, "perhaps just before the Apostolic Council."

The content

Motyer provides a helpful summary of the book, saying, "James sets himself to give practical help to the people of God in the actual situations of their lives. They are not yet gathered to their eternal happiness in Christ, but are scattered in the world (1:1), subjected to many trials and temptations (1:2, 12, etc.), liable to lapse into worldly ways (2:2ff.), or into unspiritual complacency (2:14ff) and in many other ways also buffeted from outside and enticed from within (1:14). They have the great hope of a returning Lord (5:8,9), but He has not yet come, and James would establish Christ's people in a life of practical holiness in readiness for that great day."

James stresses the need for faith to be displayed in obedience and for the life of faith to be characterised by sincere prayer. Moo concludes, "Basic to all that James says in his letter is his concern that his readers stop compromising with worldly values and behaviour and give

themselves wholly to the Lord. Spiritual 'wholeness,' then, we suggest, is the central theme of this letter."

Style and Language

Of the style, Johnstone comments that it is "lively and earnest, and an abundance of apt similitudes proves that the writer had in no small degree the eye and imagination of a poet. In several places, especially paragraphs in the last two chapters, both the sentiments and the diction forcibly remind a reader of utterances of the old Hebrew prophets." He continues, "The Greek of James approaches nearer to classical purity than perhaps that of any other New Testament writer. Considering how decided a Hebrew he was in feeling, this is certainly remarkable."

Some have suggested that the quality of the Greek makes it difficult to believe that it was written by a Palestinian Jew. In response, Moo writes, "First, we must not exaggerate the quality of James's Greek. While more polished and closer to the 'higher *koine*' than most NT Greek, the Greek of James is far from literary Greek. Absent are the elaborate sentences found, for instance, in Hebrews." Secondly, Moo refers to more recent research that has shown that "many Palestinians, especially in Galilee and even from poor families, would have grown up with fluency in Greek."

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

James 1:1

Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
δοῦλος ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ
διασπορᾷ χაίρειν.

Ἰάκωβος "Surnamed by Paul as one of the 'pillars' (στῦλοι) of the church, along with Peter and John (Gal 2:9) James enjoyed contact with other leaders (Acts 15:13)." Martin.

θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος
Martin writes, "Vouga's argument ... in support of taking θεοῦ and κυρίου together is doubly based: (1) other divine titles are linked in 1:27; 3:9 to provide a model for this parallelism; and (2) patristic interpretation of Pseudo-Andrew of Crete (ca. A.D. 740) supports this link. Motyer ... similarly argues for the rendering and cites parallels from the later NT literature. But Mitton criticizes the translation "servant of Jesus Christ, who is God and Lord," while granting the linguistic possibility, on the score that such an explicit ascription of deity to Jesus is rare in the NT and is unlikely in this letter, which he takes to be a primitive document. He does concede, however, that 'even if Jesus is not here identified with God, He and the Father are clearly associated together in what is in effect a unity. One who becomes a servant of Christ thereby becomes a servant of God'."

δοῦλος, ου m slave, servant

δοῦλος is a title of honour, like the prophets of old who were termed servants of God. Martin comments, "The author blends an old covenant confession of relationship with one under the new, that Jesus Christ is the κύριος (cf. 2:1 and, e.g. Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 12:3; Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11)." Cf. also 1 Cor 8:6.

δωδεκα twelve

φυλη, ης f tribe, people

"By calling his readers 'the twelve tribes,' ... James claims that they constitute the true people of God of the 'last days.'" Moo. Cf. 1 Peter 1:1; 2:9.

διασπορα, ας f dispersion (of the Jews or Christians scattered throughout the Graeco-Roman world)

The picture is that of the people of God living dispersed in the world – not yet gathered to glory. James is writing this letter to tell them how to live in the world. Moo suggests James is writing to Jewish Christians who have been 'dispersed' as a result of persecution (Acts 11:19).

χαρω rejoice, be glad; imperat used as a greeting

The form here is an 'imperative infinitive' (Moulton, *Grammar* 1:179).

James 1:2-4

By launching directly into the matter of trials, "James suggests that the tough times the believers were facing were a key reason for his writing to them." Moo.

Martin writes, "The subject matter of 'reaction to trials' is the first admonition of the letter, but the theme will be picked up later, notably in chap 5. There the example of Job, a favorite character of the Wisdom school, will be appealed to in support of the thesis that 'affliction produces endurance' (5:11)." There are parallels with Rom 5:3-5 and 1 Pet 1:6-7.

James 1:2

Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγάσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις,

χαρα, ας f joy, gladness, cause of joy

πασαν χαραν "here probably suggests intensity (complete and unalloyed joy) rather than exclusivity (nothing but joy)." Moo.

ἠγάσασθε Verb, aor midd dep indic, 2 pl ἠγεομαι think, regard, consider

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as πειρασμος, ου m period or process of testing, trial, temptation

περιπέσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl περιπιπτω fall away, encounter (trials)

ποικίλος, η, ον diverse, all kinds of

One of the key trials they were facing appears to have been poverty, but here James deliberately casts his net widely, "including the many kinds of suffering that Christians undergo in this fallen world: sickness, loneliness, bereavement, disappointment." Moo.

James 1:3

γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν·

γινωσκοντες it is vital that we know and understand the purpose of God in the trials we face. Cf. Rom 5:3-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7.

δοκιμιον, ου n testing, act/means of testing

Found only here and 1 Pet 1:7 in the NT and in the LXX Ps 11:7 (ET 12:6) and Prov 27:21. Some few MSS read the more common adjective δόκιμον.

πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

The testing is "not intended to determine whether a person has faith or not; it is intended to purify faith that already exists." Moo.

κατεργαζομαι accomplish, bring about ὑπομονη, ης f patience, endurance

I.e. steadfastness or constancy. It also implies a sense of hope rather than grim determination. "Faith which is tested passes over to steadfastness and consistency of living, and when consistency is pursued it becomes something that is unchangeably fixed and wrought into our character. James is talking about the way of sanctification. He is talking about ... being a consistent Christian through thick and thin. He says, This is the way your faith has got to face the trials of life. It is out of conflict and the trials of life that victory and sanctification are won." Motyer

James 1:4

ἢ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω, ἵνα ἦτε τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

τελειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

A key term for James, cf. 1:17, 25; 3:2.

ἐχέτω Verb, pres act imperat, 3 s ἔχω

There is a play on words here. The REB translates, "Let endurance perfect its work in you so that you may become perfected." By facing trial right through to the end in a spirit of faith and endurance we become mature – fully fashioned into what God would have us be.

ὀλοκληρος, ον sound, whole, complete μηδεις, μηδεμα, μηδεν no one, nothing

λείπω lack, fall short

"This concern for spiritual integrity and wholeness lies at the heart of James's concern, and he will come back to the matter again and again (see esp. 1:7-8 and 4:4-5)." Moo.

James 1:5-8

"The spiritual perfection that is the goal of trials (vv. 2-4) will be achieved only when divine wisdom is present. And wisdom can be had for the asking – albeit, an asking that is sincere and uncorrupted (vv. 6-8)." Moo.

James 1:5

Εἰ δέ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας, αἰτεῖτω παρὰ τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ ἁπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος, καὶ δοθήσεται αὐτῷ·

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

σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence

That is, particularly wisdom to know how to act in the face of trials. Martin comments, "Wisdom ... is one of the great terms of practical religion. The question 'Where shall wisdom be found' (Job 28:12) is answered by the sages of Israel in Prov 1:7: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,' implying a devotion to Yahweh and a resolve to walk in the ways of his law. For the Jewish mind wisdom meant practical righteousness in everyday living. And it is God's gift, not a native human disposition."

αἰτεῶ ask, request

ἁπλῶς generously

Moo argues that the word signifies singleness of intent rather than generosity. "James is not so much highlighting God's generosity in giving as his single, undivided intent to give us those gifts we need to please him." It stands in contrast to διψυχος, 'double-minded' in v.8 and "reassures us that God is not in two minds about his giving." Martin.

ὀνειδίζω reproach, insult, abuse

δοθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s διδωμι

An echo of Jesus' words in Matt 7:7a. Calvin comments, "Since we see that the Lord does not so require from us what is above our strength, but that he is ready to help us, provided we ask, let us, therefore, learn whenever he commands anything, to ask of him the power to perform it."

James 1:6

αἰτεῖτω δὲ ἐν πίστει, μὴδὲν διακρινόμενος, ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἕτοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ·

"Our asking must coincide with the way in which God gives: he gives with singleness of intent; we must ask with singleness of intent." Moo.

πίστει Noun, dat s πιστις, εως f

μηδεις, μηδεμα, μηδεν no one, nothing
διακρινω judge; midd & aor pass doubt,
hesitate

An echo of Jesus' words in Matt 21:21-22.

ἕτοικεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s εἰκα be
like

κλύδων, ὠνος m rough water, wave(s)

θαλασσα, ης f sea

ἀνεμιζομαι be driven by wind

ῥιπιζομαι be tossed about

"Here is the sea, says James: now it beats against the rock as though it had no other purpose in mind than to shatter its way through, but now it is driven back. Now one way, now the other. Driven this way and that: divided in its intentions. What a picture of a Christian!" Motyer.

"The *doubter* ... does not pray to God with consistency and sincerity of purpose. Prey to the shifting winds of motive and desire, he wants wisdom from God one day and the wisdom of the world the next." Moo.

Martin comments, "Having stated the clear character of a beneficent and bountiful giver James moves on to stress how appropriate also is the human response in a faith that is wholehearted and loyal. Building on the (mainly) Deuteronomic teaching on Israel's calling to be devoted to Yahweh with a single heart, he exposes the folly of a person with divided affections, likening that person's predicament to that of a storm-tossed boat. That same imagery supplies the punch line of the pericope: the double allegiance that people cherish, hoping to serve God and Mammon (Matt 6:24), leaves them in no better shape than a frail vessel on angry seas; they are tossed about in all their ways."

James 1:7

μη γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήμψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου

οἰομαι, οἰμαι suppose, think

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that (one)

λήμψεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s

λαμβάνω

James 1:8

ἀνήρ διψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ.

άνηρ, άνδρος m man, husband
διψυχος, ον of divided loyalty, undecided

This is the first time this word is known to occur in Greek literature. It may have been coined by James who uses it again in 4:8. It is the opposite of a 'whole heart' (cf. Ps 119:2; 12:2; Hos 10:2).

"We might well translate, a person who is two-faced with God. We cannot ask God for wisdom if we are being two-faced, if we are trying to look at God and the world at the same time. There has got to be the steady, straight-forward gaze, the determination to go on with God; and then God will give us His wisdom." Motyer

Cf the behaviour of Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12.

ἀκαταστατος, ον unstable

Only here in NT and in Is 54:11 in LXX.

ὁδος, ον f way, path

James 1:9-11

"Poverty can move a person from inflexible loyalty to God simply through the sheer difficulty of living. Wealth can seduce a man's mind from undeviating loyalty to God by putting up the counter-attraction of the things of the world. In these two contrasting circumstances, therefore, we see a sample of the trials of life, and it is James' purpose to show us how the wisdom that God gives enables people to face them and win through." Motyer.

By way of contrast, Martin comments, "The people James wishes to help are those who, by reason of their religious affirmation and affiliation as 'the Lord's poor,' feel themselves socially disadvantaged and slighted. Their trust is in God, and it is James' counsel that in due time God will exalt them. In the meantime let them 'boast' (καυχᾶσθαι, which is closely allied to 'trust' in the OT...) in their ταπεινῶσις ('lowliness,' 'shame') – a sentiment drawn from the idiom of the pious poor who are typified by Hannah (1 Sam 2:1–10) and Mary (Luke 1:52). There is an eschatological flavor to this admonition (cf. 1 Pet 5:5), since the expectation is that God's intervention in their lot will reverse their fortunes – but not necessarily with a consequence that is economically or materially to their advantage. It is in terms of their relationship to God's favor that they are actually to be elevated to share his kingdom (2:5).

"By contrast the rich person (ὁ πλούσιος), who is not explicitly called a 'brother' as is the ταπεινός, is addressed in an invective. His ταπεινῶσις is impending at the time of eschatological intervention. Drawing on a succession of biblical images, mainly from Isa 40:6–8, James graphically paints the picture of the fate of the godless rich. 'The flower of grass' (also in Ezek 28:1; Pss 90:5–6; 103:15–16; Job 14:2) will soon wither when the hot sun and the scorching sirocco wind devastate the fields in which anemones grow... "Clearly Isa 40 is the main source of James' imagery, commencing with a reminder of the people's ταπεινῶσις in 40:2 LXX, a term used of Israel's disgrace in exile... The prophet's hope is couched in the eschatological language of a divine interposition into human affairs and destinies."

James 1:9

Καυχᾶσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ,

καυχαομαι boast, boast about

Cf. Jer 9:23-24.

ταπεινος, η, ον humble, lowly, poor, of humble circumstances

"The LXX, especially in the Psalms, uses the word to depict a person who is of little significance in the world's evaluation, even one who is oppressed by the world (see e.g., Ps 10:18; 18:27; 34:18; 81:3; 102:17; 138:6). Used in this sense, the word is sometimes paired with 'orphan' or 'widow.' The word occurs in this sense in Mary's song of praise to the Lord, when she reflects a widespread belief about the reversal of fortunes that the Lord would one day bring about: 'He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble' (Luke 1:52)... James is clearly using the word to describe the believer's socio-economic situation. If, as we think, the Christians to whom James writes have been forced to leave Jerusalem and establish new homes in Syria and northern Palestine, most of them would be facing tough financial situations as well as social dislocation and even ostracism." Moo.

ὑψος, ος n height, high position

"The poor man is enabled to go on with God in spite of the adverse circumstances of poverty because the wisdom from on high has opened the glories of heaven to him, and he counts them richer than all the trials of earth." Motyer. Cf. 2:5.

Martin comments, "In 1:9 James urges his readers to consider their status as God's chosen ones (2:5). Our author is looking at the situation with the thought that eschatological blessings await (and are presently the possession of) God's humble servants. The readers of James can enjoy their present 'exalted' status (cf. Luke 6:20) as well as anticipate their future glorious inheritance. James is writing as one who understands the kingdom of God to have been inaugurated (but not yet consummated) at the coming of Jesus. The tension of 'already' but 'not yet,' i.e., the kingdom is both present and yet its final form is expected, is present in James' thinking."

James 1:10

ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου παρελεύσεται.

πλουσιος, α, ον rich, well-to-do

There is considerable discussion as to whether ὁ πλουσιος is also a Christian, in parallel to ὁ ἀδελφος ὁ ταπεινος or whether James is contrasting Christian poor with arrogant, unbelieving oppressors. Moo says it is difficult to be certain which James intended though he hesitantly favours the former. "While the evidence does not all point in the same direction, we think that the balance shifts toward the view that James in these verses addresses two Christians, a poor one and a rich one... The point of the passage is, then, that Christians must always evaluate themselves by spiritual and not material standards.

Maintaining such a perspective in a world that so insistently confronts us with a very different standard of measurement is not easy. But if the church is to be the kind of 'countercultural' society that Jesus intended it to be, establishing and propagating such a perspective is essential."

Martin takes the view that the rich spoken of here are non-Christian oppressors of the poor (cf. 2:7) and are destined for destruction. Martin does, however, conclude by saying, "Regardless of whether the rich man is a Christian or not, the meaning of vv 10b–11 is fairly clear: riches are worthless in the face of death and judgment."

ταπεινωσις, εως f humble state, humiliation

ἄνθος, ους n flower; blossom

χορτος, ου m grass, vegetation, shoot

ἄνθος χόρτου is 'meadow flower,' particularly the anemone.

παρελεύσεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s

παρερχομαι pass, pass away

Wealth – and all that this world offers – is no more substantial than grass. It will soon pass away. Cf. Isa 40:6-8; Ps 103:15-16; 49:16-17. "The rich man is enabled to go on with God in spite of all the snares and enticements of wealth, because wisdom from on high has opened his eyes to the real state of earthly things, how perishable they are, how unsatisfactory they are in the long run." Motyer.

James 1:11

ἀνέτειλεν γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος σὺν τῷ καύσωνι καὶ ἐξήρανε τὸν χόρτον, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος αὐτοῦ ἐξέπεσεν καὶ ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἀπόλετο· οὕτως καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν ταῖς πορείαις αὐτοῦ μαρανθήσεται.

ἀνέτειλεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀνατελλω
rise, dawn, shine

ἥλιος, ου m the sun

καυσων, ωνος m (scorching) heat

ἐξήρανε Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ξηρανω
dry up, scorch

Cf. Jon 4:8.

ἐκπιπῶ fall off, fail

εὐπρέπεια, ας f beauty, loveliness

προσωπον, ου n face, appearance

I.e. outward appearance.

ἀπόλετο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 s ἀπολλυμι
destroy; midd be lost, perish, die

οὕτως and οὕτω adv. thus, in this way

πορεία, ας f journey, pursuit (of business or wealth)

μαρανθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s

μαραينوμαι wither away

"Here James depicts the rich person suddenly dying even in the midst of his or her business undertakings." Moo. Like the flower, both can be flourishing one day and gone the next.

James 1:12

Μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν, ὅτι δοκιμὸς γενόμενος λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς, ὃν ἐπηγγέλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

This verse prepares the way for the discussion on temptation in vv. 13-18.

μακαριος, α, ον blessed, fortunate, happy

"The pronouncing of blessedness on faithful Jews who walk in Yahweh's way and turn aside from evil is common in the Wisdom literature, e.g. Pss 1:1; 31[32]:1; 33:9b[34:8b]; Prov 8:32, 34; cf. Isa 56:2; Job 5:17; Sir 14:1, 20; 26:1; and Dan 12:12... The same encomium is carried forward from the OT into the teaching of Jesus: Matt 5:3–11 // Luke 6:20–26). The theme of eschatological blessedness, i.e., joy that is pronounced to those who wait for God's salvation to deliver them from their tribulations, is one which binds together Jewish Wisdom teaching and apocalyptic hope." Martin.

ὑπομενω endure, remain behind
πειρασμος, ου m see v.2

The meaning is now moving from 'trial' to 'temptation.'

δοκιμος, ου approved, genuine, valued

Cf. δοκιμιον v.3

γενόμενος Verb, aor ptc, m nom s γινομαι
λήμνεται see v.7

The prize consequent upon passing the test.

στεφανος, ου m wreath, crown, prize

Martin writes, "στέφανος, 'crown,' is equally a common term for this reward, expressing the ideas of favor for the king (Ps 20:4–5[21:3–4]), the victor's garland (1 Cor 9:25; cf. Phil 4:1; 2 Thess 2:19) and the reward of faithful service (2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10). The subject matter here is 'life' (i.e., living in the eschatological joy of the new age that God will bring in) 'that [God] promised to those who love him.' After στέφανος the genitive τῆς ζωῆς is best taken as genitive of content; 'life' belongs to the world of victory enjoyed by those who win through in their battle with temptation (πειρασμός) to emerge as victors. Yet James notes that it is their love for God that motivates such as gain the triumph."

ζωη, ης f life

The victor's crown is life. Cf. Rev 2:10.

ἐπιγγείλατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
ἐπαγγελλομαι promise
ἀγαπαω love, show love for

Love for God is demonstrated by the way in which we face the trials of life.

James 1:13

μηδεις πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι Ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπειραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδέν.

μηδεις, μηδεμα, μηδεν see v.6
πειραζω test, put to the test, tempt

"The NIV translation suggests that all of v. 13 is about temptation: *when tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.'* For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. Most English versions agree; but note the rendering of the NJB: 'Never, when you are being put to the test, say, 'God is tempting me'; God cannot be tempted by evil and he does not put anybody to the test.' According to the interpretation reflected in this translation, James makes the transition from testing to temptation within v. 13. This is the best way to handle the movement of the text. No solid line should be drawn between v. 12 and v. 13, as if James drops the topic of testing to take up the issue of temptation. His concern, rather, is to help his readers resist the temptation that comes along with the trial. For every trial brings temptation. Financial difficulty can tempt us to question God's providence in our lives. The death of a loved one can tempt us to question God's love for us. The suffering of the righteous poor and the ease of the wicked rich can tempt us to question God's justice, or even his existence. Thus testing almost always includes temptation, and temptation is itself a test. 'Persevering under the trial' (v. 12) demands that we overcome these kinds of temptations." Moo.
Cf. Prov 19:3.

ἀπειραστος, ου unable to be tempted
κακος, η, ου evil, bad, wrong, harm
οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing

God's purpose in the test or trial of our circumstances is to promote the life of holiness. His is not the voice that tempts us to give up and to go our own way.

James 1:14

ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος·

ἕκαστος, η, ου each, every

ἰδιος, α, ου one's own

ἐπιθυμια, ας f desire, longing, lust,
passion

Martin comments, "ἐπιθυμία is an ambivalent term in NT vocabulary. Sometimes it has good connotations (Luke 22:15; Rom 15:23; cf. Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:2) but more often it carries a pejorative sense of 'evil desire, lust, false ambition' (Rom 7:17–23; Gal 5:16–21; 1 Thess 4:5; Eph 2:3)."

Temptation has its seat in our fallen nature. Bengel remarks, "Even the suggestions of the devil do not occasion danger, before they are made 'our own'."

ἐξελκω lure away, draw away

The metaphor is from fishing: once hooked the fish is dragged into the net and is caught.

δელαιζω lure, entice; catch, trap

Echoes of Gen 3 are to be found in these verses.

James 1:15

εἶτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκτείνει θάνατον.

James traces the genealogy of sin.

εἶτα adv. then, and then

συλλαβοῦσα Verb, aor act ptc, f nom s

συλλαμβανω seize, become pregnant, conceive

τίκτω bear, give birth to, produce

ἁμαρτία, ας f sin

ἀποτελεσθεῖσα Verb, aor pass ptc, f nom s

ἀποτελεω accomplish; pass be full grown

ἀποκτενω give birth to

θάνατος, ου m death

"Lust' is the desire that is established in the mind, and 'sin' is the desire when it passes over into action, and 'death' is the result of the process. This process is fixed; it belongs to a spiritual logic... It is parallel to the process whereby faith grows, through the test, to consistency, on to maturity, and (verse 12) to the crown of life. There is a process which leads to life and there is a process which leads to death." Motyer. Love for God (v.12) is the 'passion' which constrains us to follow one path rather than the other.

Moo remarks, "Temptation will be part of our experience, as it was the experience of the Lord himself (Heb 2:18), throughout our time on earth. Christian maturity is not indicated by the infrequency of temptation but by the infrequency of succumbing to temptation."

James 1:16

μη̄ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί.

πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

Moo sees this verse as transitional, referring back to what has preceded it as well as introducing what follows.

James 1:17

Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστίν, καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἐνὶ παραλλαγῇ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα.

δοσις, εως f giving; gift

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

δωρημα, τος n gift

τέλειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

ἄνωθεν from above

καταβαῖνον Verb, pres act ptc, n nom/acc s

καταβαινω come or go down, descend

φως, φωτος n light

Moo suggests that 'father' here means creator, the one to whom the lights owe their origin.

"James, therefore, cites God's creation of the heavenly bodies as evidence of his power and continuing care for the world. The OT frequently makes a similar point (cf. Job 38:4-15, 19-21, 31-33; Ps 136:4-9; Isa 40:22, 26; and note also Sir 43:1-12)."

ἐνὶ there is (equivalent to ἐνεστιν)

παραλλαγῇ, ης f variation, change

"Connotes the orderly and periodic movements of sun, moon, planets and stars." Moo. Martin says, "denotes a change, a succession of events, a movement of objects, and belongs, in one of its meanings, to the revolution of the stars in orbit." – including the alternation of day and night, light and darkness.

ἢ οἱ

τροπῇ, ης f turning, change, variation

ἀποσκίασμα, τος n shadow, darkness

"This phrase could refer to the phases of the moon or to the constant variation of night and day. But we should probably not press for any exact correspondence. James is not writing a scientific treatise but is using general language about the constant motion of the heavenly bodies to make a point about God: he does not change like the heavens do." Moo.

The obscurity of the passage has led to the emergence of a variety of readings.

God's character is marked by "unvarying goodness. He does not change His position.

He is not one thing one day and another thing another day. There is no variation with God."

Motyer.

James 1:18

βουληθεῖς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας, εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων.

βουληθεῖς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s

βουλομαι want, desire, wish, plan

ἀποκτενω see v.15

The same verb is used to contrast the product of sinful desire with the product of God's Spirit.

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

Martin writes, "The effective instrument of the divine fiat is said to be λόγος ἀληθείας, 'the word of truth.' In the OT God's word and truth are frequently joined (Deut 22:20; 2 Sam 7:28; 2 Kgs 10:6; 17:24; Pss 15:2; 118:43; Jer 23:28; Dan 8:26; Zech 8:16; Prov 22:21; Eccl 12:10). In the Pauline corpus the phrase 'word of truth' means the proclamation of the gospel or the apostolic mission and ministry (2 Cor 6:7; Eph 1:13; Col 1:5; 2 Tim 2:15)... The background here, however, is the spoken word which God uttered at creation (Gen 1:3; Ps 33:6; 107:20; 147:15; Isa 55:11; Wisd Sol 18:15; Sir 43:26) and which expressed and executed his divine will. Whether that voice of God was heard in a creative or redemptive sense (where creation would be the new creation) is yet to be decided."

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι
ἀπαρχῆ, ἡς f firstfruit, first portion (set apart to God)

Cf. 2 Thess 2:13; Rev 14:4 also Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15. The term is used in the OT of the offerings of Israel (Exod 23:16, 19; 34:16; Lev 27:26; Num 18:18; Deut 14:23; 15:19–23). It is also related to Israel, which as the elect nation is the firstborn of Yahweh (Exod 4:22) and the chosen people (Deut 7:6; Jer 2:3).

τις, τὶ acc τινά, τὶ gen τινός dat τινί a certain

ἀπαρχὴν τινα 'a kind of firstfruits'

κτίσμα, τὸς n what is created, creature

"James therefore appeals to the 'new birth' of Christians as a striking example of God's good and faithful giving. James stresses the free and unconstrained nature of this giving by beginning the verses with the principle 'willing' (βουληθεῖς) variously translated 'in the exercise of his will' (NASB); 'in fulfilment of his own purpose' (NRSV); 'he chose' (NIV). God's grace has been extended through the gospel to people so as to bring into existence a foretaste, or down payment ('firstfruits'), of a redemptive plan that will eventually encompass all of creation." Moo.

James 1:19

Ἴστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδύς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδύς εἰς ὀργὴν,

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 ἔστω (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

ἀγαπητός, ἡ, ον beloved
ἔστω Verb, pres act imperat, 3s εἶμι
ταχύς, εἰα, 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, εἰα, υ slow
λαλεῶ speak, talk

Cf. Prov 17:27-28.

ὀργῆ, ἡς f wrath, anger

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

James 1:20

ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται.

ἀνηρ, ἄνδρος m man

δικαιοσύνη, ἡς 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

James 1:21

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.

ῥυπαρία, ας f impurity, filthiness
περισσεῖα, 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.

πραΰτης, 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'

James 1:22-25

"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.

James 1:22

Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ ἀκροαταὶ μόνον παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοῦς.

ποιητης, ου m one who does or carries out, doer

μονον adv only, alone
ἀκροατης, 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."

ἑαντος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

James 1:23

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

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

ἔοικεν see v.6

ἄνηρ, ἄνδρος m see v.8

κατανοεω consider, notice, observe

προσωπον, ου n face, appearance

γενεσις, εως f birth, lineage

το προσωπον της γενεσεως one's 'natural face' – the face one was born with.

ἔσοπτρον, 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)."

James 1:24

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 of 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."

James 1:25

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

παρακυπτῶ 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
παραμεινω 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 ειμι

James 1:26-27

"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.

James 1:26

Εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκευτὸς εἶναι μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλώσσαν αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ, τοῦτου μάταιος ἡ θρησκεία.

δοκεω think, suppose
θρησκευτὸς, ον religious

χαλιναγωγέω 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.

γλῶσσα, ἡς f tongue

ἀπαταῶ deceive, lead astray

ματαιός, 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."

James 1:27

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

ἀμίαντος, 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

τηρεῶ 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

δοξά, ἡς 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?"

James 2:2

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

ἔσθης, ἦτος f clothing
 λαμπρός, α, ον bright, fine, splendid
 πτωχός, η, ον poor, pitiful
 ῥυπαρός, 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.

James 2:3

ἐπιβλένητε δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν λαμπρὰν καὶ εἶπητε· Σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς, καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ εἶπητε· Σὺ στῆθι 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
 στῆθι 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 οἱ
 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 εἶπητε 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."

James 2:4

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.

James 2:5

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).

James 2:6

ὕμεις 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
κριτήριον, ου n court, legal matter
(requiring judgement)

Commenting on *κριτήριον* 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.

James 2:7

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

James 2:8

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).

James 2:9

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

James 2:10

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

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 γεν ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one, single

γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s *γίνομαι*

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')."

James 2:11

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 *γίνομαι*
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."

James 2:12

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."

James 2:13

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.

James 2:14-26

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.

James 2:14

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

James 2:15

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

ἢ or

ἀδελφῆ, ης f sister, female believer

γυμνος, η, 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

ἑφημερος, ον daily

Cf. Matt 6:11.

τροφή, ης f food, nourishment

James 2:16

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

θερμαίνομαι 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.

James 2:17

οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχη ἔργα, νεκρά ἐστιν 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."

James 2:18

Ἄλλ' ἐρεῖ τις· Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις καὶ γὰρ ἔργα ἔχω. δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, καὶ γὰρ σοὶ δεῖξω 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 γὰρ a compound word = καὶ ἐγώ

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

χωρίς prep with gen without, apart from

James 2:19

σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός; καλῶς ποιεῖς·
καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσοῦσιν.

πιστεῶ believe (in), have faith (in)
εἷς, μία, ἐν gen ἑνός, μίας, ἑνός one

MSS variants make it unclear whether the verbal profession here is 'there is one God' (εἷς θεός ἐστὶν) 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

δαίμονιον, οὐκ ἄνθρωπος 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.

James 2:20

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

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

θέλω wish, will

γινῶναι Verb, aor act infin γινώσκω

ὦ O!

κενός, ἡ, οὐκ 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.

ἀργός, ἡ, οὐκ idle; ineffective, useless

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

Martin comments that ἀργός 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'."

James 2:21

Ἀβραάμ ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων
ἐδικαιώθη, ἀνεγένεας 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 δικαιοῶ
justify, acquit, declare & treat as
righteous

Moo argues that we should not begin from the Pauline use of the verb δικαιοῶ 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 δικαιου̅ν. Such an understanding stresses that works are the only means of demonstrating one's righteous standing... 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)
 θυσιαστηριον, ου n altar

James 2:22

βλέπεις 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.

James 2:23

καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἣ λέγουσα·
 Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ 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
 δικαιοσυνη, 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; Is 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."

James 2:24

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

ὄραω see, observe, perceive, recognise
δικαιοῦται Verb, pres pass indic, 3s δικαιοῶ
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."

James 2:25

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

ὁμοίως likewise, in the same way

Refers back to v.21, as with Abraham.

πόρνη, 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 καταδόκους, '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

James 2:26

ὡσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.

ὡσπερ 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 οἰκοδομή 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 dissension 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.

James 3:1

Μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα λημνόμεθα·

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

μείζων, ον greater; adv. μείζον all the
more

κρίμα, τος n judgement

λημνόμεθα 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...)"

James 3:2

πολλά γὰρ 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 πας) 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."

James 3:3

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

Many MSS read ἰδε 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 (ἰδου, 'behold')."

ἵππος, ου f horse
 χαλινός, ου m bit, bridle
 στόμα, τος n mouth
 βάλλω throw, place
 πείθεσθαι Verb, pres pass infin πείθω 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)."

James 3:4

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

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

πλοῖον, ου n boat, ship
 τηλικούτος, αυτη, ουτο so great, so large
 ἀνεμός, ου m wind
 σκληρός, α, ον hard; strong (wind)
 ἐλαυνώ drive
 ἐλαχίστος, η, ον (superl of μικρός) least, smallest, insignificant
 πηδάλιον, ου n rudder
 ὅπου adv. where
 ὄρμη, ης f impulse, mind, will
 εὐθύνω make straight; ὁ εὐθύνων 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 (ὑπὸ ἀνέμων σκληρῶν: Prov 27:16 LXX) driving (ἐλαυνόμενα: 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."

James 3:5

οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ μεγάλα αὐχεῖ.

Ἴδοὺ ἡλίκων πῦρ ἡλίικην ὕλην ἀνάπτει·

οὕτως see 2:26

γλωσσα, ης f tongue

μελος, ους n member, bodily part

μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great

αὐχεω 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)."

James 3:6

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.

σπιλω spot, stain, pollute

ὅλος, 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."

φλογίζω 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."

James 3:7

πάσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν
έρπετων τε καὶ ἐναλίων δαμάζεται καὶ
δεδάμασται τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ·

φύσις, 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
έρπετον, 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, ου human, characteristic of
mankind

'by the native power of mankind'

James 3:8

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, ου 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, ου evil, bad, wrong, harm
μεστοσ, η, ου full
ιοσ, ου m poison, venom, rust
θανατηφοροσ, ου deadly, causing death

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

James 3:9

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."

James 3:10

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

στομα, τος n mouth
εὐλογία, ας f blessing, praise
καταρα, ας f curse
γρη 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)."

James 3:11

μήτι ἢ πηγὴ ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρῦει τὸ γλυκὸν 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
βρυω 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.

James 3:12

μὴ δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, συκῆ ἐλαίας ποιῆσαι ἢ ἄμπελος σῦκα; οὔτε ἄλυκὸν γλυκὸν 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 ἄλυκὸν many texts (including κ C² K L P it^{ff} vg syr cop^{bo}) have the adverb οὕτως or οὕτως οὐδενία πηγὴν ἄλυκὸν καὶ (K L P).

The reading οὔτε ἄλυκὸν is supported by A B C* and found in Nestle26. It is argued for by Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, in defence of the UBS³ 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

James 3:13

Τίς σοφὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμων ἐν ὑμῖν; δεῖξάτω ἐκ τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἐν πραῦτητι 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 ἐτεροδιδασκαλιῶν 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').

James 3:14

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.

ἐριθεία, ας f selfishness, selfish ambition

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

καρδιά, ας f heart
κατακαυχᾶμαι 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."

James 3:15

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.

ψυχικός, 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.

δαιμονιώδης, 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.

James 3:16

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

ἀκαταστασία, 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

πράγμα, τος n matter, thing, event, deed

James 3:17

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

ἐλεος, οὐς ἡ mercy, compassion

καρπός, οὐ ἡ fruit, harvest, outcome

ἀγαθός, ἡ, ον good, useful, fitting

ἀδιακριτός, 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.

James 3:18

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.

James 4:1

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, οὐ ἡ war, battle, strife, conflict
μαχη, ἡς 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."

ἐντευθεν from here, from this source
ἡδονῆ, ἡς 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.

James 4:2

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

ἐπιθυμῶ long for, desire, lust after
φονεῶ 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."

ζηλοῶ be jealous of
δυναμαι can, be able to
ἐπιτυχεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἐπιτυγχάνω
obtain, receive, attain
μαχομαι quarrel, fight
πολεμῶ 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 midd infin αἰτεῶ ask;
midd 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.

James 4:3

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."

James 4:4

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, ας f love, friendship

ἐχθρα, ας 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, ου m and φιλη, ἡς f friend

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι

ἐχθρός, α, ον enemy

καθίσταται Verb, pres pass indic, 3 s

καθιστημι and καθιστανω 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.

James 4:5

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

ἢ or

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, ου m envy, jealousy

ἐπιποθεῶ long for, desire

κατοικιζῶ place, put

There are 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."

James 4:6-10

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.

James 4:6

μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν· διὸ λέγει· Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους 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.

μείζων, 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
 ὑπερηφάνος, ον arrogant, proud
 ἀντιτασσομαι oppose, resist
 ταπεινός, η, ον humble, lowly

Cf. Prov 3:34.

James 4:7

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
 διαβολός, ον 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.

James 4:8

ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἠγγιεῖ 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, χειρὸς f hand, power
 ἁμαρτωλός, ον 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.

διψυχος, ον 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)."

James 4:9

ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενήθησατε 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.

γελως, ωτος m laughter
πενθος, ους n mourning, sorrow
μετατραπήτω Verb, aor pass imperat, 3 s
μετατρεπω turn, change, alter
χαρα, ας f joy, gladness, cause of joy
κατηφεια, 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."

James 4:10

ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου, καὶ ὑψώσει
ὑμᾶς.

ταπεινωθητε Verb, aor pass imperat, 2 pl
ταπεινω humble

ἐνωπιον prep with gen before
ὑψωω exalt, lift up, raise

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

James 4:11-12 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)."

James 4:11

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

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, οἰς, οὖς 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 or
κρίνω judge, pass judgement on
νομος, οὖς m law
ποιητῆς, οὖς m one who does or carries out, doer
κριτῆς, οὖς 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.

James 4:12

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

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνός, μιας, ἑνός one
νομοθετῆς, οὖς 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."

James 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.

James 4:13

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 αὔριον 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
ὄδε, ἡδε, τοδε this; he, she, it
πολις, εως f city, town
ἐκεῖ there, in that place, to that place
ἐνιαυτος, οὖς m year

The Byzantine text add ἕνα τὸ 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."

James 4:14

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

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἦτις, ὁ τι
who, which
ἐπίσταμαι know, understand

Cf. Prov 27:1.

ποῖος, 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."

ἀτμῖς, ἰδος f vapour, mist

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

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

ὀλίγον a little, only a little

φαινω shine; midd. and pass. appear

ἔπειτα then, afterwards

ἀφανιζω ruin, destroy; pass perish, vanish,
disappear

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

James 4:15

ἀντὶ 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.

James 4:16

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

καυχασμαι 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.

James 4:17

εἰδῶτι οὖν 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.

εἰδῶτι 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.

James 5:1-6

5:1-6 is closely related to 4:13-17 in both style and content. "Both paragraphs begin with the stock formula of address ἄγε νῦν, 'come now' (NIV 'now listen'). And both paragraphs condemn a pursuit of wealth that fails to take into account the reality of God and his will for humanity." (Moo). However, there are also significant differences. The tone of 5:1-6 suggests that James is no longer addressing those within the Christian community.

"James's style is that of the prophets pronouncing doom on pagan nations. He unrelievedly attacks these people, with no hint of exhortation.

"The 'rich' whom James attacks in the paragraph are wealthy landowners, as v.4 reveals. This was a class of people frequently criticised in the OT, Jewish literature, and the wider Greco-Roman world for their greedy acquisition of land and their exploitation of those forced to work on the land for them. The socioeconomic conflict between these two classes was acute in the first-century world, and James accurately reflects the situation...

What can be said about the 'rich' in this passage, however, is that they are condemned not simply for their wealth; they are condemned for their sinful use of wealth. Applying the text to all wealthy people, then, would be a misreading of the passage. On the other hand, we cannot avoid the serious reminder about money and possessions that we confront in this text. One of the sins for which God condemns these people is their selfish accumulation of money and things (vv. 2-3). In the Western world, where amassing material wealth is not only condoned but admired, we Christians need to come to grips with this point in James and ask ourselves seriously: When do we have too much?" Moo.

James 5:1

Ἄγε νῦν οἱ πλούσιοι, κλαύσατε ὀλολύζοντες
ἐπὶ ταῖς τάλαιπωρίαις ὑμῶν ταῖς ἐπερχομέναις.

πλουσιος, α, ον rich, well-to-do

James' primary concern is not with quantity of money or possessions but with the attitude of the heart. His concern is with the sin of covetousness.

κλαύσατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl κλαιω
weep, cry

ὀλολυζω wail, mourn

An onomatopoeic word, occurring frequently in the prophets and always in the context of judgment (Isa 10:10; 13:6; 14:31; 15:2-3; 16:7; 23:1, 6, 14; 24:11; 52:5; 65:14; Jer 2:23; 31:20, 31; Lam 1:1-2; Ezek 21:17; Hos 7:14; Amos 8:3; Zech 11:2). "This background makes it clear that *the misery that is coming upon* the rich refers not to earthly, temporal suffering, but to the condemnation and punishment that God will mete out to them on the day of judgment." Moo.

ταλαιπωρία, ας f misery, trouble

A prophetic term found elsewhere in the NT only in Rom 3:16.

ἐπερχομαι come, come upon

Martin comments, "The idea behind ὑμῶν ταῖς ἐπερχομέναις ('coming upon you') is eschatological in nature, although James is not clear here as to whether he understood such punishment of the godless to be a possibility in this life or to be postponed to the day of judgment."

James 5:2

ὁ πλοῦτος ὑμῶν σέσηπεν, καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια ὑμῶν σητόβρωτα γέγονεν,

πλουτος, ου m & n riches, wealth
σέσηπεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s σηπω rot, decay

Think particularly of harvests stored away. Martin, following Moo, comments, "The rich hoard their wealth, and rather than help the needy they allow such goods to rot."

ἱματιον, ου n garment, clothing, robe
σητοβρωτος, ον motheaten

Cf. Matt 6:19, also Job 13:28.

γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γινομαι

James 5:3

ὁ χρυσὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ὁ ἄργυρος κατίωται, καὶ ὁ ἰὸς αὐτῶν εἰς μαρτύριον ὑμῶν ἔσται καὶ φάγεται τὰς σάρκας ὑμῶν· ὡς πῦρ ἐθησαυρίσατε ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις.

χρυσος, ου m gold, gold coin
ἄργυρος, ου m silver, silver coin, money
κατίωται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s κατιομαι rust, decay

Cf. Ezek 24:6, 11, 12. "This tells us that he speaks not literally but metaphorically. He is speaking of resources that are left lying fallow and are not put to any purpose, of wealth taken and just hidden away, hoarded." Motyer. Their hoarded wealth will rot and become useless.

ἰος, ου m poison, rust
μαρτυριον, ου n witness, evidence
ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι

φάγεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s ἐσθω and ἐσθω eat, consume
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body
πῦρ, ος n fire

Martin comments, "This terrible picture conveys the image of the last judgment as (ὡς; a simile...) fire (πῦρ) consumes the flesh (σάρξ, i.e., the person; so Davids, 176–77; see Judg 16:17). In short, the wealth of the ungodly rich stands as a witness to accuse them (ὑμῶν is to be classed as *dat. incommodi*, i.e. of disadvantage!). As a result they will receive punishment in the fires of judgment (Matt 25:41; 2 Pet 3:7; Jude 23; Rev 11:5; 20:9), akin to Gehenna (3:6)." Cf. Ezek 7:19.

θησαυρίζω store up, save, put aside
ἐσχατος, η, ον adj last, final

The Christian is to remember that he or she lives in the last days. The REB translates, 'You have piled up wealth in an age that is near its close.' Our attitude towards our possessions is to be moulded by the fact that we look for and long for Christ's return. "Is the Lord Jesus to come back and find that we have hoarded and hidden our resources instead of putting them to earn interest in the work of His kingdom (see Matt 25:25; Lk 19:20)?" Motyer. See also Lk 12:33. "People who hoard wealth are not only demonstrating utterly false priorities; they are also depriving others of their very life." Moo. Martin suggests that James may here be using irony: "The treasure in mind is not their vaunted riches but the misery that awaits them."

James 5:4

ἰδοὺ ὁ μισθὸς τῶν ἐργατῶν τῶν ἀμησάντων τὰς χώρας ὑμῶν ὁ ἀφυστερημένος ἀφ' ὑμῶν κρᾶζει, καὶ αἱ βοαὶ τῶν θερισάντων εἰς τὰ ὄτα Κυρίου Σαβαὼθ 'εἰσεληλύθασιν·

μισθος, ου m pay, wages
ἐργατης, ου m labourer, workman
ἀμησάντων Verb, aor act ptc, gen pl ἀμαω mow, reap
χώρα, ας f country, land, field
ἀφυστερημένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s ἀθυστερεω withhold
ἀπεστερημένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s ἀποστερεω defraud, rob, steal

ς and B* alone read ἀφυστερημενος from ἀθυστερεω meaning 'withhold.' This verb occurs nowhere else in the NT. The UBS committee, given the isolated attestation, considered it "an Alexandrian refinement." Nevertheless, Martin prefers the Alexandrian reading.

Cf. Mal 3:5, also Lev 19:13. Covetousness becomes theft when it leads to withholding what rightfully belongs to another.

κραζω cry out, call out

A dramatic picture – their withheld wages cry out. Injustice cries out to God for vindication. Cf. Gen 4:1-10.

βοη, ης f shout, cry, outcry
θερισάντων Verb, aor act ptc, gen pl θερίζω
reap, harvest

οὺς, ὠτος n ear, hearing

Σαβαωθ (a descriptive name of God in Hebrew, lit. of the armies) κυριος Σ.
Lord Almighty

Cf. Isa 5:9. "The words 'of hosts' mean in fact that the Lord is He who possesses every imaginable wealth, resource and potency. Now ask the question: how did, and how does God use this immense wealth? The reply of the Bible is that He poured it out for our benefit in such a way that finally He did not even spare His own Son but freely gave Him up on our behalf. Even then He did not stop, for with that only Son He plans also freely to give us all things (Rom 8:32)... Out of the wealth of His resources, God has paid debts which were no concern of His... How can we then, if we are His children, keep back through sheer meanness, the debts which are honourably ours? ... Dishonesty in payment is discordant with the claim to be in fellowship with such a generous God." Motyer.

εισεληλύθασιν Verb, perf act indic, 3 pl
εισερχομαι enter, go in, come in

James 5:5

ἐτρυφήσατε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐσπαταλήσατε,
ἐθρέψατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγῆς.
τρυφᾶω live in luxury or self indulgence

Does not always have a negative connotation, cf. Neh 9:25. "But the cognate to this verb has a negative connotation in the NT (Luke 7:25; 2 Pet 2:13), and James clearly uses it here to depict a sinful, self-indulgent lifestyle. The second verb is more exclusively negative." Moo. See also Lk 16:19.

γη, γης f earth, land
σπαταλαω live in self-indulgence, live in luxury

ἐθρέψατε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl τρεφω
feed, provide with food, sustain

σφαγη, ης f slaughter

They have fattened themselves up, but only for the day of slaughter.

"Oh to be a thin cow when the butcher comes!
... He is telling us that it may imperil our welcome before the Judgement Seat of Christ, if He finds that we have fattened ourselves, been self-indulgent, and put self first. We live in a day of slaughter." Motyer.
Telling words for a Western world dying of over-indulgence!

James 5:6

κατεδικάσατε, ἐφονεύσατε τὸν δίκαιον. οὐκ ἀντιτάσσεται ὑμῖν;

καταδικαζω condemn
φονεω murder, put to death
δίκαιος, α, ον righteous
ἀντιτασσομαι oppose, resist

"As does the NIV, virtually all modern translations (NASB; NRSV; REB; NJB; TEV; NLT) take the last clause of the paragraph as a statement: *who were not opposing you*. The NIV rendering suggests that the lack of opposition to the wicked rich came before the persecution; that the rich 'went after' people who had done nothing wrong. But the verb is a present indicative, better translated, as in the NASB, 'he does not resist you.' The focus would then be on the non-resistance of the poor, afflicted righteous (cf. Matt 5:39; Rom 12:14), who refuse, or are unable, to oppose the power and influence of the rich." Moo.

James 5:7-11

Many consider that James has concluded his teaching and now returns to the theme with which he began the letter, the need for patience and prayer in the face of the trials of life (cf. 1:2-18). Moo, however, prefers to see this paragraph as the flip side of the condemnation of the rich we find in 5:1-6 (the two paragraphs being linked through the conjunction οὖν, 'then,' 'therefore'). He compares the structure here with Psalm 37.

James 5:7

Μακροθυμήσατε οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἕως τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου. ἰδοὺ ὁ γεωργὸς ἐκδέχεται τὸν τίμιον καρπὸν τῆς γῆς, μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἕως λάβῃ πρόϊμον καὶ ὄψιμον.

μακροθυμεω be patient, wait patiently

ἀδελφοί shifts the focus firmly back onto the congregation, chiefly consisting of those who were economically as well as religiously poor.

ἕως conj until

Suggests a goal as well as a time period.

παρουσια, ας f coming, arrival, presence

Martin writes, "The Christian here is to wait for the time when Jesus will come to set the oppressed free (which, in terms of the overall plan of God for the end of history, includes the judgment of evildoers)."

γεωργος, ου m farmer, vinedresser

Cf. 1 Cor 9:7,10; 2 Tim 2:6.

ἐκδεχομαι wait for, look forward to

τιμιος, α, ον precious, valuable

καρπος, ου m fruit, grain, harvest

γη, γης f earth, land

πρωϊμος, ου m early rain (of rain that comes early in the season), autumn rain

The rain that prepares the soil for the seed and the seed for germination.

ὄψιμος, ου m late rain (of rain that comes late in the season), spring rain

The rain that produces the crop.

Most miniscules add ὑετόν ('rain').

"Behind this metaphor lies the same teaching which was given at the beginning of the epistle, namely that it is as faith meets and passes the tests of life that it grows, by patience, into full maturity of character." Motyer.

Martin thinks that some Zealot minded members of the church might have been tempted to hasten the coming of the kingdom of God by slaying the rich (cf. 4:2). Against this background they are urged to patience.

James 5:8

μακροθυμήσατε καὶ ὑμεῖς, στηρίζατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἤγγικεν.

στηριζω strengthen, establish, set firm

Cf. 1 Thess 3:13. Not double-minded, shaken or moved from the constancy of faith and hope.

ἤγγικεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ἐγγιζω approach, draw near

"The return of the Lord was then at hand: the return of the Lord is now at hand. We live in the last days, the days of imminent return... The pressure upon us of that return is not to promote curiosity as to time and mode, but to promote the life of holiness and of fruitfulness, so that we may be ready to meet the Lord." Motyer.

James 5:9

μὴ στενάζετε, ἀδελφοί, κατ' ἀλλήλων, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε· ἰδοὺ ὁ κριτὴς πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν ἔστηκεν.

στεναζω sigh, groan, grumble

An echo of one of the most persistent motifs of the letter: the problem of sinful speech, cf. 1:27; 3:1-12 and esp. 4:11-12.

"James clearly uses the verb to describe groaning or complaining against (κατὰ) fellow community members. But the broader biblical use of the word [cf. Ex 2:23] again adds a nuance to the word, implying that the groans are the result of oppression." Moo.

ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὐς one another

"Grumbling against those who are close to us is particularly likely to occur when we are under pressure or facing difficult circumstances. We vent the pressure from a stressful work environment or from ill health on our close friends and family. So it would be quite natural if James's readers, under the pressure of poverty and persecution (cf. 5:1-6), would turn their frustrations on one another. Moreover, the exhortation to be patient with the circumstances of suffering that the readers face could easily evoke the need for patience with fellow community members as well." Moo.

κριθῆτε Verb, aor pass subj, 2 pl κρινω

judge, pass judgement on, condemn

κριτης, ου m judge

θυρα, ας f door, gate

ἔστηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ἵστημι pf stand

"If we destroy peace by our tongue, we mar the crop, and enter the presence of that returning Lord, not with joy, but with fearful trembling before 'the Judge' who 'stands at the doors'." Motyer.

"The nearness of the eschatological day is not just an impetus to look forward to the judgment of 'sinners' ..., but it is also a warning to examine one's behaviour so that when one whose footsteps are nearing finally knocks on the door, one may be prepared to open... The coming Lord is also the judge of the Christian." Davids.

James 5:10

ὑπόδειγμα λάβετε, ἀδελφοί, τῆς κακοπαθίας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας τοὺς προφῆτας, οἱ ἐλάλησαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου.

ὑπόδειγμα, τος n example

λάβετε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl λαμβανω

κακοπαθεια, ας f suffering, endurance

μακροθυμια, ας f longsuffering, patience

προφητης, ου m prophet

λαλεω speak, talk

ὄνομα, τος n name, authority

The trials they had to endure were "not a sign of divine disapproval; it was a mark of God's approval upon them that He trusted them to suffer for His name's sake." Motyer.

James 5:11

ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομείναντας· τὴν ὑπομονὴν Ἰωβ ἤκούσατε, καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου εἶδετε, ὅτι πολὺσπλαγγχὸς ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος καὶ οἰκτιρῶν.

μακαρίζω consider blessed

The only occurrence of this verbal form in the NT. The adjective μακαριος and the noun μακαρισμος are, however, common.

ὑπομενω endure

Cf. Matt 5:11-12. Martin comments, "Jesus' words were that those who are persecuted for his name's sake are blessed (see Matt 5:10-12; 23:29-36; and in particular the sapiential word of Luke 11:49) and those who endure to the end will be saved (Matt 10:22; 24:13; Luke 21:19)."

ὑπομονη, ης f patience, endurance

"Job's is no grovelling, passive, unquestioning submission; Job struggled and questioned, and sometimes even defied, but the flame of faith was never extinguished in his heart." Barclay.

τελος, ους n end, conclusion

τελος κυριου 'the end of the Lord,' either:

- i) The goal or purpose the Lord had in mind (and accomplished) for Job; or,
- ii) The 'end' of the Lord's life – the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The former seems to fit the context better, pointing to the restoration of Job recorded at the end of the book, a demonstration that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy. The goal God has in mind for those to whom James writes is growth to maturity through trial.

εἶδετε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl ὄραω see

Implying a familiarity with the story.

πολυσπλαγγχος, ον very compassionate
οικτιρῶν, ον merciful, compassionate

Cf. Job 42:5.

James 5:12-20

"The phrase *above all* in v.12 marks the beginning of the epistolary conclusion. James wraps up his letter by touching on three issues that he considers critical for the community. And each of them involves speech. First, in the last reprise of a key motif of the letter, James prohibits the wrong kind of speech – in this case, the taking of frivolous vows (v. 12). Second, James encourages mutual prayer for both physical and spiritual needs (vv. 13-18). And, finally, he exhorts his readers to take the teaching of the letter and apply it to those of their number who might be sinning in any of the matters that he has touched on (vv. 19-20)." Moo.

James 5:12

Πρὸ πάντων δέ, ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ὀμνύετε, μήτε τὸν οὐρανὸν μήτε τὴν γῆν μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ὄρκον· ἦτω δὲ ὑμῶν τὸ Ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ Οὐ οὐ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπὸ κρίσιν πέσητε.

Moo considers that *πρὸ πάντων* has a purely, or at least primarily, literary function similar to Paul's [το] λοιπον (2 Cor 13:11; Phil 3:1; 4:8; 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:1; 1 Tim 4:8). It does not mean that this matter is more important than everything else, though it does underline the following prohibition.

ὀμνωω and ὀμνωμι swear, vow, make an oath

Swearing involves invoking the name of God to certify the truthfulness of what is said. Martin comments, "Both the Synoptic record (Matt 26:63) and the teaching of Paul (Rom 1:9; Gal 1:20; 2 Cor 1:23; 11:1; 1 Thess 2:5, 10; Phil 1:8) are familiar with the practice of oaths. But Jesus was critical of the misuse of oaths (i.e., implying the misuse of the tongue), and the attempt by some to circumvent the obligation to fulfill an oath (Matt 23:16-22; Mark 7:9-13) is condemned. The teaching of James seems to be an independent variant of the logion of Jesus as recorded in Matt 5:33-37."

μητε and not; μητε ... μητε neither ... nor
οὐρανός, ους m heaven
ἄλλος, η, ο another, other
τις, τὶ acc τινά, τὶ gen τινός dat τινί anyone, anything, a certain
ὄρκος, ους m oath, vow
ἦτω Verb, pres imperat, 3 s εἶμι
ναὶ yes, yes indeed, certainly

David's comments, "James ... prohibits ... the use of oaths in everyday discourse to prove integrity."

"Become known as a people of straightforward, irrefragable truthfulness of speech, for otherwise you may fall under judgement for a sin of speech." Motyer .
"Our mere word should be as utterly trustworthy as a signed document, legally correct and complete." Mitton.

κρισις, εως f judgement, condemnation
πέσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl πιπτω fall

Martin comments, "The idea of condemnation (κρισις) comes into operation when oaths are offered as a means of signaling the truthfulness of human intention. To conclude one's remarks with an oath – which usually involved invoking God's name – placed the speaker under even greater obligation to fulfill declared promises, and this in turn placed the oath-taker in greater danger of condemnation by God."

James 5:13

Κακοπαθεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν; προσευχέσθω· εὐθυμεῖ τις; ψαλλέτω.

κακοπαθεω suffer, undergo hardship

Cf. v.10. Not necessarily illness.

προσευχομαι pray

"Perhaps James would include petition to God to remove the trial. But James's concern when he deals with trials elsewhere (1:2-4, 12; 5:7-11) is to encourage believers to endure the suffering with the right spirit and with a divine perspective on history. Presumably, then, the prayer that he encourages here is for the spiritual strength to endure the trial with a godly spirit." Moo.

εὐθυμεω take courage, be happy
ψαλλω sing, sing a hymn, sing praises

Our faith is to pervade and colour every part of our life. Martin comments, "It may also be that James is reminding his readers that they must not forget God in the good times (a lapse exemplified in the merchant traders, 4:13–16)."

James 5:14

ἀσθενεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν; προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἀλείψαντες αὐτὸν ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου·

ἀσθενεω be sick, be ill, be weak

Some have suggested that James is here referring to one who is *spiritually* weak. Moo outlines this view: "What James is describing, these scholars contend, is a person who is spiritually weak. The spiritual leaders of the church need to pray for this person so that his or her fervour for the Lord might be restored. An exhortation to pray for such a situation would fit very well at the end of a letter that has regularly chastised its readers for just such spiritual lassitude." But Moo concludes that it is "overwhelmingly likely" that James is here speaking of physical illness (so also Davids, Martin).

προσκαλεσάσθω Verb, aor midd dep imperat,
3 s προσκαλεομαι call to oneself,
summon, invite

πρεσβυτερος, α, ον elder

On 'elders' Martin comments, "The term is never used of a Christian office in the Gospels, where it refers to Jewish elders in the synagogue, but appears as such in Acts (11:30; 14:23; 15:2; 16:4; 20:17; 21:28: the last reference is noteworthy, since it shows a scene where 'elders' gather around James, who is the head of a collegium) and the epistles (1 Tim 5:17–19; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1; 2 John 1; cf. Phil 1:1). It may very well be that the office of elder was taken over from the synagogue (drawn from the 'elders of Israel' in Exod 3:16; 24:1, 9; Deut 5:23; 19:12; Ezra 10:14; Matt 26:3; J. L. McKenzie, 'The Elders,' 522–40) and given a Christian character (Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6:651–83; cf. Mussner, 219). Other terms that appear to be synonymous for elder are 'overseer' (Acts 20:28, RSV) and 'bishop' (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3). From Acts (20:17, 28) it is evident that the elders' duties included 'overseeing' or 'pastoring' the flock. Since 'pastors' are never mentioned together in the NT with 'elders,' it may be that the latter carried out responsibilities which were similar to those of the present day pastor or 'minister' (Moo, 176). If so, it is quite natural for sick members to entreat the elders to come and minister to them. Also, the term 'elder' should not be construed simply to mean a person of senior age (as perhaps in 1 John 2:13, 14 addressed to 'fathers'). Though some elders would likely be of mature age, the main qualification was spiritual competence (1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5; cf. 1 Pet 5:1–3)."

ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church
προσευξάσθωσαν Verb, aor midd dep
imperat, 3 pl προσευχομαι

"The leaders of the local Christian community have a special ministry of prayer given them by God." Motyer.

ἀλείψαντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl
ἀλειψω anoint

A contemporaneous aorist.

ἐλαιον, ου n olive oil, oil

Cf. Mk 6:13. Moo suggests that "As the elders pray, they are to anoint the sick person in order to symbolise that the person is being set apart for God's special attention and care." Martin similarly writes, "oil is mentioned to certify the interest of God in human need and to suggest a mood of 'joy' in the midst of trial and divine purpose in suffering – a common Jacobean trait (1:2–3, 12; 2:13; 5:11, 13) – is to be preferred. The idea of oil-anointing as a mark of honor and joy derived from God's electing mercy is well attested in the Jewish and NT literature (Deut 28:40; Isa 25:6–7 LXX; 61:3; Amos 6:6; Mic 6:15; Pss 23:5; 45:8; 92:11; 133:2; Prov 27:9; Eccl 9:8; Matt 6:17; 26:6–13 par.; Luke 7:36–50). This would fit James' overall tenor admirably: the elders bring and apply to the afflicted one the outward tangible sign of God's covenant faithfulness in regard to human distress, and the pledge that, in adversity as in happiness, God's plan does not miscarry."

ὄνομα, τος n see v.10

"... giving him in symbolic fashion an assurance that the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, is active and operative in his cause." Motyer. Cf. Ps 23:5.

James 5:15

καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα, καὶ ἐγερεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος· κἂν ἁμαρτίας ᾗ πεπονηκώς, ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ.

εὐχη, ης prayer, request, wish
πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

This is not primarily a ministry of anointing but of prayer. "Anointing with oil, because its significance is so unclear, attracts a lot of attention in this passage. But anointing, whatever it signifies, is clearly subordinate to James's concern in these verses: prayer." Moo.

σωζω save, rescue, heal

καμνω be sick

ἐγερεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἐγειρω raise

Reflects the language of NT healing stories (Matt 9:6; Mk 1:31; Acts 3:7).

This should not be taken as a universal promise of healing if only the procedure is right or faith sufficiently strong.

κἂν (καὶ ἐάν) even if, and if, even
ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

"Sin and sickness were often closely associated in the ancient world. Certainly the book of Job, as well as Jesus (cf. John 9:2-3), makes it clear that drawing a direct relationship between illness and sin is impossible to do. But the NT continues to recognise that some illnesses are, in fact, the product of sin (Mark 2:1-12; 1 Cor 5:5 [?]; 11:27-30). Recognising this possible connection, James encourages the sick person to deal with any potential spiritual causes of the illness that he is experiencing. The 'if' (κἂν) is therefore doubly important: it shows that James by no means assumes that sickness is caused by sin; and it makes a spiritual interpretation of the passage difficult, since it is difficult to imagine a condition of spiritual 'weakness' that would not be a product of sin." Moo.

ἦ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἰμι

πεπονηκώς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s ποιω

ἀφεθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s ἀφημι
cancel, forgive

Stephen Timmis suggests that the situation addressed may be that of sickness related to sins committed against the fellowship (cf. 1 Cor 11:30). That is why the role of the elders is important here.

James 5:16

ἐξομολογεῖσθε ὁὖν ἀλλήλοις τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ εὐχεσθε ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων, ὅπως ἰαθῆτε. πολὺ ἰσχύει δέησις δικαίου ἐνεργουμένη.

ἐξομολογεω agree; midd confess, admit,
acknowledge

ἀλλήλων, ος, ος see v.9

εὐχομαι pray, wish, long

The ministry of prayer is not confined to the elders.

ὅπως (or ὅπως ἂν) that, in order that
ἰαθῆτε Verb, aor pass subj, 2 pl ἰαομαι
heal, cure, restore

Moo considers that, as with the previous verse, James is talking about healing of physical ailments rather than spiritual healing. "As David's says, James 'consciously generalises, making the specific case of 5:14-15 into a general principle of preventative medicine...'. His focus is no longer on the specific case that he mentioned in v. 14 (*is any one of you sick?* ...) but on the general need of the community to be involved regularly (the present tense of the imperative suggests this) in mutual confession and prayer as a way of treating cases of sickness that might arise. At the same time, James's shift from elders to believers in general reminds us again that the power to heal is invested in prayer, not the elder. And while it is appropriate that those charged with the spiritual oversight of the community should be called to intercede for those seriously ill, James makes it clear that *all* believers have the privilege and responsibility to pray for healing."

James may, however, have in mind the confession of sins and hurts done to others; i.e. confession to those one has wronged leading to prayer together and restoration of a damaged relationship. But see also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, chapter 5.

πολυ adv much, greatly
ισχυω be strong, be able, be sufficient

"Prayer, James wants to make clear, is a powerful weapon in the hands even of the humblest believer; it does not require a 'super saint' to wield it effectively." Moo.

δεησις, εως f prayer, plea
δικαιος, α, ον righteous

There is a moral foundation to prayer.

ἐνεργεω work, be at work (in)

"The form of the participle (ἐνεργουμένη) is ambiguous. It could be passive, in which case we could translate 'prayer is very powerful when it is energised (by God or the Spirit).' On this view, James would subtly introduce a qualification to the effectiveness of prayer: only when God 'energises' the prayer as it is offered in accordance with his will will it be effective. However, as theologically attractive as this interpretation might be, it probably reads too much into the text. The participle is probably a middle, with the sense 'as it powerfully works' (as most English translations interpret)." Moo.

James 5:17

Ἡλίας ἄνθρωπος ἦν ὁμοιοπαθῆς ἡμῖν, καὶ προσευχῇ προσηύξατο τοῦ μὴ βρέξαι, καὶ οὐκ ἔβρεξεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἑνιαυτοῦς τρεῖς καὶ μῆνας ἕξ·

Ἡλιας, ου m Elijah
ὁμοιοπαθης, ες like in every way

Cf. Acts 14:15. Elijah is a fitting example because he was not sinless but was like us in every way. "As in v. 16b, James emphasises that every believer has access to the kind of effectiveness in prayer that he is illustrating here." Moo.

προσευχη, ης f prayer

προσευχῇ προσηύξατο 'Prayed earnestly' is a good translation of this Semitic cognate intensive construction.

βρέξαι Verb, aor act infin βρεχω rain
ἑνιαυτος, ου m year
τρεῖς, τρια gen τριων dat τρισιν three
μην, μηνος m month
ἕξ six

Cf. 1 Kings 17-18. "Prayer ... brings two things together, a human agent and a supernatural result. By means of prayer a mere human can move God." Motyer.

James 5:18

καὶ πάλιν προσηύξατο, καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς ὑέτον ἔδωκεν καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐβλάστησεν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς.

παλιν again, once more
οὐρανος, ου m heaven
ὑετος, ου m rain
ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδομι
ἐβλάστησεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s
βλαστανω and βλασταω intrans sprout;
trans. yield, produce
καρπος, ου m fruit, grain, harvest

James 5:19

Ἀδελφοί μου, εἴαν τις ἐν ὑμῖν πλανηθῆ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἐπιστρέψῃ τις αὐτόν,

εἴαν if
πλανηθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s πλαναω
lead astray, mislead, deceive

Martin argues that the wandering spoken of here is not unconscious error but apostasy. He continues, "It can be said that actions leading to apostasy are thought of as under Satanic influence (see Braun, *TNDT* 6:233–53). This attribution is borne out in much of the NT literature (see Matt 12:22–37; 24:4–5, 11; Mark 12:24, 27; 13:5–6; Rom 1:27; Eph 4:14; 2 Thess 2:11; 2 Tim 3:13; Titus 3:3; 1 Pet 2:25; 2 Pet 2:15, 18; 1 John 2:26; 4:6; Rev 2:20). James has already given attention to the warning that certain misbehavior is the work of the devil (3:15; 4:7; cf. 2:19). Thus, a person who deliberately forsakes the 'way of righteousness' is under the control of the devil and in need of a radical conversion. Otherwise, this person faces the risk of condemnation by God."

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

"*The truth* does not refer here to Christian doctrine in the narrow sense, but more broadly to all that is involved in the gospel. This truth is something that is to be done as well as believed (cf. Ps 51:6; Gal 5:7; 1 John 1:6)." Moo.

ἐπιστρεφω turn back, turn round, turn

James 5:20

γινωσκέτω ὅτι ὁ ἐπιστρέψας ἀμαρτωλὸν ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ σώσει ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκ θανάτου καὶ καλύψει πλῆθος ἀμαρτιῶν.

ἐπιστρέψας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

ἐπιστρεφω

ἀμαρτωλος, ον sinful, sinner

πλανη, ης f error, deceit, deception

ὁδος, ου f way, path, road

σωζω save, rescue, heal

ψυχη, ης f self, inmost being, life, 'soul'

θανατος, ου m death

καλυπτω cover, hide

πληθος, ους n crowd, multitude

ἀμαρτια, ας f sin

Cf. Prov 10:12, also 1 Pet 4:8.

Postscript

"If James is indeed something of a sermon in epistolary form, these last two verses are an appropriate conclusion. Not only should the readers of James 'do' the words he has written; they should be deeply concerned to see that others 'do' them also. It is by sharing with James the conviction that there is indeed an eternal death, to which the way of sin leads, that we shall be motivated to deal with sin in our lives and in the lives of others." Moo.

Martin similarly comments, "Thus, James abruptly concludes his 'sermon in epistolary form' by reminding his readers of his 'apostolic goal' (Davids, 201), namely, that all should seek to walk with God in wisdom. The final contrast is one that has pervaded the tract: wisdom versus folly. The 'wise' person will already be practicing obedience and will be motivated to act so as to ensure that the 'foolish' person will turn back to the right way (Prov 2:20; 4:5; 5:22–23; 7:24–25; 8:4–5). Sin, which is attacked so directly in James' letter, is both a personal and a community problem. His desire is that all his readers deal with its threat to 'eschatological perfection' (1:4), both on an individual level and in the lives of others."