

The Epistle of James to the Twelve Tribes

by
Garland H. Shinn

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The Epistle of James

Preface

This work consists of the personal notes of the author on the Epistle of James. They were not originally intended to be published, so the writing tends to be in a rough, non-literary style, sometimes in the first person. This is a result of the writer's free-flowing thinking.

Assumptions. The writer is a Christian who believes the Bible is the Word of God. The phrase "Word of God" indicates that God communicated in normal human language, so that the original readers of Scripture would be able to understand His meaning. This is not to say that everyone did understand the original communication at the time it was written, only that it was God's intention that they do so, using their God-given intellect, but realizing that an individual is not always capable of doing so because of ability in personal mental ability, and willingness to consider the message in its normal grammatical-historical sense.

Therefore, a second assumption is that the student should use normal interpretive methods when approaching the written text of the Bible. The careful interpreter of Scripture must consider the original context, including the language, the cultural milieu, and the historical background of the writer and original readers. No unwarranted allegorizing or spiritualizing of the text is acceptable since such an approach tends to read into the text conclusions already drawn.

However, anyone who approaches Scripture may, and often does have an understanding of the broad teaching of the Word of God from previous study. This may flavor the interpretation of some passages, and it will certainly influence the application of those carefully interpreted passages that differ from others that are clearly applicable to today. Here the author may disagree with some, since he holds that the Scriptural revelation took place in a progressive fashion. Early New Testament writings such as James, while intended for the church believers of his period, are often not applicable to today, because further revelation made available new truth to which James did not have access.

Many object to this approach, but it is only common sense to not allow applicability to determine the meaning of the text. James says some things that contradict Paul, and Paul also contradicts James, if one takes the passages in their normal sense. Many sincere people have attempted to bind these contradictions into a coherent whole without contradiction, but in doing so often fall into the dangerous pit of abandoning normal contextual interpretation.

Finally, it is the writer's sincere belief that each Christian, to the best of his or her ability, should approach the text of the Bible in an unbiased way. This work is not intended to dictate an interpretation, but to provide an insight into one person's interpretation. Please, do your own work, and refer to this and other works on James as resources for thought, not for a replacement for your own efforts. The old saying, "You can graze in another's field, but you must give your own milk" is appropriate in this regard.

The Greek Sentence and Diagram. The Greek text provided in this work is a modified majority text, edited by the author. The comments include citations of textual problems when appropriate. The diagram is a structural analysis of the Greek text primarily done as a first step in exegesis. It is included because many of his students over the years have indicated a desire to see writer's diagrams of the Greek sentences. They are of limited value to the reader limited to English, or for the novice Greek student, who may put too much emphasis on structural analysis.

The Epistle of James

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved wife,
Nancy, who has, of her own accord,
supported my ministry for over fifty years.

καὶ ἔλθὲ σὺ περιστερά μου ἐν σκέπη τῆς πέτρας
ἐχόμενα τοῦ προτειχίσματος δειξόν μοι τὴν ὄψιν σου
καὶ ἀκούτισόν με τὴν φωνήν σου ὅτι ἡ φωνή σου ἡδέϊα
καὶ ἡ ὄψις σου ὠραία

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret *places* of the cliff,
Let me see your face,
Let me hear your voice,
Because your voice *is* sweet,
And your face *is* lovely.
Song of Solomon 2:14 LXX

The Epistle of James

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Introduction

The Epistle

The wonderful short Epistle of James has been as misunderstood as any book in the New Testament. Famously, Martin Luther referred to it as a “straw-epistle,” and by some accounts attempted to have it removed from the New Testament canon. He evidently believed that it taught initial justification by works. Others have equally misunderstood its message, and have even assigned it to “a different body of Christ” than the current one. However, there have been more subtle misunderstandings of James’ epistle.

James Hardy Ropes wrote, “The Epistle of James is a religious and moral tract having the form, but only the form, of a letter.”¹ This unenlightened approach to the epistle has plagued the Christian public for over a hundred years. The book of James is foremost an epistle, and is not any way a tract, moral or otherwise. It was written and sent to a people who no longer exist, the early first century dispersed Hebrews. Furthermore, it was actually sent to a subset of those Hebrews, those who had come to faith in the death and resurrection Jesus Christ, and in Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Messianic promise.

The key to understanding James’ Epistle consists of a correct understanding of the transition between God’s various programs. Donald Guthrie wrote:

...the Epistle of James can be rightly understood only within the context of the whole New Testament Scriptures. Its contribution is very different from that of Paul’s letters and yet it was a true instinct that led the Church to include it in its Canon, for it represents an age of transition...²

The New Testament did not come into existence all at once. It was composed over a number of years by various human authors under the bearing-along ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). James is the earliest of the New Testament letters, written before Paul had began his canonical writing. It was written to correct ungodly practice among dispersed Israelites, those not living in the area of Judea or Galilee. Furthermore, these Hebrews had come to faith in Christ, possibly as a result of the events recorded in Acts 2.

At the time of writing, neither James nor his audience had heard of grace for daily living in the Pauline sense of the word. The Church of that time, and James’ immediate audience, was made up of primarily Hebrews. They knew their Hebrew Scriptures, but very little about the Christian life was yet known, beyond its high morality, which was shared by the faith of the Old Testament. In this earliest of transitional epistles, the only Scriptures yet available were those of the Old Testament, and perhaps the Gospel of Mark. James, of course, knew the twelve, including Matthias, who had been the Lord’s earliest disciples, and so was well-taught in the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus concerning those teachings that he did not know first hand.

The transition of Israelite believers into the early acceptance of Jesus the Nazarene as the Messiah of Israel began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and continued until that first generation of new He-

1 James Hardy Ropes. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Son:, 1916. pg. v.

2 Donald Guthrie. *New Testament Introduction*. “The Epistle of James.” Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

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brew Christians were integrated into the full grace program, or, perhaps in some cases, came to the ends of their earthly existence. The later Epistle to the Hebrews also reflects this process of transition, as its readers were being encouraged to return to a pre-grace method of Christian living. Even Paul's writings, including his later epistles, contain elements of transitional teaching.

The point is this: James' writing was intended for limited group of people who lived at a particular time, and under unusual circumstances. Much of his corrective writing must be understood as having a highly legal cast to it, and as such, cannot be directly applied to believers today, two millennia after the transition has ended.

I hold that these individuals were Christians, were members of the body of Christ, the church, had the indwelling ministry of the Spirit of God. But they, along with James, had not received the information to apply these truths to their daily lives. For them, it was valid law and kingdom based truth that we today know was superseded by later revelation.

The Author

Unlike the some New Testament letters, the Epistle of James is not anonymous. It was written by someone called James, but four men are called James in the NT. They are: 1) the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, 2) the son of Alphaeus, 3) the father of Judas,¹ and 4) the half brother of the Lord.

Which of the four wrote the letter? It must have been number 4) above. The Introduction to James in the BKC² neatly summarizes the issue:

James, the son of Zebedee, could not be the author since he suffered martyrdom under Herod Agrippa I before this epistle was written (Act 12:2).

It is unlikely that the little-known son of Alphaeus was the author though some, especially Roman Catholics, equate the son of Alphaeus with the Lord's brother. They claim that James was really Jesus' cousin through Mary of Cleopas (Alphaeus), the Virgin Mary's sister. This contention, however, violates a literal interpretation of "brother" and is clearly an attempt to support the invention of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Repeated references are made to the Lord's half brothers and half sisters and four of His brothers are named: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas³ (Mat 13:55).

James, the father of Judas (not Iscariot) did not figure as an important person in the early church. He could hardly be the author of this epistle.

It seems clear therefore that the author is James, the half brother of the Lord, who became the recognized leader in the Jerusalem church.⁴

The Date

We discount the foolish idea promoted by the unbelieving critics who place James in the second century. They do so on specious grounds (the language is too sophisticated for an early Galilean, it was not accepted as canonical until the three hundreds, etc.) because they reject the clear internal evidence of its early writing. Furthermore, the epistle evidences no knowledge of Paul's writings, and unless one rejects its clear Christian references, a late date would make it purely Jewish, with no references to the New Testament faith whatsoever.

The Epistle of James

James' Epistle was written very early in the first century, even before the Pauline epistles were penned, hence its lack of references to them. But like those epistles it has been bedeviled by unfounded historical criticism by those who insist that it is something that it is not. Many apologists have written defending the integrity of James (and Paul's writings as well), so we will not enter into that foray here. Such works as Donald Guthrie's *Introduction to the New Testament*³ are sufficient answer to such attacks.

James was written before 50 AD, probably around 44, 45 AD.

The Content

The Christian who is committed to a normal non-allegorical interpretive process will find value in this commentary. It strives to present the information of James' Epistle from a historical perspective, that is, from the point of view of the doctrinal history of James and his readers at the time of the letter's writing. No attempt is made to promote an unhealthy vacuous application of the contents when it is quite obvious that the book was written before Paul's grace message for daily living was produced. Rarely can the epistle of James be directly applied to the believer today, as the rest of the New Testament superseded its message. This is not to say that the epistle is of no value, for it is of great worth. James writes to people direly in need of correction, and provides a pre-grace, Old Testament solution for each of their problems.

The content of James' Epistle is not irenic. He is often harsh, while also showing a personal concern for his readers. He repeatedly addresses them as brothers, and once as brothers and sisters. But it becomes clear, even with a simple reading through the epistle, that great moral problems existed among the diaspora. James writes to correct these problems using the sometimes unpleasant legal approach that was, at the time, the only one which was available to him.

This epistle, then, is transitional. It is designed by God (not by James) to bridge the period of time after the events of Acts 2, until the beginning of the Pauline era, a period of time which was just beginning, and would not finish for several years. Even after Paul had written the bulk of his material which had begun to be spread throughout the Christian churches, that first generation of Hebrew Christians were not required to immediately understand or enter into the new grace program. It is evident from such later epistles as Hebrews and First and Second Peter, as well as the book of Acts, that the transition of Israelites into the grace program continued gradually during and through the end of Paul's ministry.

It may be inferred from the above paragraphs that this presentation is written for committed Christians who have accepted the position that the Bible is the communication of God to mankind (the Word of God), and that it should be treated with great care. The doctrinal position of the writer is that of a Christian conservative in doctrine and in grace based practice, who believes in a normal, historical grammatical interpretation of the Biblical text.⁵ It has been his privilege to teach Bible, Greek and Hebrew for over forty years in various colleges and seminaries, as well as in his local assembly.

The present work represents the approach that I used in both undergraduate and graduate classes. It has three parts as follows:

1) An analysis of the Greek text of the book, taken sentence by sentence, each of which I diagrammed in order to do preliminary exegesis on sentence structure. This approach has both strengths

³ Guthrie. *New Testament Introduction*.

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and weaknesses, but since many of my students have asked for copies of the diagrams for various books, the I have made these available. Ultimately, each student of the Greek New Testament should do his own structural analysis and exegesis, for it is the process that is educational, with the happy expectation of a beneficial result. The student, however, should not get lost in the structural analysis, as exegesis must begin with the sentence in its correct word order, which is lost somewhat in the diagramming process, and in relationship to other sentences in its paragraph, as well as the overall context of the epistle itself.

I parsed each verb and verbal, using Greek letters as a reference. If anyone is interested in the meanings of the parsing code, send me an e-mail, and I'll send an explanation. My e-mail address is at the end of this introduction, following the Outline of James.

2) Following the diagram is a commentary section beginning with the word "Considerations." The considerations consist of notes written by me *for my own benefit*, sometimes including approaches to teaching the text that may not be immediately apparent to the reader. But this might explain why the content of this section is sometimes repetitive, and even disjointed. I did make a half-hearted attempt to keep jargon out of this section, but often times it was left in for the sake of completeness and precision.

3) The reader will note the use of Arabic numerals throughout both the diagrams and the considerations. These refer to end notes for each chapter that contain various thoughts that were not deemed critical to the discussion. Some end notes contain grammatical considerations that only a specialist will appreciate. However, I also included some doctrinal discussions, and even a few rants, which I wrote for my own purposes and were frankly never intended to be seen by other people. But they were left in, with the hope that someone might, from time to time, find them of benefit.

I included occasional miscellaneous thoughts in the end notes. These consist of various short, or sometimes not so short, ramblings generated by my studies of the text. They may or may not be of value to the average reader. One must decide for oneself.

The Outline

Outline of the Epistle of James "Christian Living During the Early Transition"

Introduction – 1:1

- A. The Author – 1:1a
- B. The Recipients – 1:1b
- C. The Salutation – 1:1c
- I. Temptation in Difficult Circumstances – 1:2-27
 - A. Temptation Produces Endurance – 1:2-4
 - B. Temptation Needs Wisdom – 1:5-8
 - C. Temptation Requires Humility – 1:9-11
 - D. Temptation Has Cause – 1:12-18
 - E. Temptation Exhibits Unrighteousness – 1:19-27
- II. Faith in Justified Practice – 2:1-26
 - A. Faith Exercised toward One's Neighbor – 2:1-13

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- B. Faith Expressed for One's Justification – 2:14-26
- III. Wisdom among Local Leaders – 3:1-18
 - A. Wisdom Limits Teachers – 3:1-12
 - B. Wisdom Produces Righteousness – 3:13-18
- IV. Problems between Individual Believers – 4:1-12
 - A. Problems Caused by Spiritual Enemies – 4:1-10
 - B. Problems Caused by Legal Judgment – 4:11-12
- V. Presumption in the Christian Life – 4:13-5:12
 - A. Presumption and the Providence of God – 4:13-17
 - B. Presumption and the Danger of Riches – 5:1-12
- VI. Communication during the Early Transition – 5:13-18
 - A. The Cause of Transitional Communication – 5:13-14
 - B. The Result of Transitional Communication – 5:15-16
 - C. The Nature of Transitional Communication – 5:17-18
- VII. Salvation from Physical Death – 5:19-20
 - A. The Condition of Straying – 5:19
 - B. The Results of Turning – 5:20

Garland H. Shinn, Santee, CA, 2018.

E-mail: ghshinn@yahoo.com

End Notes

- 1 This was not Judas Iscariot, but a second Judas who was also one of the twelve.
- 2 Throughout this work the initials BKC indicate the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* produced by the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary.
- 3 This Judas, the Lord's half brother, is the most likely candidate to have written the short NT Epistle of Jude.
- 4 Blue, J. Ronald. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, "James." Electronic edition: E-sword.
- 5 I wrote this paragraph in the third person several years before incorporating it into this introduction. I decided to leave it that way, just to have a bit of fun with those who say that a writer should never switch from first to third person, and back again, in a document.

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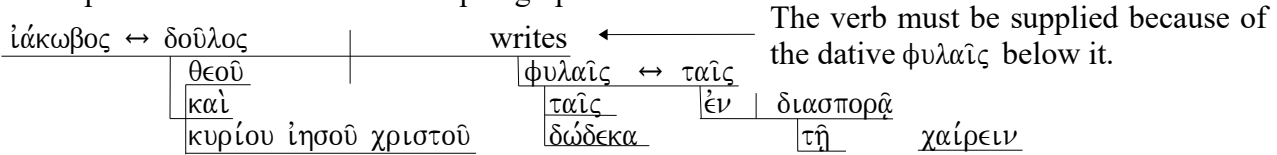
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1:1 Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ δοῦλος ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ·
χαίρειν.

A simple sentence. A one sentence paragraph.



Translation: James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes, the ones in the dispersion: Greetings.

Considerations: James is the English form of the name Jacob, which is reflected in the original Greek transliteration (Ἰάκωβος) from the Hebrew יַעֲקֹב. James addresses his letter based on his spiritual relationship to God and the Lord Jesus Christ. A normal reading of the New Testament (i. e. Matthew 13:55-56) indicates that James was a son of Mary and Joseph, and therefore, a half-brother of the Lord. However, He views himself as a slave to two persons (Both θεοῦ and κυρίου ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ are genitives of possession, the normal construction with the word slave), so clearly James considered Jesus to be equal to God. The word God when used in this sort of context always refers to the Father. It in no way denigrates the deity of Christ.

James uses the standard greeting χαίρειν which is translated “Greetings” in many versions. It is the infinitive of the verb χαίρω which, in several forms, contains the idea of greeting. The verb actually means to have joy, to be joyful. Burton holds that the infinitive here is the object of an understood verb of bidding (“I bid you greeting”).¹ However, it appears to be an expletive greeting, as it had obviously become common usage in the New Testament. It is best thought of as an infinitive absolute, an infinitive that grammatically stands alone.

The recipients of the letter are the twelve tribes who are in the dispersion, that is, who were not living in or around Jerusalem from where James was writing.²

The phrase twelve tribes is limited to those Israelites who had become believers in Christ. It is most likely that James is writing primarily to those who had attended the day of Pentecost recounted in Acts 2, and who had become believers in the Messiahship of Jesus. Nevertheless, clearly the phrase *twelve tribes* was current at the time of writing. Tribal distinctions within Israel were still being kept at this time. Further dispersions seems to have weakened those distinctions until all who would have been identified by tribe began to be called by some form of the word Jew in the various European languages. This tendency was already beginning in Acts 2 when those gathered are comprehended under the word Jew, a truncated English form of the Greek word meaning Judean. Yet, these crowds were from all over the Roman world, and were not living in Judea, nor were they necessarily born there.

In the time since Pentecost, those early Israelite Christians had probably been instrumental in bringing other Israelites and Gentile proselytes to faith in Jesus. But in the early days of the transition, few if any Gentiles had come to faith who were not already associated with the Hebrews as proselytes.

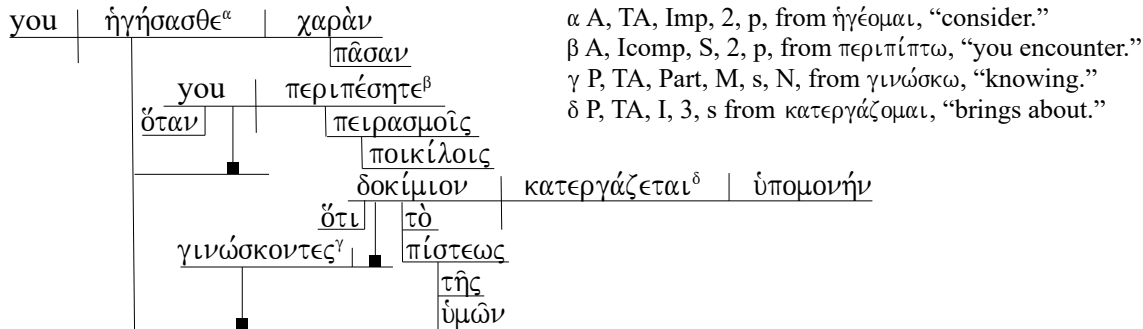
1:2-3 πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγάπησατε ἀδελφοί μου ὅταν πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις, ³ γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν.

A complex sentence with two subordinate constructions, one temporal clause and one anarthrous participle. Vss. 2-4 are one paragraph.

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ἀδελφοί
μου

James is possibly using the phrase *my brothers* in the sense of Hebrew brothers at this point in time. It is clear, however, that the recipients of this epistles are early Christian converts.



*Translation: Consider it every joy, my brothers, whenever you encounter various temptations, knowing that the testing of your faith brings about endurance.*³

Considerations: The word translated temptations³ in my version is sometimes translated *trials*, as though it were referring to the various providential situations of life. However, later in this chapter many translators use *temptation* rather than *trial*, but when one synthesizes this passage it becomes clear that the distinction is not valid. James is dealing with the topic of temptation throughout the chapter, not situational trials. The very temptation to wrong-doing itself produces testing enough.

Temptations do bring about testing (vs. 3), but not for the purpose of attempting to defeat the individual. The word testing is δοκίμιον, a word that refers to testing something for approval, rather for disapproval. A related word, δόκιμος, means accepted, approved.⁴

Another word that is regularly mistranslated, and therefore misunderstood, is ὑπομονήν, which refers not to patience, but to endurance, as correctly translated. One gains endurance by overcoming the negative situation, remaining under the load of the temptation, and coming out victorious by applying the correct solution.

That which is being tested is one’s faith, and one’s faith grows and becomes stronger through the testing. It is the faith that ultimately endures more strongly. Saving faith, which occurs only once and cannot be tested, is not what James means here. He is referring to the faith by which one lives his daily life.⁵

The subordinate temporal clause is introduced by ὅταν. When a clause appears with this subordinate conjunction, one must observe the mood of its verb to determine the force of the clause. In this case, the verb is in the subjunctive mood, and therefore the clause is stating an indefinite possibility. Were the conjunction ὅταν used with the indicative mood, it would indicate that the clause was stating a definite, or something assumed as real. James’ intention, then, is to indicate a *possibility* of falling into various temptations.

The participle γινώσκοντες is from γινώσκω. It is significant that James uses a form of γινώσκω rather than οἶδα to indicate *knowing*. The word James uses implies practical information in various situations, whereas the word οἶδα refers to inferential or learned knowledge, though not necessarily related to daily practice. Also, the participle γινώσκοντες appears to be causal. The idea is that because James’ readers already know what testing does, they should consider it all kinds of joy to fall into temptations. It brings about endurance.

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In general, the word wisdom refers to the ability to use accurately acquired knowledge. It implies that information is available, and that a person needs wisdom to implement that information. However, through use (sometimes called semantic drift), the word came to incorporate the idea of the information itself. It is in this sense that Paul used the word wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:24, where it is used of God’s revealed information (wisdom¹¹) that is found in Christ, that is, wisdom which incorporates knowledge with the ability to use that knowledge. Indeed, wisdom seems to be used that way many times in the Gospels (SA Matthew 13:54 and Mark 6:2). This appears to be a regular use of the word in the Gospels, and it is certainly the way James uses the word here.

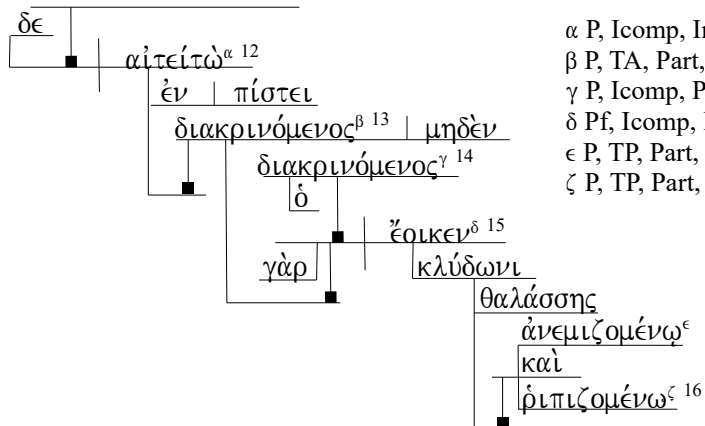
This, then, is not a general encouragement to ask for wisdom, since the clear context is temptation. It is in the area of temptation that these believers should ask for wisdom. And wisdom, in this case, includes new information necessary to overcome the temptation problem immediately facing the Jewish believer in Christ at that time. There was not yet any grace revelation available to overcome the enemies of the flesh, the devil, or the world system. It is in that context alone that the Jewish believer is to ask for wisdom.

Today, the believer learns wisdom from the already revealed word of God. It is no longer necessary to ask for wisdom in the spiritual sense, because the complete revelation of wisdom is available (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Today, one should ask for enlightenment rather than wisdom. For this reason Paul asks God on behalf of the Ephesians for “the [human] spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, having your eyes enlightened” (Eph. 1:16-18). Being “thoroughly furnished” today consists of devoting oneself to the Scriptures, as Paul encouraged Timothy to do.

1:6 αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος, ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἕοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ.

A complex sentence with an adverbial participle, which carries its own subordinate clausal clause. Second sentence in this paragraph.

he who lacks wisdom



- α P, Icomp, Imp, 3, s from αἰτέω, “let him ask.”
- β P, TA, Part, M, s, N from διακρίνω, “doubting.”
- γ P, Icomp, Part, M, s, N from διακρίνω, “the one who doubts.”
- δ Pf, Icomp, I, 3, s from εἶκω, “is similar.”
- ε P, TP, Part, M, s, D from ἀνμίζω, “being driven by wind.”
- ζ P, TP, Part, M, s, D from ῥιπίζω, “being blown about.”

Translation: But let him ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is similar to a wave of the sea being driven by wind and blown about.

Considerations: During the transition, since revelation was incomplete in certain practical matters, asking for new information was required, but it must be done “in faith,” that is, believing that God

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will provide the wisdom needed for success. Again, this asking is not for physical things, but for spiritual benefit, and was only possible during the transition.

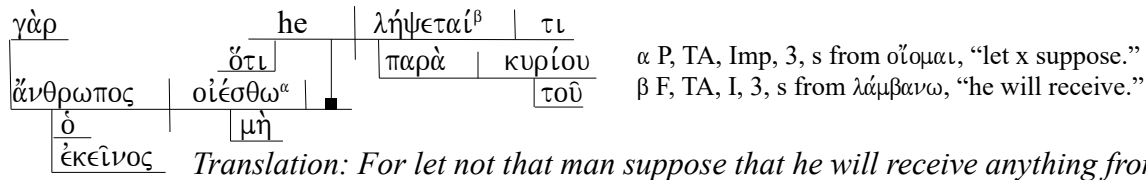
This is not to say that a believer should not ask for wisdom today, but he should never use these two sentences as a justification to do so. The wisdom for daily living and overcoming temptation has already been revealed, and needs to be studied and applied. The wisdom needed today does not include the transmission of new information. Scripture is complete, and is sufficient for all spiritual needs (2 Timothy 3:17).

But during the time of the New Testament’s writing, such asking must be done with belief, or it would not become available. A doubting person was not believing, but was similar to a wave.¹⁷ The simile here is one of personal instability, a lack of relying on God. Like a wave, he is “being driven by wind and being blown about,” and cannot expect to receive wisdom from God.

There were various individuals gifted to present new revelation during this time. Indeed, one such gift related directly to wisdom, and an allied gift to knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8). But there were conditions that needed to be met, so that chaos did not occur. One such required condition was spiritual stability in the form of conscious belief.

1:7 μὴ γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου.

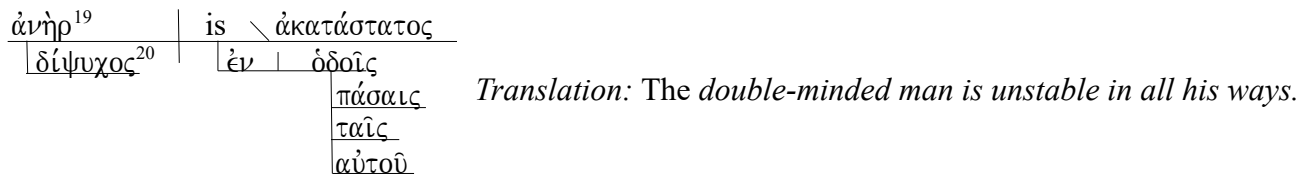
A complex declarative sentence. Third sentence in this paragraph.



Considerations: This and the next sentence conclude the current paragraph. The meaning of the sentence is clear. The doubting man should not suppose¹⁸ that he will receive an answer to his asking for wisdom. This refers to receiving direct revelation from God, an answer concerning information not yet revealed in Scripture.

1:8 ἀνὴρ δίψυχος ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ.

A simple sentence with an understood verb. Fourth sentence in this paragraph.



Considerations: This final sentence of the paragraph reiterates the nature of the instability at issue. It is of a mental nature, though not through mental abnormality, as some have speculated. Rather, such a person is simply unreliable in his mental processes, and should not be considered worthy of receiving new revealed information for which he might ask.

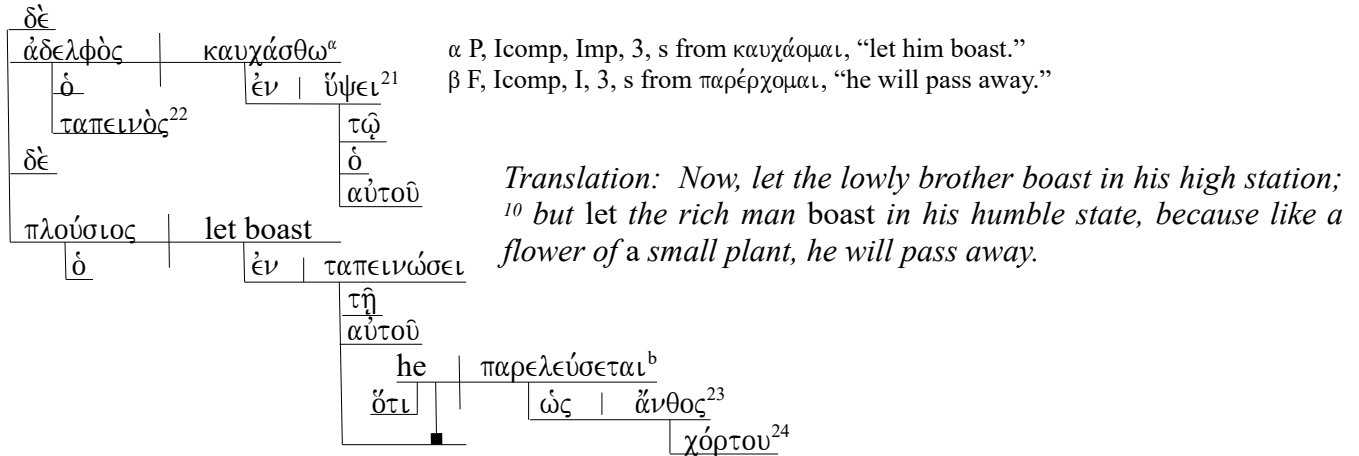
The term double-minded is actually “two-souled.” The noun ψύχη has various contents in the New Testament, one of which is simply “mind,” as here. We have a similar expression in English, as when someone says “I’m of two minds about this issue.” It carries the idea of indecision, and therefore insta-

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bility. But not just any mental instability, but instability in the sense of not believing what God has promised in Scripture.

1:9-10 καυχάσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὑψει αὐτοῦ, ¹⁰ ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ ὅτι ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου παρελεύσεται.

A compound-complex sentence. Vss. 9-11 are a paragraph.



Considerations: This sentence is not discussing poor and rich, per se, but people of low social state verses people of higher position. The word rich is used in the sense of wealthy people who have prominence, with the emphasis on their attitude of haughtiness. It was common among Israelites to think that some were better in the sight of God than others because of their wealth. Even today wealth is a signal of social prominence. But it is that social standing that is in view here. James will discuss the monetary issue later in this epistle.

The first clause is straightforward, though a literary paradox. A paradox is often ironic, as here. The lowly brother has no high station, so his boasting in his low station is the best he can do. Yet that is good enough, as, from God’s perspective, there is no difference between the two, and the stations are equally high.

The paradox continues with the address about the rich man. His high station is actually no different than the station of the lowly person, so it is, in God’s view, equally lowly. Hence, we have the absurdity of his “putting on airs,” as my grandmother used to say. The simile is apt. He is like a small flower, and he will pass away. What use is his high station, as a consequence? The answer is obvious, of no use.

The teaching is of universal application, in one sense, that is, it is absurd for people to boast in their wealth, and therefore their social station and so-called importance. This truth is, of course, generally lost on the rich, and we tend to admire a well-to-do individual who is “down to earth,” who does not view himself of more importance others.

1:11a ἀνέτειλεν γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος σὺν τῷ καύσωνι καὶ ἐξήρανε τὸν χόρτον, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος αὐτοῦ ἐξέπεσεν, καὶ ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἀπώλετο.

A triple compound sentence. The second sentence in the paragraph.

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γὰρ		ἥλιος		ἀνέτειλεν ^α 25	
ὁ	σὺν	καύσωνι			
καὶ		τῷ			
it		ἐξήρανε ^β		χόρτον	
καὶ		τὸν			
ἄνθος		ἐξέπεσεν ^γ			
τὸ		αὐτοῦ			
καὶ		εὐπρέπεια		ἀπώλετο ^δ	
ἡ		προσώπου			
τοῦ		αὐτοῦ			

- α A, Icomp, I, 3, s from ἀνατέλλω, “rises.”
- β A, TA, I, 3, s from ξηραίνω, “it dries out.”
- γ A, Icomp, I, 3, s from ἐκπίπτω, “falls.”
- δ A, Icomp, I, 3, s from ἀπόλλυμι, “perishes.”

Translation: For the sun rises with its extreme heat and dries out the small plant and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its face perishes.

Considerations: This four-fold illustrative statement metaphorically describes the rich man of high social standing in vs. 10 above. It emphasizes the temporary nature of his condition.

1:11b οὕτως καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν ταῖς πορείαις αὐτοῦ μαρανθήσεται.

A simple sentence. The third sentence in the paragraph.

πλούσιος		μαρανθήσεται ^α 26		α F, TP, I, 3, s from μαραίνω, “will become withered.”	
ὁ	οὕτως				
καὶ		ἐν		πορείαις ²⁷	
		ταῖς		αὐτοῦ	

Translation: Thus also the rich man will become withered in his journeys.

Considerations: James continues the application of the above illustrative statement, but the activity of the man is emphasized. He becomes withered as though he were a plant because he is no longer productive in his pursuits. The metaphorical word “journeys” is his activities, rather than his travels.

1:12 μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος λήψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο ὁ κύριος τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

A complex sentence with three dependent clauses. Vss 12-15 are a paragraph.

ἀνὴρ		is \ μακάριος		α F, TA, 3, s from λαμβάνω, “he will receive.”	
ὅτι		λήψεται ^α		στέφανον	
γενόμενος ^γ		δόκιμος		τὸν	
ζωῆς ²⁸				τῆς	
κύριος		ἐπηγγείλατο ^δ		ὃν	
ὁ		ἀγαπῶσιν ^ε		αὐτόν	
		τοῖς			

- α F, TA, 3, s from λαμβάνω, “he will receive.”
- β P, TA, I, 3, s from ὑπομένω, “endures.”
- γ A, Icomp, Part, M, s, N from γίνομαι, “having become.”
- δ A, TA, I, 3, s from ἐπαγγέλλομαι, “promised.”
- ε P, TA, Part, M, p, D from ἀγαπάω, “the ones who love.”

Translation: Blessed is the man who endures temptation, because having become approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to the ones who love Him.

Considerations: Blessed means “happy” (μακάριος), meaning the man who endures temptation is happy with the circumstances of having been victorious. This sentence is the closest James comes to a

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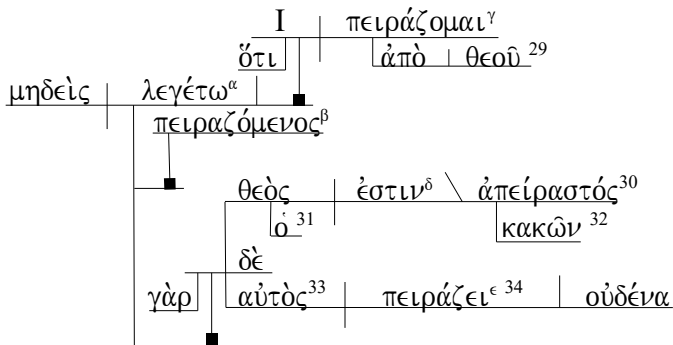
motivational statement for right living, whereas Paul’s language would have been oriented toward grace provision. James will build on the law basis for living as he goes on through his epistle.

“Endures” is the correct translation. ὑπομένω means to bear up under, to avoid attempting to get out from under the temptation. The process is from endurance to approval to reward.

The “crown of life” is a metaphorical statement. The concept of crown refers to reward, no literal crown being contemplated. The phrase “of life” indicates that of which the crown consists. “Life” is physical life, that which is ultimately found in entering the earthly kingdom. That is what, under law, the Israelite had to look forward to. The penalty of the law for sin, physical death, would not apply. This could be in the current life, or could refer also to the ultimate resurrection of the believer in the previous age program. No heaven for him, only physical blessing and happiness for “the ones who love Him.” Herein is nothing to be negative about, but it is not the ultimate goal of the believer in the current age. As revelation became available, these believers would ultimately understand that a change of prophetic program made a new destination, the heavenly realms, available to them.

1:13 μηδείς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι. ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα.

A complex sentence with an object clause, compound adverbial causal clauses. Second sentence.



α P, TA, Imp, 3, s from λέγω, “Let no one say.”

β P, TP, Part, M, s, N from πειράζω, “being tempted.”

γ P, TP, I, 1, s from πειράζω. “I am being tempted.”

δ P, Icop, I, 3, s from εἰμί, “is.”

ε P, TA, I, 3, s from πειράζω, “He tempts.”

Translation: Let no one being tempted say, I am being tempted from God, for God is not temptable by evil, and He Himself tempts no one.

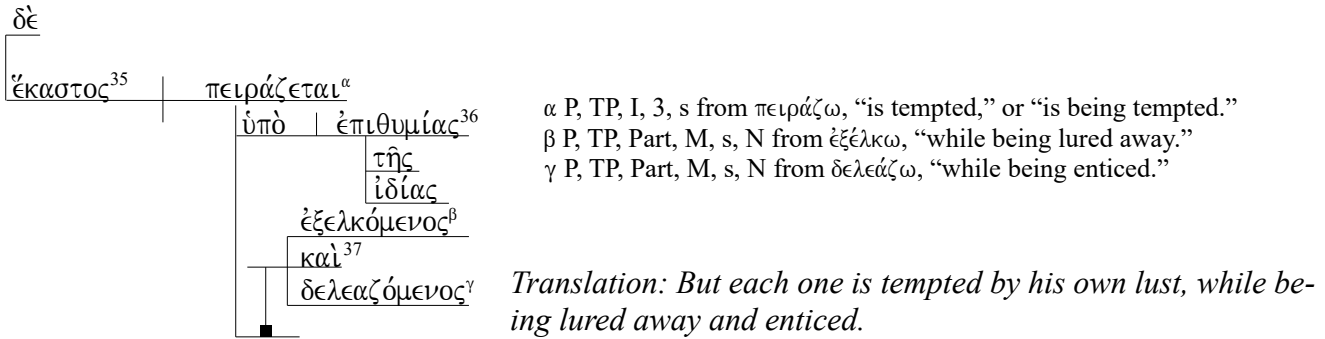
Considerations: James strongly establishes in this sentence the theme of this first section of his epistle. The verb *tempt* is used three times. “Let no man say,” James commands, implying that some, when tempted, were saying that God was the one tempting. The issue at hand is the source and means of temptation. It is not from God, a reference to the divine nature, and should not be attributed to the divine nature of God when one comes under temptation. The use of ἀπο, as an agency of source is not unique in the New Testament. See the End Note associated with θεοῦ.

This is of universal application in all ages, because it is rooted firmly in the very nature of God Himself, which is stated in the subordinate explanatory γὰρ clause. God’s divine nature is not temptable, nor does He Himself, the divine person, tempt. The emphasis of this sentence is on the divine nature of God in which the divine persons equally inhere.

1:14 ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξεκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος.

A simple sentence with compound anarthrous participles. The third sentence in this paragraph.

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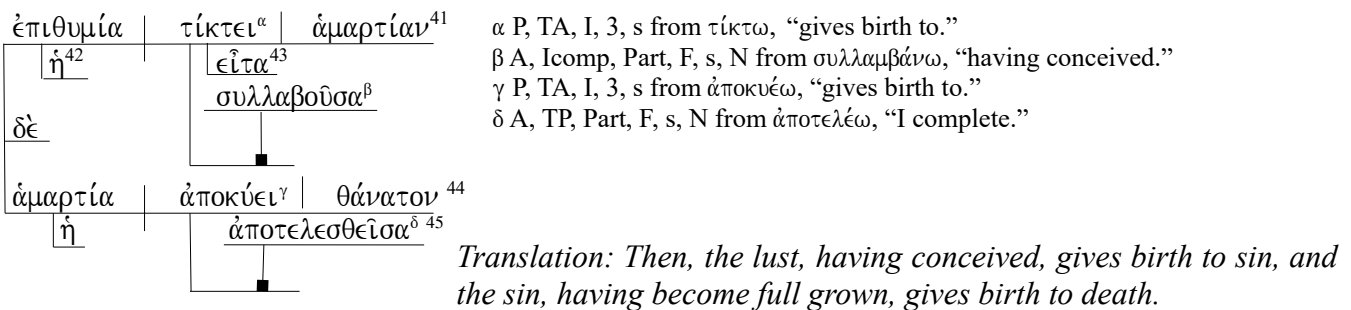
Considerations: Temptation is distinct from both lust and sin. Lust is simply strong desire, and is associated with one of the three enemies of the believer. Once lust exists in the individual, either inwardly (from the principle of indwelling sin) or from an outside source (from the devil or the world system) it becomes the person’s own lust and therefore is the means by which temptation occurs. However, one cannot be tempted unless lured away (ἐξέλκω)³⁸ from right thinking, and enticed³⁹ (the bait must exist) by an opportunity to perform the lust. Otherwise, the lust goes unfulfilled since it has no opportunity to turn into temptation.⁴⁰

Temptation, therefore, is not simply the desire to perform the sin act, but the actual mental step needed to determine to do the act. In order for the sin act to be performed, temptation must exist, and when it does, the lust conceives sin (see verse 15 below).

It is this interval between the lust and the work that grace provision for overcoming the enemy must occur. (See Galatians 5:16 and 19.) At the time of writing, James knew nothing of this grace methodology, and early church believers (mainly Israelites), continued the legal struggle to overcome works of unrighteousness. Today, however, all believers can and should apply the grace methods of Paul (and others) to overcome the strong desire to perform unrighteous acts.

1:15 εἶτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν ἢ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον.

A compound sentence with both clauses containing an anarthrous participle. The fourth sentence in this paragraph.



Considerations: James identifies the process when going from strong desire (lust) to physical death using the metaphor of child birth. The previously mentioned lust (in vs. 14) must conceive (a reference to temptation, which it produces), and then gives birth to sin acts. The previously mentioned sin acts (in the previous clause) when it is full grown, gives birth to physical death.

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Again we see that lust is not sin, but is distinct from it. While it is true that the desire to perform unrighteous deeds comes from the fallen nature, and therefore can proceed to sin, the strong desire, the lust, while unrighteous, is not an act of sin.

Today, in the program of grace, lust is not able to be controlled, and the person cannot keep from lusting, but the act of sin can be controlled by the intervention of the grace ministry of the Holy Spirit. By the application of grace provisions to overcome the temptation, the believer is able to have victory without reverting to legalistic practices.

1:16 μή πλανᾶσθε ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί.

Simple sentence with a vocative. James places the vocative after the sentence to emphasize his message forcefully. Vss. 16-18 are a paragraph.

ἀδελφοί

μου

ἀγαπητοί

you | πλανᾶσθε^a 46

α P, TP, Imp, 2, p from πλανᾶω.

μή

Translation: Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Considerations: James introduces a new paragraph with this short sentence. Some disagree, and make it the final sentence of the previous paragraph. If that is so, James is saying that his audience ought not wander as a result of temptation, in which case the translation “Do not be deceived” cannot stand. πλανᾶω can mean to wander, but such an interpretation seems highly unlikely. It causes the teaching of the doctrine of temptation to end with a negative, which tends to invalidate the teaching of the rest of the chapter, in which James is clearly indicating the qualities necessary in the transition Hebrew believer to deal with the temptation.

Furthermore, the warning against deception goes better with the next paragraph rather than a warning against succumbing to the temptation in the preceding paragraph. These believers needed to understand that God has gifted them in order to overcome temptation. This warning makes sense, then, because the very purpose of James is to give them information by which they can correctly deal with this pre-grace problem.

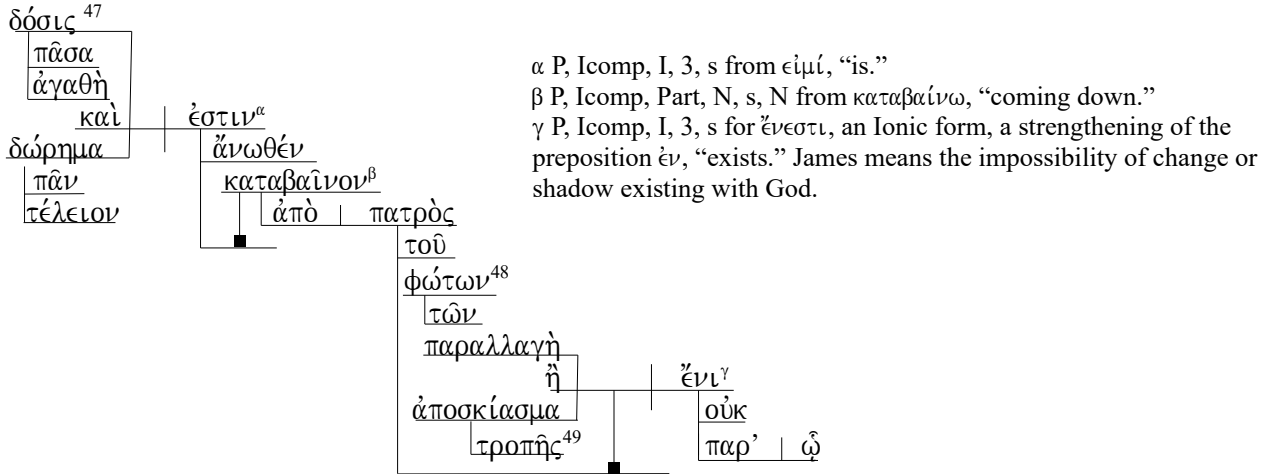
Therefore, the paragraph itself is quite encouraging, even though James begins it with a negative warning. The reason is that it is still part of the context of temptation. We must discern the nature of at least part of the temptation from the positive statements, because the Hebrew believers were being tempted to a deception. Though grace for overcoming temptation had not yet been fully revealed, some new truth was available during this early transition period, and as we shall see, James presents an aspect of this new information in vs. 18.

About what, then, should the Hebrew believers not be deceived? The best answer is that they should not be deceived about the nature of God who gives that which is good for overcoming temptation. James is beginning this passage on needed information with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, beginning with His providing of gifts to His children (vs. 17). James then continues by explaining a new doctrine, the doctrine of regeneration (vs. 18).

1:17 πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν καταβαίνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα.

A complex sentence with a relative clause. Third sentence in this paragraph.

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Translation: Every good gifting and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom variation or shadow of turning does not exist.

Considerations: This sentence begins a two sentence encouragement by James concerning the very nature of God Himself. One thing the Hebrews believers needed to not be deceived about was that the very nature of God produces every good gifting and every good gift.

Most translations translate the words δύοσις and δώρημα as though they were one word. However, δύοσις refers to the act of giving rather than the gift itself, and indicates that not all good giftings from above are tangible gifts. God provides that which cannot be seen as gifts. The word δώρημα, however, does refer to every perfect gift from above, the more tangible elements that come from God’s very nature. All the positive things one receives in this life, whether tangible or intangible, come from above, from the Father “of the lights.”

The “Father of the lights” is a reference to God who is the generator of the heavenly bodies which produce light on the earth. The phrase “the lights” is specific (articular) and plural, and should not be taken to mean “light” in some metaphorical or mystical way. So the first tangible gift that God provided for mankind were the lights, the heavenly bodies, specifically those that shed light upon the earth.

But unlike these bodies, God Himself does not vary, and casts no shadows produced by turning as do the sun and moon, whose nature is to move, to turn, and thereby to cast shadows that vary. Here we have a metaphor which contrasts God favorably to the heavenly bodies who, by their turning around the earth bring about physical shadows, whereas God’s nature is such that with Him no character variation, nor metaphorical shadows, exist. This sentence is a statement that God is immutable in His nature, but not in His activities as He determines.

Many have asked if the term “the Father” is a reference to God the Father. While such is possible, it’s not necessary for the term to be used that way. At the early time of this writing, the concept of the Trinity was yet rudimentary. None of Paul’s epistles were available, and the term “Father” as referring to God was used in the Hebrew Scriptures without reference to the Person of the Trinity, at least not directly. What is clear contextually, is that the word “Father” is referring to God as creator. He is the Father in that He produced the sun and moon, as well as other of “the lights.” It’s best to take this as a ref-

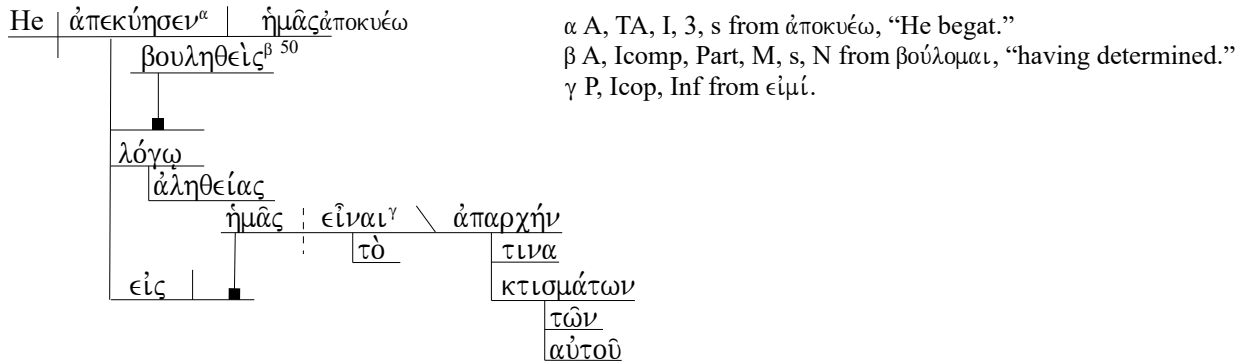
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erence, not to a single person, but to the God’s nature as viewed from the perspective of His ability to create. It is equally applicable to the Son and the Holy Spirit as to God the Father.

This positive encouragement continues in the next sentence.

1:18 βουληθεῖς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων.

A simple sentence. The fourth sentence in this paragraph.



Translation: Having determined, He begat us by the word of truth, so that we might be some firstfruits of His creatures.

Considerations: One of the gifts that God has given believers is regeneration. James emphasizes this aspect of salvation by grace, a grace doctrine already known and understood. The basis for overcoming temptation is to realize the new nature that is the result of salvation, because without that knowledge, no further progress can be made.

The clear, unambiguous statement is that God begat us. The verb ἀποκυέω, when used of a mother, means “gave birth to.” The pronominal subject found in the verb refers back to the word Father, hence the translation “begat,” the common translation when referring to a male as a father.

The “us” is inclusive of James and His readers. This can still be applied today, since it was not part of the Pauline mysteries. As noted, the word ἀποκυέω can refer to the act of a woman’s giving birth, but it can also refer to the begetting of children by a father. The Father begets spiritual children in this age, and thereby provides His children with new natures. At the time of writing, it is doubtful if James understood the full implication of his statement, as the complete doctrine of regeneration had not yet been revealed. Nevertheless, the basic truth remains, one cannot hope to consistently overcome temptation apart from understanding the new nature’s existence.

The participle βουληθεῖς shows the sovereign will of God at work. “Having determined,” God begat. Without the determinative will of God, no personal action could have taken place in regeneration. The determinative will of God is one of the great doctrines in the Scriptures dealing with the individual wills of the persons of the Godhead.

The means of God’s act of begetting we find in the phrase “by the word of truth.” See 1 Peter 1:23. The anarthrous λόγος metaphorically means communication. Without the communication from God no regeneration can take place. The phrase “of truth” is a genitive of quality, and should be understood in the sense of “the truthful word.” This truthful communication probably took place for the majority of James’ readers on the day of Pentecost when they heard Peter expound (Acts 2). Peter included

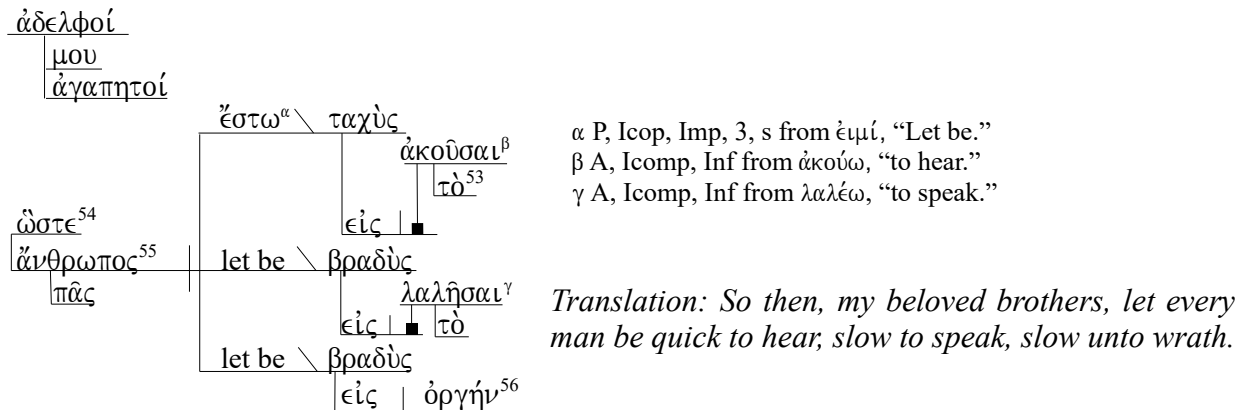
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aspects of the Lord’s messianic message as part of the rejection narrative, as well as the truth of His death and resurrection. Today, one must receive the communication of the gospel of salvation found in 1 Corinthians 15, which no longer includes the Messianic gospel. The death and resurrection of Jesus is still the basis for regeneration.

In the clause “so that we might become some firstfruits of His creatures” (τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχήν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων) the articular infinitive following εἰς shows either purpose or result. It most likely indicates conceived result in this context⁵¹. It could also be translated “for us to be.” God begat these Hebrews with the specific results that they should be “the firstfruits of His creatures.” It’s unlikely that this is generally applicable to all Christians. To the Hebrew recipients, it’s likely that it would have taken on a Hebrew Scriptures concept of the first born. The term did not always mean the one *born first* in the Old Testament, but it does come from that idea. Probably these new believers in Christ would have interpreted it that way. James says that they were some of the firstfruits, that is, some of the first to believe in Christ.⁵² There were others who had preceded them, such as those in the upper room (Acts 1:13-15).

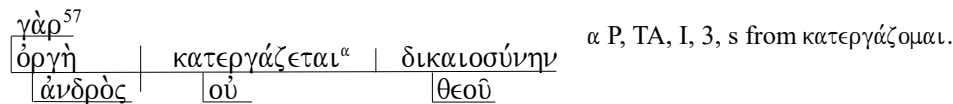
1:19 ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί, ἔστω πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι βραδύς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι βραδύς εἰς ὀργήν.

A simple sentence with a triple compound verb, two of which are elliptical. Vss. 19-20 are a two sentence paragraph.



1:20 ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐ κατεργάζεται.

A simple sentence. The second sentence in this paragraph.



Translation: For a man’s wrath does not work God’s righteousness.

Considerations: - Vs. 19 - Again, James addresses his readers with the phrase “my beloved brothers.” And again, he is referring to his Jewish brothers, those who had come to faith in Jesus of Nazareth. This narrows the intended audience to those transitional saints with whom he is concerned.

This is a simple sentence with a triple predicate. “Let every man be” is the third person command. “Every man” means “every person” regardless of sex. The stated verb, which must be understood to go with three independent predicates is not a permissive, but stated imperative. James is laying down the requirement.

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The phrase “quick to hear”⁵⁸ carries the idea of “pay attention, listen.” “To hear” translates ingressive infinitive, “begin to consider” is the idea. It’s a way of saying listen and consider the word of truth (vs. 18) before acting. My Okie grandfather used to say, “Don’t go off half-cocked,” a gun reference meaning essentially the same thing.

The next two predicates contain the word “slow” rather than quick. The parallelism is striking in it’s contrast with the first predicate. “Slow to speak,” is parallel idea to “quick to hear.” After you’ve listened, think before speaking.

The final predicate introduces another command to be slow, but is not exactly parallel in construction to the first two, which contained aorist infinities. Instead we have a prepositional phrase “unto wrath.” The reason James used this approach was to make sure that his readers did not interpret his words to mean “don’t commit wrath.” Each of the commands is to be either quick or slow, but there is no forbidding of the act. No one should read the second command to forbid speaking. James refers to lifestyle attitudes. So, being “slow unto wrath” does not forbid a person for being wrathful.

To understand why he approaches the word *wrath* thus, we must define it accurately. Wrath is not anger, and it should not be based on an emotion. Rather it is an act of striking out, which may be necessary in certain circumstances. Under the Mosaic Law, wrath was required in capital cases, and it was the execution of wrath by the community where the criminal was put to death. The inclusion of the cities of refuge in the Mosaic law were designed to enforce a “slow to wrath” perspective. Were one accused of a capital crime, he could flee to such a city, which gave time for the emotions of those charged with the putting to death of criminals with a period of time to consider their actions.

But in James’ day, no such cities existed, and it was up to the individual not to execute wrath immediately, and certainly not without careful consideration, which brings us to the statement in vs. 20.

Vs 20 – First we find an explanatory γάρ, which takes us back to the last predicate of verse 19, and begins an explanation of why one should be slow to wrath. James does not give circumstantial reasons for being slow to wrath. He could have explained that in their dispersed situation, it was up to the Roman authorities to apply righteous wrath, but he did not do so. Rather, he appealed to a doctrinal statement designed to show that an individual man’s wrath does not necessarily work God’s righteousness (δικαιοσύνην), which is used here in the sense of God’s righteous wrath. The ultimate issue is theological, not social or governmental.

For “man” he uses the word ἀνδρός, which is the normal word for a male as opposed to a female, unlike the word ἄνθρωπος in vs. 19, which is used of both men and women. It was, under the law, the male who was primarily responsible before God to execute wrath in the required situations.

The word translated “does not work” is κατεργάζεται, and is not the normal form for the verb *work*. According to Thayer it means to work to achieve, or to accomplish something, which is its meaning here. A man’s wrath does not accomplish God’s righteousness. This is James’ way of saying that only under the specified situations spoken of in the Mosaic Law could a male Hebrew accomplish God’s righteous goals, but since those conditions no longer exist, the Hebrew male should be slow wrath. Man’s wrath is generally unacceptable. A human being usually does not have all the information necessary to execute righteous wrath. This was true in the nation of Israel as well, hence the cities of refuge.

In the Hebrew Bible, Israelites were required to go to war, an execution of wrath, under God’s direction, but they often went to war when they should not have, and contravened God’s program. Cer-

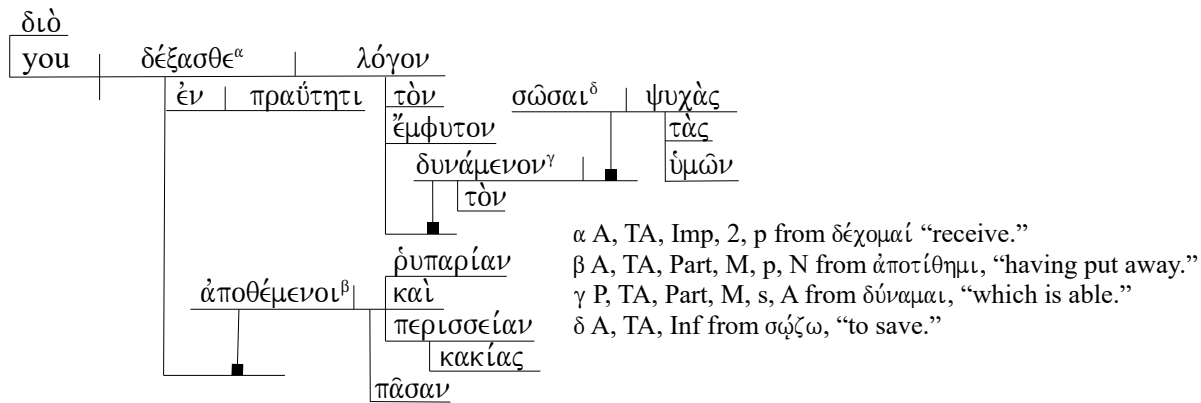
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tainly, it is legitimate to defend one's self and one's family, which could very well require striking out against an opponent, but in other circumstances, where time is allowed, stop and think before committing wrath.

This short two sentence paragraph introduces the next paragraph, which continues the consideration concerning how to be a biblically oriented Hebrew of the dispersion. As we shall see, it is a paragraph filled with Jewish terminology and considerations, and one must be careful not to over apply this information to the grace program for today.

1:21 διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσείαν κακίας ἐν πραύτητι δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν.

A simple sentence with two participles and one infinitive. Vss. 21-25 are a paragraph.



Translation: Therefore, having put away all filth and abundance of malice, receive in meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Considerations: Therefore, διὸ, connects this sentence with the last sentence of the previous paragraph. The dispersed Hebrew Christians were to be models of propriety, based on a correct reception of the “implanted word.” As usual, λόγος means communication, rather than a specific word. In this case, the communication from God, either the written text of Scripture, or the teaching of the apostles.

“Having put away” refers to the removal of garments. Here it is used metaphorically of getting rid of “all filth and abundance of malice.” Paul also uses the word “put away,” but does so in grace passages, which cannot be said of James. Here the basis is, as we shall see, the Old Testament Scriptures.

The word “filth” can also be translated “dirt,” but is used metaphorically here to refer to ungodly activities which were viewed in the Hebrew way of thinking as causing a person to be soiled in God's presence. Such is still true today, as God speaks in the grace epistles of the believer being cleansed, and therefore made acceptable in God's sight. The phrase “abundance of malice” refers to various ways to cause harm. The word κακίας is broadly speaking of badness, or wrong-doing, but often is in a context of being physically harmful, and is probably used by James to indicate the results of misplaced wrath.

These believers were to “receive in meekness the implanted word.” Modern translations often use “gentleness” rather than “meekness” here. But “gentleness” makes no sense in the context. Many scholars believe the word “meekness” is not adequate, as well, but it fits the meaning of the Greek as well as any English word. πραύτητι is the locative of πραύτης, and is strongly linked with the idea of humility, but carries more of the idea of composure, not easily moved toward anger or wrath. Biblically, a person

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who is meek is not shy and retiring, but tends to calmness of spirit, and may in fact be bold and forward in their relationships with others. Hence, it makes perfect sense to associate it with receiving the word of God. A truly meek person can read and study the Word without being moved to pride so as to insert his views onto to Scripture on the one hand or passivity so as to stand silently during the misuse of the Word on the other. Truly meek people can stand strong on the truth of the Word, and boldly speak out its truth, while not expecting a response that somehow benefits the speaker.

The idea of “the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” has caused consternation in many commentators. The word “implanted” occurs only here in the New Testament, and carries the idea of the roots of a plant being buried. Here it is used metaphorically. The word of God should be so intimate in the lives of the dispersed Israelites as to be compared with a tree that has sent deep roots, and is therefore maintained by its root system.

Again, “the word” refers to the communication of God as presented in the Old Testament Scriptures, the New Testament not having yet been written in its entirety. In fact, very little of the Greek writings were yet available, and none of Paul’s, John’s or Peter’s later writings can be considered under the term “word” as used by James. (Some have argued that Mark’s Gospel was written and being circulated by the time James wrote, which is probably true, but one wonders how far the circulation had extended. At any rate, there’s no Christian life doctrine in Mark.) So we conclude that “the implanted word” refers to the word of God that was to be memorized, “hidden in one’s heart,” as was the result of the synagogue teaching. It is unlikely that Hebrews in the dispersion carried Scriptures in their entirety with them. There were no printing presses, in those days, and the hand copied scrolls were bulky and not easily portable.

The main problem, however, seems to be the misunderstanding of phrase “to save your souls.” Commentators insist on applying to the words of the phrase a very limited meaning, a meaning based more on modern cultural use among many who think of salvation and the soul only in a specific way. First, the word “to save” does not inherently carry the idea of spiritual salvation from sin. It means that only in certain contexts. Indeed, it is used of salvation from sickness (healing), as well as salvation from danger in Scripture, much as the English word is used today.

Neither James nor his readers would have thought of spiritual salvation from sin in the later sense of Paul’s epistles. Even if they did associate the word salvation with sin, they would have thought of it nationally, that is, the salvation of the nation of Israel from sin by entering into the Kingdom of God on earth. Paul himself used *saved* that way in Romans 11:26. Furthermore, *soul* does not refer to the inner part of man, as it does sometimes mean. Here it would have meant to both James and the dispersed Jews “physical life.” Indeed, obedience to the Mosaic Law resulted in life rather than death.

Contextually, James means that by obedience to the Hebrew Scriptures, the dispersed Jews, as Israelites, were more likely to continue in physical life than otherwise.⁵⁹ Indeed, the Jewish faith was a recognized faith by Rome, and Jews were as often protected because of their faith as persecuted. That is not to say that the Romans under the Emperors was consistent, because they were not, and sometimes Jews were persecuted. But if a Jew lived consistently under the Mosaic code, they would not have been convicted of capital crimes by the Romans, and they would not normally have been put to death.

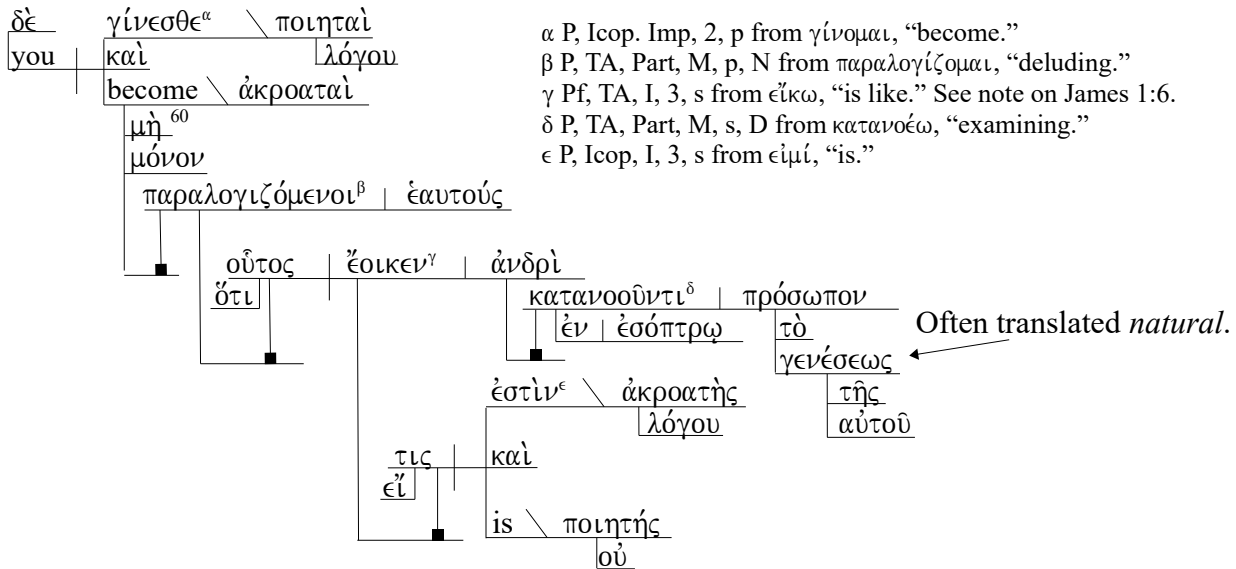
In summary, it is clear that James is telling the dispersed Israelites that they should live a moral and upright life, and not engage in dangerous or harmful behavior, and to carefully keep to the truth of the Hebrew Scriptures in order to enjoy a physical life that caused no calamity to come upon them.

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This dependence on the Scriptures is developed further throughout the rest of this paragraph.

1:22, 23 γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταὶ παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοὺς 23 ὅτι εἴ τις ἀκροατὴς λόγου ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ ποιητής, οὗτος ἔοικεν ἀνδρὶ κατανοοῦντι τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ.

A complex sentence with two dependent clauses and two participles. Second sentence in this paragraph.



Translation: But become ones doing the word and not only hearing, deluding yourselves, ²³ because if someone is hearing the word and not doing it, this one is like a man examining the face of his birth in a mirror.

Considerations: James continues his emphasis on the morality required by the Hebrew Scriptures. The word λόγος is again used, as it was before, to emphasize the central place of the word of God for these new Christian believers.

As always, the key to understanding this sentence is not to divorce it from the historical and cultural context of James and his Hebrew readers. The need for this encouragement is based on what was often happening in synagogues in the Jewish world. There was an intense focus on the Hebrew Scriptures, but much movement away from simple understanding and practice had occurred since the dispersion took place.

As one reads the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it becomes clear that all is not right among the leaders of the Hebrews. There was much arrogance, but little true practice of the Scriptures that they claimed to revere. Indeed, one major sect, the Sadducees, looked at the Hebrew Scriptures from an inadequate perspective, limiting their understanding to the teaching of the Torah, and reject such doctrines as spirit beings and resurrection. As to how widespread this problem was throughout the Jewish world one can only speculate. But it seems unlikely that the Hebrews scattered throughout the Roman Empire escaped from the impractical intellectualism found in Judea at the time of the writing of the Gospels.

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James, of course, knew of that problem first hand, living in Jerusalem as he did. Here was the center of the Hebrew world, and the rot had set in. The arrogance of both Sadducees and Pharisees had undoubtedly spread, which at least partially explains why James would write as he did.

The first two words of vs. 22, γίνεσθε δὲ, are of immediate importance. The word δὲ, translated “but,” is a weak adversative, both contrasting and linking this command to the previous sentence in vs. 21. He ended that sentence with a wise injunction, and begins with an implied contrast, not of the injunction, but the words which prompted it “having put away all filth and abundance of malice.” Now he continues to emphasize the doctrine of the implanted word by stating the imperative “become.” There is no wiggle room here. James is requiring that his readers become doers of the word rather than just hearers. This makes sense, given the state of Judaism in the Roman Empire. It’s one thing to study the word intellectually, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is another to obey it once studied. And if there is one thing that the Old Testament Scriptures emphasized it was “doing.”

Today, under grace, it is wrong to emphasize doing without emphasizing the means to perform, but that was not so under law. And James and his readers were still operating under the legal system. Today, we should never tell a person “be a doer of the word,” without adding the mechanism of grace provision. Without that, the end result is legalistic frustration. Yet, how often have we heard this statement of James pulled out of its context, and applied to young, gullible Christians today? Such should never be!

In James’ day, it was common for people to go to the synagogue and spend hours listening to the leadership discussing the smallest detail of the Hebrew Bible without any thought of what a person should *actually do*, which one can somewhat understand because much of the doing of the Old Testament involved aspects of the law that could no longer be applied. The dispersion Jews could not go to the temple on a regular basis to sacrifice and perform the Mosaic rituals. So, perhaps for many, their faith became a matter of study rather than practice. It seems likely that many of the leaders had not taken the moral and ethical concepts of the Scriptures seriously. At least, that is what James and others of the early Christians realized from the rejection of their Messiah, and the totally immoral reaction of the local Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Hypocrisy was running full steam ahead in Judaism!

But James encourages them to be doers, not only hearers; otherwise they were deluding themselves. This has been a common problem with believers in all ages. The word of God is often taken to mean something that it could not mean, and through sloppy thinking and laziness believers become deluded into thinking something is important, when, in fact, it is something else that is paramount. To the Israelites in the dispersion, this may have been the tradition and ritual rather than the reality of a godly life.

James refers to the moral and ethical constraints of the system of Godly practice, rather than the rituals, which practice was confirmed to his readers in Vs. 21. It was this that would keep them alive in a heathen land.

In vs. 23, James illustrates the nature of the delusion to which these believers were susceptible. He uses a causative clause with a first class conditional sentence embedded within it, “because if someone is hearing the word and not doing it, this one is like a man examining the face of his birth in a mirror.” James assumes that someone (not named) is indeed hearing the word and not doing it, an altogether righteous assumption. He then uses a statement of comparison (not a true simile) by saying that this

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person is like a man (ανήρ) who examines his face in a mirror. Now, we must go on to the next sentence in vs. 24 to find the conclusion and point to this comparison.

1:24 κατενόησεν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀπελήλυθεν καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ἦν.

A complex sentence, with one dependent object clause. Third sentence in this paragraph.

γὰρ	κατενόησεν ^α 61		ἑαυτὸν	α A, TA, I, 3, s from κατανοέω, “he examined.”
	καὶ			β Pf, Icomp, I, 3, s from ἀπέρχομαι, “departed.”
he	ἀπελήλυθεν ^β		ὅποιος	γ A, TA, I, 3, s from ἐπιλανθόνομαι, “forgot.”
	καὶ			ε I, Icomp, I, 3, s from εἰμί, “was.”
	ἐπελάθετο ^γ		■	
	εὐθέως			

Translation: For he examined himself and departed, and immediately forgot what sort of man he was.

Considerations: James’ illustration by way of comparison in vs. 23 is explained here in vs. 24. In vs. 23 we are told that if someone is a hearer rather than a doer of the word, he’s like a man who examines his face in a mirror in a mirror. Here we are told how such a person is like that man. The man examines himself and departs, and immediately forgets something. And what he forgets is a peculiarly Hebrew way of looking at this comparison. He forgets what sort of man he is.

On the surface, this doesn’t seem to tell us much, or why the comparison is relevant to hearing and not doing. But to the *believing* Jews it was highly relevant. To understand the statement we must examine how an Israelite of the day thought of himself. We must realize the arrogance that had been taught to the Israelite, and how James punctures that arrogance. Consider the following:

- 1) God had chosen Israel, and had blessed the nation as long as it was in obedience.
- 2) The chosen people had rebelled, and were now scattered.
- 3) Nonetheless, they were still told on a regular basis that they were better off in the program of God than the heathens around them.
- 4) However, the believing Israelites had recognized that the people of Judea had rejected their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, but they had accepted His messiahship.

Now, to the believing Israelite of James’ day, there was recognition that the Lord was Israel’s Messiah alone, and that as such, the people of Israel were the primary, if not the sole recipients of God’s blessings. If they were consistent in their understanding of Hebrew Scripture, such a belief would have been moderated by the teaching about Gentiles in the various prophets, but they would have still had a sense of superiority over non-Hebrews.

Here’s the key. They were not doing the word, especially in the moral and ethical senses. Their idea of superiority had made it difficult to see what their personal problems really were. James wrote this to people who were still in need of an education, because they had forgotten what kind of people they were. They were hearers, but not doers, and that invalidated their superiority. Built into that realization was that they were failing in God’s program of right living.

What James is saying, therefore, is that if they do not perform the word, they are hypocrites. Do not think that the dispersed believing Jews would have missed James’ message here. They would have understood it, and their realization of what was happening in their Jewish community would have been devastating. By believing what the apostles claimed about Jesus, they had separated themselves, per-

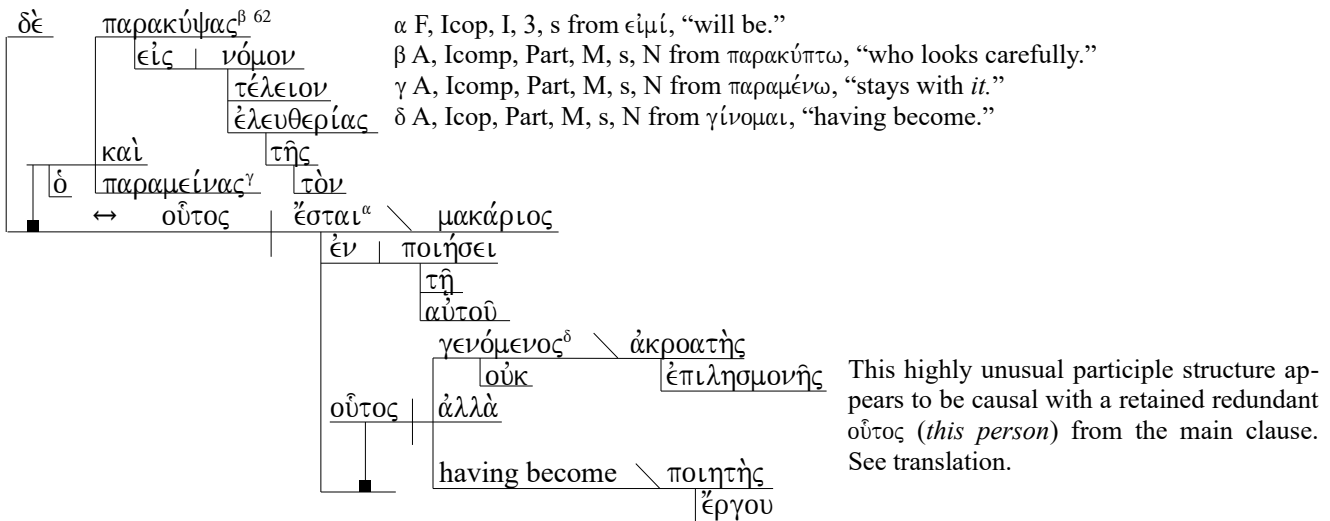
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haps unknowingly, from the majority of dispersed Israelites. And that’s what the hearers but not doers among the believing Israelites were in danger of forgetting. They had looked at themselves, and seen themselves as Jews like their Jewish friends and neighbors, but they had forgotten that they were no longer like them.

So, if they desired to enter into true blessing, they needed to see themselves accurately, and act accordingly, which is what James will insist upon in the next sentence.

1:25 ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ παραμείνας οὗτος οὐκ ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος ἀλλὰ ποιητῆς ἔργου οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται.

Technically, a simple sentence with four participles (one elliptical). Fourth sentence in this paragraph.



Translation: But the one who looks carefully into the complete law of liberty, and stays with it, because this person not having become a forgetful hearer, but having become a doer of work, this one will be blessed in his doing.

Considerations: Almost all commentators in my library think James does *not* mean the Mosaic law when he uses the phrase “the complete law of liberty.” Most refer it to Paul’s concept of law, that is, law of the non-forensic type, requirement associated with grace provision. They make these statements without giving any reason why, and seem, therefore, to close down the discussion. We will re-open it here. *This is not Paul’s grace requirement, it IS the Mosaic code.* No other interpretation fits the historical or literary context! Robertson’s view is typical of the anti-Mosaic approach, “James here refers to the word of truth (Jam 1:18), the gospel of grace (Gal 6:2; Rom 12:2).” Robertson gives no reasons, so we are to accept his view based on his word. We will proceed to give our reasons, and the evidence for rejecting Robertson’s (and others) view.

First, we have translated “νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας” the complete law of liberty. The traditional translation of τέλειον is *perfect*, but we must always ask, “In what sense is perfect being used.” Thomas Green in his Greek lexicon defines τέλειον as “brought to completion; fully accomplished, fully developed,; fully realized, thorough, complete, entire, *as opposed to what is partial and limited...*” Other lexicons add to that the idea of maturity, or being full grown (BDAG). We believe that James is using it in the sense of *complete*, or *finished*, here. He is encouraging his readers to understand the totality of the Torah, the law, rather than simply legal code itself. (We do not agree with the few who in-

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dicate their belief that James is referring to the entire Old Testament, though we think that is possible. But without better arguments concerning the word law used in that manner, we are reluctant to hold that view.)

Why do we hold this view of law? Again, because of the historical, literary, and biblical contexts. Consider these five reasons:

1) Paul had *not yet* written and circulated his letters, so it is not possible that James could be referring to grace requirement. Paul was probably near to writing his first epistle, that to the Galatians, but even if he had, it was to primarily Gentile churches warning them against the unbelieving Jews who were advocating that they live under the requirements of the Mosaic code. It's true that Galatians was a circular letter, written to several assemblies in Galatia, but it would have taken a good amount of time, probably some years, for it to circulate to the Christian assemblies as a whole.

2) The audience here were scattered Israelites, not the mixed assemblies of Jews and Gentiles to whom Paul wrote. The word *law* had a definite meaning to the original dispersed readers, and it had nothing to do with grace living. They would have immediately thought of the law of Moses.

3) The literary context is dealing with *doing*, and as such, must be viewed from a Jewish perspective, that is, doing the moral requirements of the Mosaic code.

4) It is beyond comprehension that if James had known of Paul's new message he would have used the terminology that he did (νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας) to mean something that his readers could not understand without further explanation. There is no attempt to define the word *law* in a way that would change their idea of it from the Mosaic law, which would have required quite a long discourse (as Paul in Romans 6-8) to ensure. No such explanation exists here.

5) While it is true that Paul also used the word *liberty*, he never did so in the context of law. Rather, he used it of liberty from the bondage of law. See Galatians 2:4, and 5:1, for examples of this use. To the Israelites to whom James was writing, the word liberty would most likely taken to mean liberty from Gentile domination, especially if they were conversant with Deuteronomy 28-30, which they undoubtedly were.

Concerning James' two references to *hearing the word* (λόγος) in this context, Oesterley rightly states, "...reference is being made to the reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue; further, the mention, also twice made, of the doing of the word makes it a matter of practical certainty that the reference is to the Torah, the Law; the fact that Jews are being addressed only emphasizes this."⁶³ The Jews, even at that time, regularly read from the Torah during their synagogue gatherings. Given the expense of producing individual copies of the Torah, it is unlikely that many had personal copies, so the primary interaction they would have had with the Law of Moses would have been hearing it read in their meetings. See Deuteronomy 31:10-13 for Moses requirement of reading the entire law every seven years. Deuteronomy 31:12 explicitly states that they were to both hear and do the law.

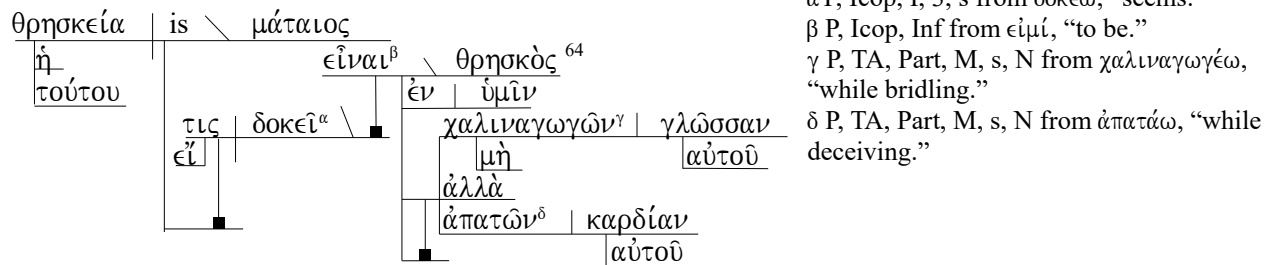
The fact is, the dispersed Jews were still living under law at this time. That does not mean they were not Christians, nor does it mean they were not part of the body of Christ. But it does mean that they had not yet heard or read body truth. They did not yet know what they had in Christ. To force them to act according to what they did not know is foolish, and certainly not in keeping with the intent of the biblical writers. James was writing within a specific time frame, and within a specific doctrinal context, and he himself had not yet been introduced to the revelation given to Paul, at least not in its fullness.

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It is clear that if the reader looked carefully into and stays with it (does not depart from) the law, because that person does not become a forgetful hearer, but a doer of work, is blessed (μακάριος, happy) in his doing. James uses the word happy in its normal circumstantial sense. Happiness comes to the transitional Hebrew at this point in the revelation of God’s program through observing carefully and performing the moral and ethical requirements found in the Torah.

1:26 εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ τούτου μάταιος ἡ θρησκεία.

A complex conditional sentence. Vss 26-27 are a paragraph.



Translation: If anyone among you seems to be religious while not bridling his tongue but deceiving his heart, the religion of this one is useless.

Considerations: The phraseology “seems to be religious” refers to an individual who is observing ritualistic activities, which fits perfectly with the situation facing the readers. The condition of the first class here apparently exhibits a present general supposition rather than referring to a specific event.⁶⁵ Among the Jews of the day, the forms, the rituals, were often considered the most important aspect of their life before God. The point of this entire passage is that God is concerned with the character of the individual, rather than the observable rituals of religion. Such a person only *seems* to be religious.

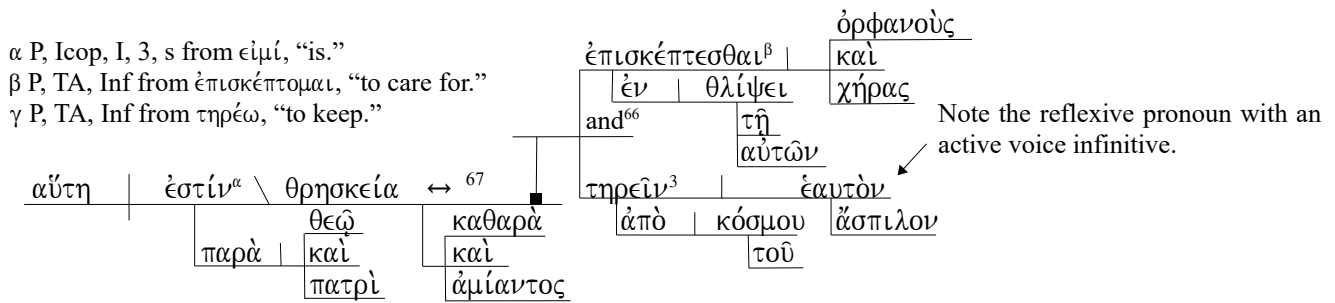
It appears to be the nature of man to prefer ritual over godly practice. Such is certainly as true today in the twenty-first century local church as it was in the first century synagogue. In fact, one searches the pages of the New Testament epistles in vain for any reference to ritual in the local assembly. There does not exist one iota of evidence that the local assembly should have orders of service, long-winded public “prayers,” or any worship service at all. The New Testament *does teach* that the local assembly is a time of fellowship and honoring God, rather than ritual and worship. (No place in the NT speaks of worship as a purpose for assembling. The local assembly is for breaking of bread [fellowship].) For the Christian today, the physical body is the temple, and one can worship any place the body is.

Therefore, we conclude that the biblical Christian faith is not a religion at all, and the biblical Christian should neither use, nor tolerate without correction the use of the word religion when referring to the biblical faith.

1:27 θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ θεῶ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανούς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου.

A simple sentence with compound infinitive appositional complements. Second sentence in this paragraph.

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Translation: Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father; is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself spotless from the world.

Considerations: The word religion (θρησκεία) occurs only four times in the New Testament, and here is the only time it is used in the positive sense. James removes it from its content of ritualistic activity to beneficent activity, which, unlike ritual, is legitimate. If there is any such thing as legitimate use of the religion, it is in this sense. To use religion as it is today of some kind of Christian faith or worship system is not legitimate and should be avoided by true Christians.

To James, correct practice of the individual trumps religious ritual. In a sense, he is redefining the word translated religion in terms of what it should be as opposed to what it actually was.

James describes the word religion in two ways: first as to association, then as to quality. James is describing religion before (παρά) God, meaning associated with God, as opposed to the ritualistic use of the word which had been imposed on the daily ritual of the Jews of the first century, which had become a matter of multiple ritual washings, formal public prayers, and so on. The Hebrews had gone well beyond the statements of the Mosaic law in this regard.

James refers to God as "God and Father," a way of identifying the relationship of God to the nation Israel, as well as to individual believing Israelites. It is doubtful that James had the Trinitarian doctrine in mind with this designation, though it is not impossible. By the time James was writing, the truth of the three persons of the Godhead was certainly known. But the probable reason for the phrase "God and Father" was filial to the nation, rather than a direct doctrinal Trinitarian distinction, because this was a common idea among the Jews from the Hebrew Scriptures. God calls Israel His son (i. e. Exodus 4:22) and spoke of His Fatherhood relationship to them (i. e. Psalm 103:13).

Qualitatively, religion from God is pure and undefiled. Both of these words carried ritualistic significance, as both were used of ceremonial cleansing. James lifts them out of the ritualistic into the personally practical by presenting two aspects typical of that practice which comes from God.

The first requirement for pure and undefiled religion is taking care of orphans and widows. There is an implied condemnation here, as though the requirements to do these things had been neglected among the dispersion Jews. Under the Mosaic code, widows and orphans were uncommon, because of several factors. A true widow was one who had neither husband nor children to care for her. According to the law of the levirate (from *levir*, brother-in-law, found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10), if a man died without children, his brother was to have sexual relations with the widow, so that she could bear a son to be the heir of her husband's land. So, true widows, that is, widows without support of their children, were to be scarce under the law. But like so many laws that were enforceable in the land, this law had

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fallen away, which made widows and orphans (both of whose parents had died) more common. The Christian Jews have the responsibility to care for such within the Jewish community.

The second requirement of pure and undefiled religion is to keep themselves spotless from the world. Here is the earliest mention of the world system outside the gospels. To Jews, dispersed among the Gentile world system, this was a valuable reminder. James is encouraging these people to not get sucked into the filthy, immoral Gentile practices around them, those that caused God to look upon them as defiled. Under the Mosaic code, this was accomplished by physical separation from the nations around them as much as possible. The dietary and clothing restrictions were primarily to maintain this separation. But at the time James wrote, that physical separation had long been absent. They had been taken captive, and when released from captivity, many had not returned to the land of promise. So James here encourages them that true religion includes, if not separation physically from Gentiles, separation from their immoral soiling practices.

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Endnotes

- 1 Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh. 1898. See pg. 154, § 388, 389.
- 2 Evidently, tribal records were still being kept by the Israelites at this time. The concept of the so-called “lost tribes” is incorrect. What seems to have happened is that the family and tribal records were lost, not the twelve tribes. The records were probably lost during the great Jewish persecutions that went on over the centuries since the birth of Christ, starting with the Roman removal of many of the Jews from Jerusalem and surrounding areas.
- 3 πειρασμός, a masculine noun occurring some 21 times in the New Testament. It should be translated *temptation* unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. See Acts 20:19 where it means *trials* rather than *temptations*. The verb form πειράζω, occurs some 39 times, and usually means *to tempt*, and should be so translated. However, it occurs occasionally in the sense of *to try* or *test*, as in John 6:6.
- 4 See, for example, Abbott-Smith’s *Lexicon* under δόκιμος. The same lexicon defines the adjective δοκίμιος as that which is tested, approved, essentially identical with δόκιμος. For some odd reason, many (most?) lexicons break out δοκίμιον as a separate word, and list it as a noun. Abbott-Smith points this out. However, a good argument can be made that δοκίμιον is simply a substantival use of the word δοκίμιος.
- 5 A strict doctrinal distinction needs to be observed when reading the word *faith* in the New Testament. Saving faith, which occurs only once when an unbeliever believes the gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4, the single object of faith for salvation), cannot be tested. The Greek word *faith* (πίστις) occurs over 240 times in the New Testament, and could also be translated *belief*. The majority of times it means faith to live by, though this truth is rarely acknowledged. Generally, the object of faith for daily living in Israel before Christ was the Mosaic law, in all its particulars. Today, it is the grace teaching of the New Testament epistles. In both cases, intensive study must be done to understand the various elements of each system.

It is the lack of this distinction that has produced one of the great controversies in theology. Many who do not distinguish the two uses of the word fall into the trap of thinking that one’s saving faith can be compromised, and therefore, a person who has believed the Gospel accurately and who has been saved can lose their salvation. They can cease to believe. However, the great preponderance of Scripture clearly teaches that this is not so. It is not the purpose of this discussion, however, to delve into the biblical doctrine of faith to the extent to prove the above assertion, but to simply observe one major cause for the confusion.

Others, who do not hold that a true believer cannot leave the state of salvation, nonetheless, because of the lack of distinction, hold that a person who sins regularly cannot be a true Christian, and hasn’t truly believed and entered into a state of salvation. They reject the idea that a believer can fall into serious carnality, and hence, hold that the person was never saved in the first place. Their doctrine is often called the perseverance of the saints, and is not precisely the same thing as the doctrine of the security of the believer.

These two positions, identified under the poor terms Arminianism and Calvinism, are, in the practical sense, very close together. Both of them hold that a person who has not believed according to their mistaken idea of faith is an unbeliever, no matter how he got there, either by ceasing to believe, or by not having believed correctly in the first place.

Endnotes

The solution is relatively simple. Make the normal, language-based distinction between the way the word faith is used in various contexts. Saving faith, which occurs but once, cannot be tested or tried. It produces a permanent state of salvation. Living faith, on the other hand, can be tested, it can grow, it can diminish, all based on the individual's willingness to enter into a grace-based way of living the Christian life.

As we shall see, James knew nothing (yet), of grace for daily living. Paul's great doctrine of living under grace rather than under law (Romans 6) had not been presented in written, circulated form when James wrote. Consequently, James uses the Mosaic law as the basis for daily living for these early, transitionalized believers.

- 6 ἵνα most often introduces a pure final clause (telic) indicating purpose. On occasion, however, ἵνα can introduce a clause of conceived result, though this idea is more often expressed by ὥστε with the infinitive. It is roughly analogous to the English "in order that" indicating purpose, as opposed to "so that" indicating either result or conceived result, though these distinctions are not absolute. As a matter of form, this translator attempts to keep the distinctions consistent in translation, but this is not always possible.
- 7 Perhaps an imperative of permission, though not so in the next verse. The subject of this verb is assumed from the protosis of the conditional sentence.
- 8 In vs. 5, the two parallel present complete participles, *ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ δοθήσεται*, share a single governing article. Articular participles are generally adjectival or substantival. Here they refer back to the object of the preposition *θεοῦ*, with which form (the genitive/ablative) they agree.
- 9 First class condition. Could be translated "since someone lacks wisdom."
- 10 Burton points out that the verb *αἰτέω*, which forms the apodosis of the clause *εἰ δέ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας*, is also acting as the apodosis of the coordinate clause *δοθήσεται αὐτῷ*. (Think about it!) Burton, *Moods*, pg. 110, § 269.
- 11 Some have thought that the word *wisdom* when used by Paul is not so much semantic drift as it is the association of the word with the Hebrew "wisdom literature" (considered to be Job through Canticals). Paul, then, uses the word as being the wisdom of God in written form, a not altogether unattractive idea.
- 12 This is not prayer, but "asking of a superior," according to the doctrine of asking as presented by Jesus in the upper room, q. v. This imperative is identical to the one in vs. 5, but carries no idea of permission. This "asking in faith without doubting" is a requirement for success!

The subject of a third person imperative must be derived from the context. Grammars regularly teach students to translate it "let him, her or it" plus the verb meaning, but the diagram should reflect who the actual third person is in the context.
- 13 *διακρινόμενος* is an anathrous participle modifying the imperative mood verb. Taken with *ἐν πίστει* (a positive), it is a strong negative. James is stating that one *must* ask in belief, while not doubting.
- 14 Same form as above, except articular complete, standing as the subject of the verb. The *γάρ* clause gives the reason that the doubting is unacceptable.
- 15 The form *ἔοικεν* is a 2nd perfect, occurring only here and in James 1:23. This is an intensive perfect indicating a settled state of similarity.

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- 16 This verb is related to the noun ῥιπίς, a fan or bellows.
- 17 Friberg, in his *Analytical Lexicon*, identifies the verb ἔουκεν as “the perfect of an obsolete verb εἴκω.” Authors use perfect tense verbs for specific reasons, which must be discovered. In this case, the most likely reason for the verb is to intensify the resultant quality of the tense. It is as though James were saying, “the one who doubts is in a settled state of being like a wave of the sea.” The implication of the perfect tense here is that the one who doubts is in a regular state of instability. For a further discussion of the Intensive Perfect, see D&M, *Manual Grammar*, pg. 202.
- 18 The Greek word translated suppose (οἴομαι) occurs only three times in the New Testament: John 21:25, Philippians 1:16, and here in James. It means to think in the sense of holding to a supposition, something that may, or may not be true.
- 19 Robertson comments, “Instead of *anthrōpos* (general term) in Jam 1:7, perhaps for variety (Ropes), but often in James (Jam 1:12, Jam 1:23; Jam 2:2; Jam 3:2), though in other Epistles usually in distinction from *gunē* (woman).” (WP)
- 20 Robertson says, “First appearance of this compound known and in N.T. only here and James 4:8. Apparently coined by James, but copied often in early Christian writings and so an argument for the early date of James’ Epistle (Moulton and Milligan’s *Vocabulary*). From *dis* twice and *psuchē* soul, double-souled, double-minded...” (WP)
- 21 Thayer’s definition: *Height*: properly, of measure, Eph. 3:18; metaphorically, *rank, high station*: James 1:9.
- 22 Thayer’s “*lowly, of low degree*: with a substantive, James 1:9 (Thayer); ATR agrees, “The lowly” brother, in outward condition (Luk 1:52), humble and poor as in Psa 9:12; Pro 30:14 (WP).
- 23 Blossom, flower (Liddell & Scott).
- 24 “Feeding place for grazing animals; by metonymy, what grows there *grass, hay, herbage* (MT 6.30); in reference to grain *growing plant* before it heads out *sprout, blade* (MT 13.26); as a building material *hay, (thatched) grass* (1C 3.12).” (Friberg).
- 25 The first of a series of gnomic aorists. Such aorists are timeless, and can be translated as a static present. Burton agrees, *Moods*, pg. 21, § 43.
- 26 Literally, this verb should be translated “will be withered,” but I used *will become withered* since it flows better in English.
- 27 The word is related to the verb πορεύομαι, to come or go. Friberg notes that literally it means a journey or a trip. But the word is also used figuratively of activities, undertakings, as here.
- 28 τῆς ζωῆς is a genitive of apposition, “the crown that consists of life.”
- 29 We find the preposition ἀπό used as an instrumental, though ATR(WP) rejects this view. He says ἀπό indicates source, that is, that the phrase indicates the negative source of the temptation. However, here source and agency have become concatenated, so that the source does indicate the agent of the passive voice verb beneath which it is diagrammed. We use the same kind of thing in English when someone says something like, “I was made sick from eating that fish.” We mean both that the source and means of the sickness was eating the fish. The reason that ἀπό is used with the passive voice verb is to indicate the idea of remote agency, the ultimate source of the temptation. The proof of this view is found in the next clause, “He Himself tempts no one.” It is clear that James is rejecting the idea that God tempts to evil, and that He is the ultimate agent of temptation

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to evil. With this view, Dana and Mantey agree on page 101 of their *Manual Grammar*. They list ἀπό indicating agency as one of its remote meanings, and even use this verse, James 1:13, as the primary illustration of this fact. Agency emphasizing source is not uncommon in language, and it is unusual to find so many who do not recognize this fact. See also Acts 15:4 (critical text), 2 Corinthians 7:13, and Revelation 12:6 (critical text).

Note that θεοῦ is anarthrous. It is not a direct reference to the Father here, as we would expect it to be articular in that case. The word is emphasizing God's quality or nature, and can be applied in such passages to any one of the Trinitarian persons. It is contrary to God's nature that He should tempt anyone to perform an evil act.

- 30 ἀπειραστός is a predicate adjective, describing the subject from alpha privative prefix (α, meaning not) with the adjective πείρατος, temptable. It occurs only here in the New Testament, where it is presented with its passive sense, not temptable. The active sense, not tempting, does not occur in the New Testament.
- 31 An article of previous reference. Not specifically a reference to the Father, but to the previously mentioned God quality, the divine nature.
- 32 κακῶν is a genitive of reference, and, though it is somewhat awkward, the construction could be translated "untemptable by evil." See D&M, *Manual Grammar*, pg. 78.
- 33 Emphatic use of αὐτός, emphasizing that God emphatically does not tempt to sin.
- 34 Third use of πειράζω in this sentence. The subject of this verb is αὐτός, used as an emphatic, and should be translated "himself."
- 35 ἕκαστός, "each person." James is emphasizing the individuality of the temptation. One is tempted alone, and one must overcome it alone. This is true even today under grace.
- 36 The prepositional phrase ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας indicates that one is tempted by his own lusts, or strong desires. The Greek word ἐπιθυμία does not automatically carry the negative connotations of the English "lust." Context must make this determination. In Scripture Jesus has strong desires, as does the Holy Spirit. In English the word "lust" originally carried a similar neutral connotation, but has become associated mainly with illicit sexual desire. The New Testament regularly uses it negatively of *any* illicit strong desire.

This preposition phrase indicates the direct agent of the temptation. Not from God, but from one's own lust. Therefore, the lust both precedes and produces the temptation. But temptation cannot exist without alluring (ἐξέλκω) and an enticing (δελεάζω). See the next note.
- 37 These two parallel passive participles (ἐξεκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος) are temporal, indicating two events that are happening at the same time as being tempted. The temptation cannot exist without them. Note that the main verb and both participles are passive voice.
- 38 Used only here in the New Testament.
- 39 The word enticed (δελεάζω) is related to δέλεαρ (*bait*) and is used three times in the New Testament: here and in 2 Peter 2:14 and again in 2:18.
- 40 Temptation is highly circumstantial. A person on a desert island may be tempted by some things, but if he's alone, free of female companionship, he cannot be tempted to commit fornication. While he may lust so to do, the circumstances won't permit the act. Also, the alluring and enticing cannot exist without the opportunity to act; the temptation cannot take place.

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- 41 The word sin is used three ways in Scripture: 1) indwelling sin, 2) sin guilt, and 3) sin acts, the most common use. Here it is clearly acts of sin that are in view.
- 42 Observe two articles of previous reference, one with ἐπιθυμία and one with ἁμαρτία. “The previously mentioned....”
- 43 εἶτα indicates a *resultant* “then” rather than a *temporal* “then”. It might be paraphrased, “Then, as the result of the forgoing...”
- 44 Physical death. Scripture writers were consistent in linking physical death to the sin act (see Romans 6:23). Here, James would have a ready audience to the idea, since in the Hebrew Scriptures Moses consistently requires death for sin, either personal death, usually in the form of stoning, or the sacrificial death of an animal as a substitute.
- 45 The passive participle ἀποτελεσθεῖσα means “has become full grown” and emphasizes completion of growth. It is transitive, and it is the subject ἁμαρτία that receives the action of having become full grown.
- 46 Rienecker and Rogers consider that this might be a permissive imperative, “Do not allow yourselves to be deceived.” Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 1976.
- 47 In this compound subject, James uses two nouns which are often confused. δόσις is the first of two these distinct words often translated *gift*. However, δόσις does not mean *gift*, but *gifting*, and should be so translated. On the other hand δώρημα, the second word regularly translated *gift* means *something given* (note the μα ending), that is, a gift.
- 48 Articular use of φῶτων, “of the lights.” Objective genitive. The specific lights of which God is the Father, that is the producer, the sun and the moon.
- 49 τροπῆς is a subjective genitive, meaning “shadow produced by turning,” shadow caused by apparent movement of the sun and moon.
- 50 The participle βουλευθεῖς is strange. Parsed traditionally as an aorist passive, it is actually a complete verbal and voiceless. It is nominative, referring to the one who determined, the clausal subject, showing that it cannot be passive, because if it were, it would mean “He was determined,” an obvious absurdity. It is aorist because the act of determining precedes the action of the main verb, “He begat.” It is a causative participle meaning, “because of having determined, He begat.” The traditional parsing by form simply cannot stand. One must observe carefully the function of verbs and verbals, and then determine the voice or voicelessness based on use, not form.
- 51 Some, such as Burton, *Moods*, pg. 161, § 409, and Robertson, *WP*, on the verse, take it as purpose. However D&M classify result under purpose, see *Manual Grammar*, pg. 282-283, § 267 (2) *Semi-final Clauses*. Purpose and conceived result are very close in meaning, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between them.
- 52 While τίς is an indefinite *pronoun*, here it is used as an *adjective* describing firstfruits. As noted, the idea seems to be that these believers were some, thought not all, of the firstfruits.
- 53 Articular infinitives with εἰς indicating result can modify adjectives, as well as verbs. See Burton, *Moods*, pg. 162, § 413. The idea here is that a man is to be quick to hear, with the results that he understands. Often the concept of hearing is used in the sense of understanding, and the figure exists in English even today, as when someone says “Hear me!”. The same resultant idea is found in

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the next clause, “slow to speak,” meaning slow to speak so as to speak carefully. It’s an idiomatic way of saying, “Think before you speak.”

- 54 TP here. The critical text has ἴστε, which is either the second plural indicative or the second plural imperative of οἶδα. It has been translated both ways. It appears to me that the inferential conjunction ὥστε is preferred. This is another case where the critics chose the more difficult reading from the Egyptian text type, rather than the more straightforward term from the majority text. ὥστε is the more likely reading, and it ties in the previous context, which ἴστε does not.
- 55 In vs. 8 above and in 20 below, James uses ἀνὴρ in the sense of “person,” while here he uses ἄνθρωπος in the same way.
- 56 Wrath (ὀργήν) is the correct translation, not anger. The next sentence (1:20) expands on this last of the three verbal expressions in this sentence. *Wrath* is a noun of action, and carries the gerundive idea of *being wrathful*.
- 57 Explanatory γάρ, giving the reason for the statement “slow unto wrath.”
- 58 The aorist infinitives ἀκοῦσαι and λαλῆσαι are both ingressive, that is, they emphasize entering into a state. The idea is “be quick to enter into a state of hearing, and be slow to enter into a state of speaking.” For this reason, grammarians sometimes speak of ingressive aorists as emphasizing the beginning of the act, but it is the nature of the aorist that it is the act itself, rather than the duration of the act, that is meant.
- 59 In other words, “to save” is used in the sense of deliverance from physical death.
- 60 μή is associated with the elliptical imperative verb become, along with the adverb μόνον. Since οὐ is not used, we know the verb is imperative, though not written.
- 61 All three verbs in this sentence are gnomic. Verbs are gnomic when they occur in proverbial or illustrative sentences. The action is supposed, for the sake of the proverb or illustration. Burton states that if the second verb, ἀπελήλυθεν, is gnomic, “it is from the point of view of the current usage a Historical Present rather than a Historical Perfect.” *Moods*, pg. 39, § 79. In fact, if historical perfects occur in the New Testament, they are quite rare. See *Moods*, pg. 38, § 78.
- 62 παρακύπτω – To stoop to look, used of Peter looking into the empty tomb (Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:5), and of Mary of Magdala in Jn. 20:11. Used of angels in 1 Pet. 1:12. Occurs 5 times in the N. T.
- 63 W. Robertson Nicholl, ed. *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament, Volume Four*, “The General Epistle of James.” Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co. n.d., pg. 432.
- 64 “Religion” is external observances, rituals. See BKC, WP, “religious system” (Green). θρησκός is thought to be the subject of the infinitive by some, but such is highly unlikely. See Acts 17:18, for another example of this construction.
- 65 See Burton, *Moods*, pgs. 107-108, § 260-261. Present general suppositions more often occur in conditions of the third class, rather than the first class, as here.
- 66 Note that *asyndeton*, the lack of a conjunction where one is expected, and must be supplied, is not unusual in the New Testament.
- 67 Here we have the unusual situation where compound infinitives are acting in apposition to a noun. Since an infinitive is a verbal noun, the construction is not unwarranted. SA 1 Thessalonians 4:3. This is the only place in the Scripture where religion is defined, and it does not come close to the

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modern definition of religion, which seems to be more in line with the legalistic practice of the Jewish ritual. See Burton, *Moods*, pg. 153, § 386. Clearly, the biblical faith is not a religion, even in the biblical sense of the word, for there is no required ritual today.

Epistle of James
Chapter Two

2:1 ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ἐν προσωποληψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης.
A simple imperative sentence. This paragraph goes from vss. 1-4.

ἀδελφοί
μου

you | ἔχετε^α | πίστιν | α P, TA, Imp, 2, p from ἔχω, “have.”

μὴ | ἐν | προσωποληψίαις | κυρίου¹ ↔ ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ

τοῦ
ἡμῶν
δόξης
τῆς

Translation: My brothers, do not have the faith of our Lord of glory, Jesus Christ, with favoritism.

Considerations: After warning his readers about religion, James deals with a specific practical problem in 2:1-13, showing favoritism to the rich over the poor. This is based on a false view of prosperity common among the Hebrews of the day, as it was often taught by Hebrew leadership that an individual was being blessed with God if he were rich, while a poor person was without merit before God. This may be based on the Old Testament teaching that if Israel followed God, physical blessing would follow. This somehow got transferred from the nation to the individual, and was affecting the relationship between dispersion Israelites.

That this was only for Christian Jews is evident from James’ introduction to the issue. The “faith of our Lord” can only be applied to that sub-set of dispersion Hebrews. The object of faith for daily living for these Hebrews was the Lord Jesus Christ.

That James refers to Christ as “our Lord of glory” lends an Old Testament characteristic to the injunction, as this phrase lifts Christ into the realm of deity to the Jewish mind, the concept of God’s presence on earth. For in the Hebrew Scriptures the “glory of the Lord” refers specifically to the presence of God on earth, the so-called *shekinah* (the word *shekinah* does not appear in the Hebrew Scriptures, but is of rabbinic usage, from the Hebrew root שָׁכַן, meaning *to dwell*). Note Exodus 24:16 where the Glory of the Lord speaks to Moses. The glory appeared in the cloud of the Exodus 16:10, referring again the presence of God on earth. The word glory (from the root כָּבֵד, meaning *heavy*) appears some 200 times in the Hebrew Bible, and several times it refers to the actual presence of God on earth (i.e. Exodus 16:7 & 10, 24:16-17; Leviticus 9:23, 16:19).

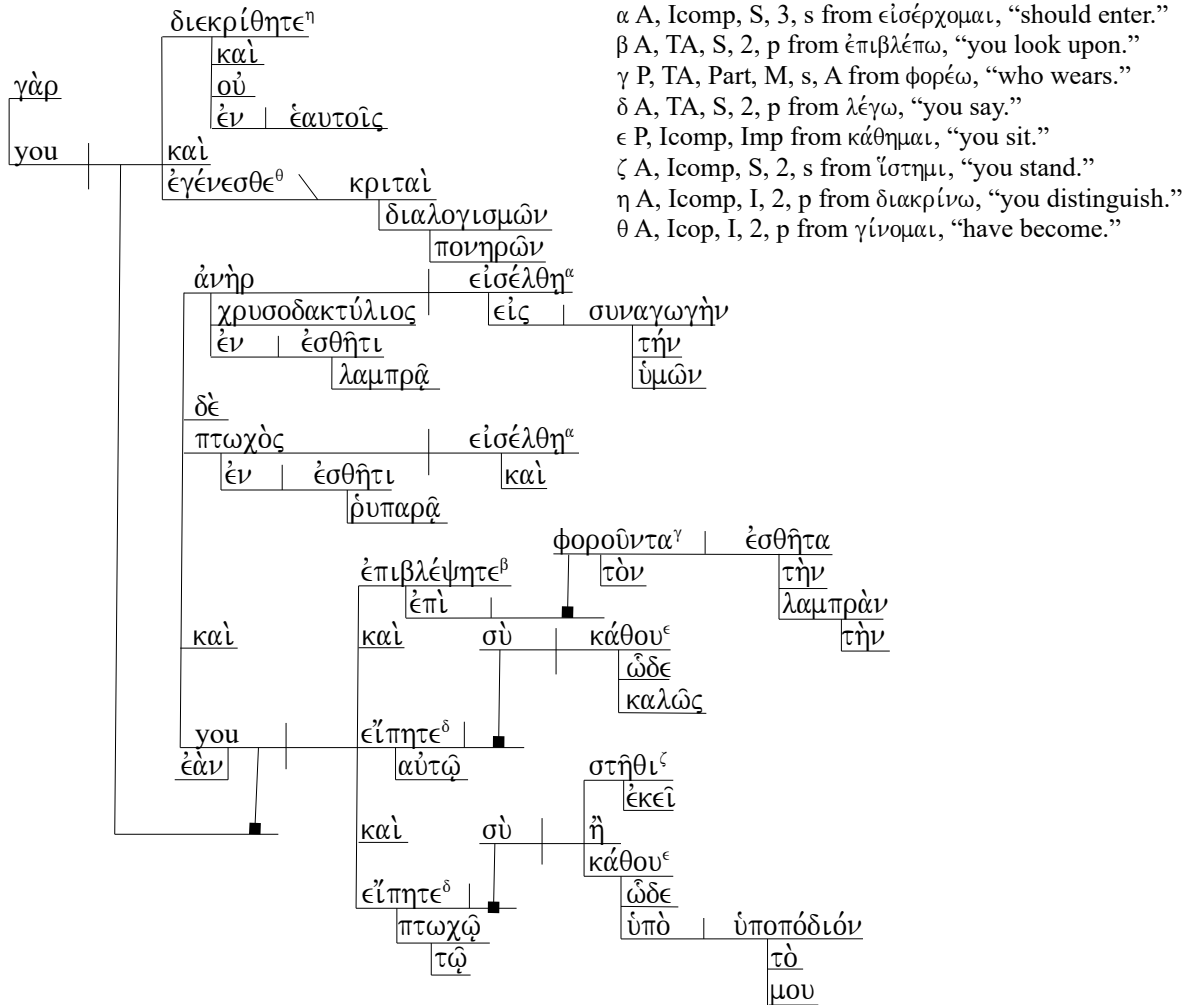
The Greek word for favoritism, or partiality, is προσωποληψία, which is made up of the Greek word for face (πρόσωπον) and the word for take or receive (λαμβάνω). Originally it meant to receive something at face value, but came to be associated with accepting a person for how he looks, hence, to show favoritism because of outward appearance. This word is found only here in all of ancient Greek literature.

The specific nature and practice of the favoritism being shown is explained in the next long sentence contained in 2:2-4.

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Chapter Two

2:2-4 ἂν γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθήτι λαμπρᾷ εἰσέλθῃ δὲ καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἐσθήτι³ καὶ ἐπιβλέψῃτε ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθήτα τὴν λαμπρὰν καὶ εἴπητε αὐτῷ, σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ εἴπητε σὺ στήθι ἐκεῖ ἢ κάθου ὧδε ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου⁴ καὶ οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν;

An interrogative conditional sentence of the third class with a compound predicate in the apodosis, and a triple compound predicate in the protasis. The third compound clause of the protasis contains a triple compound predicate. This is the second sentence in the paragraph.²



Translation: For if a man should enter into your synagogue with a gold ring in splendid clothing, and also a poor man in dirty clothing should enter,³ and you look upon the one who wears the splendid clothing and you say to him, You sit here in a good place, and to the poor man you say, You stand there, or sit here under my footstool,⁴ even so, did you not differentiate among yourselves and have become judges with evil thoughts?

Considerations: James begins this sentence with the condition of the third class "If a man enters a synagogue," in this case to indicate a hypothetical situation. The word *synagogue* has caused much debate. Some Christian writers make the word equivalent to "congregation," desiring to soften the Jewish idea of the word. And while the word can refer to the congregation of a synagogue as well as to the

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building, the literal meaning of the word is the building, while the metaphorical is the congregation. Even if James is referring to the congregation here, rather than the building, it is the congregation of the synagogue, which in the context of the dispersion still has a Jewish emphasis, and is not a church or body of Christ reference. When the dispersed Jews returned from Jerusalem to their Gentile cities, they returned to their regular attendance at a synagogue.

In fact, the word συναγωγή most naturally refers to the building. The Greek word primarily means a gathering together place, and the phraseology clearly points in that direction. The man “enters,” the normal idiom for entering a place. Then the person in question, if he is a rich man, is told to sit in a good place. The emphasis is on a location, not a group of people. Furthermore, the poor man is told either to stand, or to sit under the footstool of the person speaking, again a place.

Some commentators refer to the synagogue as “a place of worship.” Nothing could have been further from the mind of the Hebrews of the first century. It was a gathering place, but those devout Jews knew that the only legitimate place of worship was the temple in Jerusalem. Worship in the Hebrew Bible is intimately connected with the sacrificial system, and those sacrifices could only be performed in Jerusalem. The synagogues were actually places of study and association between individuals, not a place to worship God.

Another particularly first century emphasis is the descriptions of both the rich man (αυήρ) and the poor man. This statement is not referring to rich and poor from the perspective of social station, as it was in 1:9-10 above. Here, both are described according to the outward appearance. No consideration is given to the inner man, the character of the individual, or the circumstances or station of his life, other than that of poverty vs. wealth. Interestingly, in the U. S. today, the opposite is often true. While this is beginning to fade, through most of this author’s life Americans valued men of work rather than the “idle rich.” In fact, among the majority of working people, the rich were actually despised. That is, until someone was looking for donations. Nevertheless, today the local church has become associated with “dressing up,” wearing the finest apparel one owned. This ought not be, and some churches look down on people who show up in working garb, or soiled clothing. Recently, the “come as you are” movement has become somewhat more common, but one wonders if this isn’t just to get warm bodies in the pews. We hope not. We hope that the idea of dress is not a criteria in these churches for assembling with believers, and that the correct doctrinal idea of the local assembly is again taking hold.

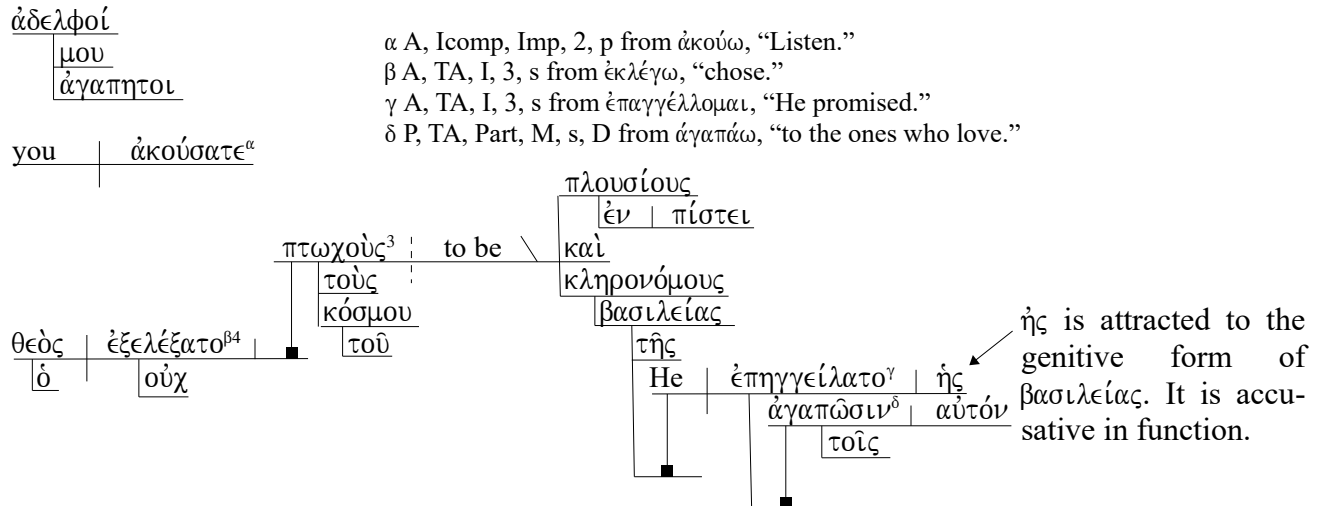
The apodosis (the *then* clause) of this sentence is an interrogative, asking a negative question that requires a positive response, “even so, did you (plural) not differentiate among yourselves and have become judges with evil thoughts?” Yes, indeed they did. The idea of differentiating among yourselves speaks of the internal attitude that the dispersion Jews had toward one another. They were virtually all Jews in attendance in those synagogues (with the minor exception of a few Gentile proselytes), yet they preferred the rich over the poor, the splendid over the dirty. These prejudicial thoughts are deemed “evil,” another word that is associated with Satanic influence. This word for evil (πονηρός) indicates a malignancy, a growth of evil thinking among the Jews.

While this sentence is a third-class condition, and speaks of a hypothetical situation, it becomes clear when reading through James 2:1-13 that this was an on-going issue, and a regular practice in the synagogues.

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2:5 ἀκούσατε ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο τοὺς πτωχοὺς τοῦ κόσμου πλουσίους ἐν πίστει καὶ κληρονόμους τῆς βασιλείας ἧς ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

The first sentence is a simple imperative. The second is a complex rhetorical interrogative. Vs. 5 begins a new paragraph which goes through vs. 13.



Translation: Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose the poor men of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to the ones who love Him?

Considerations: James again addresses his audience as “my beloved brothers,” expressing loving concern for his Hebrew brothers. The imperative “Listen!” is equivalent to saying, “Pay attention!”

The second sentence is again a negative interrogative expecting a positive answer. The answer is, Yes, God did so choose. This does not mean that He chose no rich people, but that He included the poor in His act of choosing. Clearly, God does not have a prejudice against the poor! He chose poor people to be two things, 1) rich in faith, and 2) heirs of the kingdom. Therefore, these Christian Jews should not participate in the dishonoring of the poor.

To be “rich in faith” probably refers to having an abundance of faith in the sense that a poor man has no recourse to his riches in his daily life. Can a rich man be rich in faith? Of course, but riches do tend to move a person’s attention away from God, and to consider one’s self better than others who are less physically blessed. The poor person must believe God, for he cannot put his faith in wealth. To be heirs of the kingdom is a reference to the Old Testament promises of God, and of the Lord Jesus Himself, concerning the earthly kingdom. This is obviously referring to believing Israelites.

The earthly kingdom is clearly in view, and no one had yet entered it. An heir is looking forward to his inheritance, he has not yet gotten it. The Old Testament knows nothing of this false view of the kingdom consisting solely of spiritual salvation among believers today. Nor does the word kingdom ever mean heaven. The phrase “kingdom of heaven” used in the gospels does not mean the kingdom that consists of heaven, but the kingdom that comes from heaven. Note that the kingdom is promised to the ones who love Him, whose attention and object is God, not their own abilities, or their wealth.

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Chapter Two

2:6 ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠτιμάσατε τὸν πτωχόν. οὐχ οἱ πλούσιοι καταδυναστεύουσιν ὑμῶν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλκουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς κριτήρια;

Two sentences, the first of which is simple declarative. The second is compound negative interrogative. These are the third and fourth sentences in the paragraph.

δὲ			α A, TA, I, 2, p from ἀτιμάζω, “have dishonored.”
ὑμεῖς	ἠτιμάσατε ^α	πτωχόν	β P, TA, I, 3, p from καταδυναστεύω, “do oppress.”
			γ P, TA, I, 3, p from ἔλκω, “drag.”
πλούσιοι	καταδυναστεύουσιν ^β	ὑμῶν	
οἱ	οὐχ		
καὶ			
αὐτοὶ	ἔλκουσιν ^γ	ὑμᾶς	<i>Translation: But you have dishonored the poor man.</i>
			<i>Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into courts?</i>
			not
			εἰς κριτήρια

Considerations: In a simple declarative sentence James identifies the continual practice of favoritism among at least some of the dispersed Christian Israelites: dishonoring the poor. By denying the poor their rightful place in the synagogue, they are compounding the evil done by the rich. Logically, it makes no sense, given not only that God has chosen the poor in choosing them to enter the kingdom, but also the on-going practice of the rich persecuting the Christians.

Here we have the first direct statement that the rich in the synagogues were oppressing the new Christian Jews. In a negative rhetorical question, James accuses the rich of dragging the Christian believers into court, that is, into judgment tribunals. It appears that the persecution within the Jewish community of Christians has already begun to that extent. For this second reason, it makes no sense that the Christian should be dishonoring the poor.

2:7 οὐκ αὐτοὶ βλασφημοῦσιν τὸ καλὸν ὄνομα τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς;

A simple negative interrogative sentence. This is the fifth sentence in the paragraph.

αὐτοὶ	βλασφημοῦσιν ^α	ὄνομα	
			α P, TA, I, 3, p from βλασφημέω, “they slander.”
			β A, TP, Part, N, s, A from ἐπικαλέω, “are called.”
			<i>Translation: Do they not slander the good name by which you are called?</i>
			τὸ καλὸν ἐπικληθὲν ^β
			τὸ ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς

Considerations: The rejection of Jesus of Nazareth by the Jewish community at large is reflected in this sentence. Another negative rhetorical question, and the third reason that preferential treatment ought not be given to the rich over the poor.

The word *slander* is actually “blaspheme,” but it is not a technical term. Here it means simple slander, making false statements about Jesus of Nazareth, namely that He is not the predicted Messiah, that He is not God, that He did not die and rise from the dead.

The phrase “the good name by which you are called,”⁵ could be paraphrased “the good name with which you are named,” though the word is actually a form of καλέω, with a prefixed preposition ἐπί. It means primarily “to call upon,” and is so translated a number of times in the KJV (i.e. Romans 10:12,

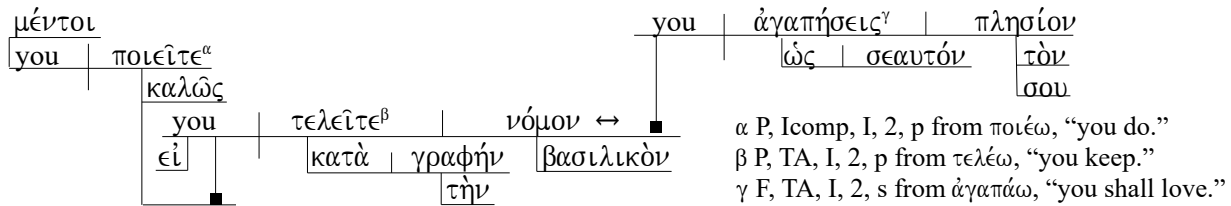
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13). However, it is also used of an alternate name of an individual, and is sometimes translated “sur-named.” See Matthew 10:3 and Acts 4:36 in the KJV for examples.

The persecution of Christians would get worse as time went on. Eventually the Romans, perhaps partly because of the slander of the unbelieving Jews, began to view Christianity as a new sect, and the persecution became intense. Paul was not yet ready to start his apostolic journeys, but once the word began to spread more widely through Paul and his companions, the persecution of Christians, whether from a Jewish or Gentile ethnicity, began in earnest.

2:8 εἰ μέντοι νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν καλῶς ποιεῖτε.

A complex conditional sentence of the first class with an appositional independent clause. This is the sixth sentence in the paragraph.



Translation: If, on the one hand, you keep the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor like yourself, you do well.

Considerations: The first class condition is assumptive, that is, it is assumed to be true as an encouragement that it be so by the readers. James desired his readers to recall the requirement of the law to love one’s neighbor.

The word μέντοι, which we have translated “on the one hand” can be an intensive, as well as a co-relative, as we have translated it here. It naturally is to be paired with the δέ of the next sentence, which we have translated “on the other hand.” Both sentences are first class conditions, and seem to operate as a positive/negative couplet.

The word translated keep (τελέω) actually means to complete or finish. One normal use means *to perform*, especially with reference to a requirement, such as law. Paul uses it in Romans 2:27 in this sense. The normal idiom in English for such a function is the simple verb *keep*, but not *keep* in the sense of holding on to.

The phrase “royal law” has elicited much comment. Commentators who previously made the law to be a grace requirement are stuck here. They simply can’t do it, because this is a direct reference from the Torah found in Leviticus 19:18, and repeated by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 22:29. But why does James say “royal law.” Commenting on the word “royal” ATR (WP) asks the same question, “Old adjective for royal, regal (from *basileus* king), as of an officer (Joh 4:46). But why applied to *nomos*? The Romans had a phrase, *lex regia*, which came from the king when they had kings. The absence of the article is common with *nomos* (Jam 4:11). It can mean a law fit to guide a king, or such as a king would choose, or even the king of laws. Jesus had said that on the law of love hang all the law and the prophets (Mat 22:40), and he had given the Golden Rule as the substance of the Law and the prophets (Mat 7:12).”

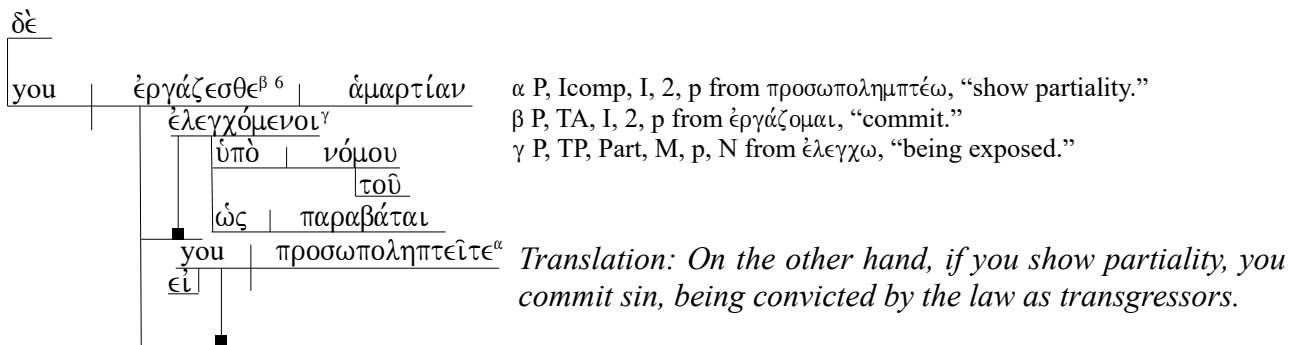
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With this view the BKC agrees, “The law is royal or regal (*basilikon*, from *basileus*, “king”) because it is decreed by the King of kings, is fit for a king, and is considered the king of laws. The phrase reflects the Latin *lex regia* known throughout the Roman Empire.”

However, we must not think, as some may be led to do, that James is attempting to “raise” this law to be equal to Roman law. In fact, it is superior to such man-made statements, as James would have understood. The “royal” aspect of this law is based on the kingdom doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ, not the *lex regia* of the Roman system. BKC is correct when it says that the King in question is Christ. It is not the Roman Emperor, or any client king of the Roman system. It is the one who will be King of kings, the one who will rule the earth with a rod of iron, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. No other interpretation is possible, for no other view would have occurred either to James or his Christian readers at the time. This law is the ultimate answer against favoritism, and the oppression of the poor by Christian Jews, a Levitical command reinforced by the Lord Jesus Christ, upon which the entirety of the Mosaic code rests (Matthew 2:37-40).

2:9 εἰ δὲ προσωποληπτεῖτε, ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται.

A complex conditional sentence of the first class. This is the seventh sentence in the paragraph.



Considerations: In contrast to the positive “you do well” of verse 8, this shows the negative result of one who plays favorites with the rich over the poor. Since they are violating the law expressed in the previous sentence, they are committing sin.

The word we have translated “commit” is ἐργάζομαι, and regularly means to perform or accomplish (Liddell and Scott, et. al.). The regular English idiom when the object is sin is “commit.” However, the question is, why would James make such a distinction? The answer is in the phrase, “being convicted by the law as transgressors.” This highly suggestive phrase is worth close attention to the serious Bible student.

The participle, translated “being convicted,” means to convince by proof (ATR, WP), as in a court of law. In fact, the KJV translates the participle correctly as “convinced.” The modern English idiom is to convict, when speaking of a legal violation. In this case, the proof is stated as “by (ὑπό by the direct agency of) the law”, that is, by the Mosaic code, which the perpetrator has violated. Hence, he has been convicted “as a transgressor.”

The word “transgressor” is a technical word that refers to someone who has violated a forensic law, that is, a law with penalty attached, such as the Mosaic code. The word transgressor is related to παράβασις, “transgression.” The biblical writers agree that sin is the result of lawlessness, in this case a violation of a forensic law, which produces transgression, such as Adam’s transgression in the Garden

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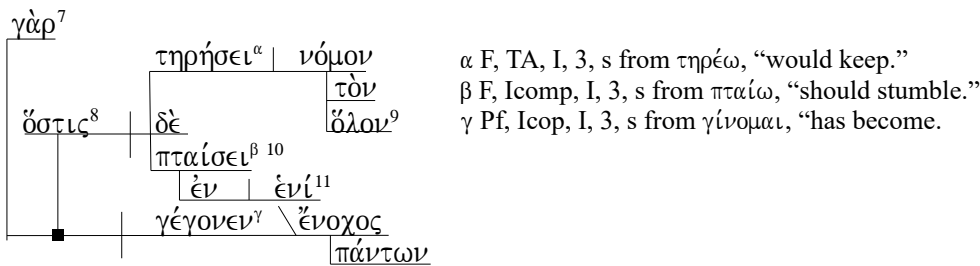
(Romans 5:14), or an Israelite’s transgression of the royal law. A person who has violated a non-forensic law, such as a known grace requirement, is also guilty of sin, because he is acting in a lawless manner (1 John 3:4), though he *cannot be a transgressor*, since Christians are under no forensic law today (Romans 6:14).

Now, the above paragraph may seem to be “beating a dead horse” by going into too much detail. But there is a reason for it. The wording of James in this sentence makes it clear that he and his readers considered themselves still under the Mosaic code, even though the readers were no longer abiding in Canaan. They did not yet have the grace requirement information as provided by Paul, and others, so there was no recourse to living a morally upright life without adhering to the forensic Mosaic code. *One simply cannot learn to live the grace life by studying James.*

Furthermore, James is applying guilt to them, if they do not obey the royal law (see vs. 10 below). Guilt is undoubtedly the *motivating force* that he applies. Since grace provision is not yet understood, guilt is almost the only basis for leverage to motivate compliance that James has. Today, once grace provision for daily living has been revealed, it is no longer legitimate to send people on “guilt trips,” by applying a guilt based on forensic law, as James does here. This does not mean that Christians should never feel guilty, but the guilt must not be applied from without, but from within, from an understanding that the believer has violated the biblical doctrines for Christian living. We must not hesitate to explain to a believer today feeling guilty, that he is not applying the correct grace solution. It is not sufficient to say, as we have heard some do, “Do not feel guilty.” It is correct to say that one does not experience guilt if one is in obedience to grace teaching. Obedience is the solution to guilt feelings, because it is obedience to how to overcome the sin problem in the life of the believer.

2:10 ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσει, πταίσει δὲ ἐν ἐνί γέγονεν πάντων ἔνοχος.

A complex declarative sentence with an indefinite relative clause with a compound predicate as the subject of the main clause. This is the eighth sentence in the paragraph.



Translation: For whoever would keep the whole law, but should stumble in one thing, he has become guilty of all.

Considerations: In the three sentences found in verses 10 and 11, James applies the motivation of guilt to the partiality issue, and shows that his readers were still under the Mosaic code, and liable to its penalty. This is the first of two motivation elements he uses. See verses 12 and 13 below for the second motivation.

While the subject of the main clause is the indefinite relative clause, we have chosen to repeat the subject as the pronoun “he” in the translation for two reasons: 1) it flows better, and 2) it reinforces the concept that the same person who is intending to keep the law is also the one who stumbles, and to whom the rest of the main clause applies.

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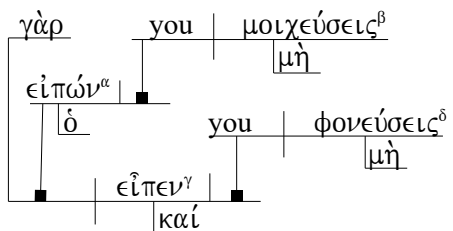
James seems to be teaching the lack of “wobble room” within the law. He will expand on this lack in the next two sentences. But at this point James has made his logical argument. If you are guilty, dispersion Jews, of violating the royal law, you are guilty before God of having violated every point of the law. He doesn't mean that they have actually broken every point, but are *counted guilty* of having violated every point. This is a subtle difference, but an important one. Every point of the law has only one punishment: physical death, either personal, upon the violator, or symbolical, upon a sacrifice. The violators of the royal law have shown themselves to be guilty before God; therefore, they deserve to die.

The verb “stumble” (παίω) is worthy of special attention. It occurs only five times in the New Testament, 3 of which are in James. We will see it again in chapter three. However, it also occurs in Paul's and Peter's writings (Romans 11:11; 2 Peter 1:10). It means to stumble in the sense of seeing the obstacle, and trying to get over it, and not quite making the leap. Hence, a person who sins is willfully violating the requirement, jumping over the barrier (the law) and tripping.

The application to believers today is a negative one. Do not attempt to put yourself or anyone else under law, as James does here to those already under it. Not only will such an attempt fail today, the consequences of false thinking in this area in the lives of believers can, and probably will, be devastating. You cannot place yourself, nor anyone else under law, today, no matter how hard you try. “You are not under law, but under grace,” Romans 6:14. But you can ruin yourself and them with unresolved guilt by attempting to do so.

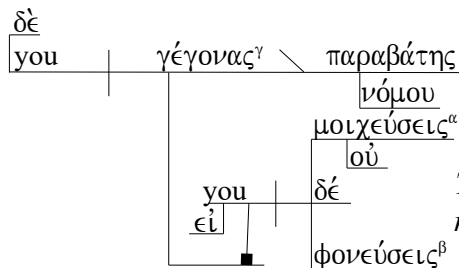
2:11 ὁ γὰρ εἰπὼν μὴ μοιχεύσεις, εἶπεν καὶ μὴ φονεύσεις. εἰ δὲ οὐ μοιχεύσεις φονεύσεις δὲ γέγονας παραβάτης νόμου.

The first sentence is a complex declarative sentence. The second sentence is a complex conditional sentence of the first class. These are the ninth and tenth sentences in the paragraph.



- α A, TA, Part, M, s, N from λέγω, “who said.”
- β F, Icomp, I, 2, s from μοιχεύω, “you shall commit adultery.”
- γ A, TA, I, 3, s from λέγω, “said.”
- δ F, Icomp, I, 2, s from φρονεύω, “you shall murder.”

Translation: For the one who said, You shall not commit adultery, also said, You shall not murder.



- α F, Icomp, I, 2, s from μοιχεύω, “you will commit adultery.”
- β F, Icomp, I, 2, s from φρονεύω, “you will murder.”
- γ Pf, Icop, I, 2, s from γίνομαι, “you have become.”

Translation: So, if you will not commit adultery, but you will murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

Considerations: The γάρ (for) is of the first sentence is explanatory. The sentence in vs. 10 needs further exposition, so James explains it in this simple declarative sentence, and thereby provides the logic behind the previous statement. The subject of this sentence is the participle “the one who said,” referring to God. He is the ultimate source of the law. Two of the ten commandments occur in this sentence, reinforcing the seriousness of the charge against the Christian Jews. Their preferential treatment

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of the rich, their prejudice against the poor, is just as serious as a violation of one of the ten commandments.

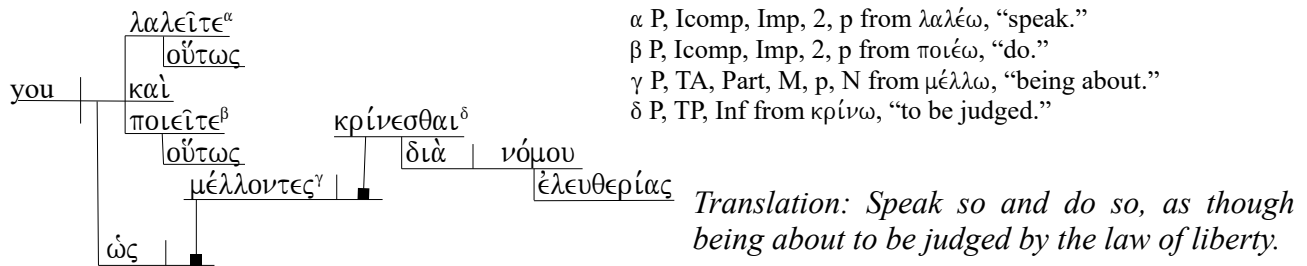
Furthermore, if one does not commit adultery, but does commit murder, he is guilty before the whole law, and deserving of death. Likewise, then, the one who shows preferential treatment is guilty before the whole law, and deserves the same.

The conclusion to the logic is found in the second sentence. If an Israelite does not commit one of the violations, but does commit another one, he is a transgressor of the law. The implication is clear. A transgressor deserves death without mercy, which James will explain in the next two verses. As noted in the notes on vs. 9 above, the noun *transgressor* is a technical term, referring to the act of transgression of a forensic law, that is, a law with penalty attached.

James is building a damning case against the violation of the law, that is, the royal law that was being violated because of his reader's favoritism toward the rich and their despising of the poor.

2:12 οὕτως λαλεῖτε καὶ οὕτως ποιεῖτε ὡς διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες κρίνεσθαι.

A simple imperative sentence with a compound predicate. This is the eleventh sentence in the paragraph.



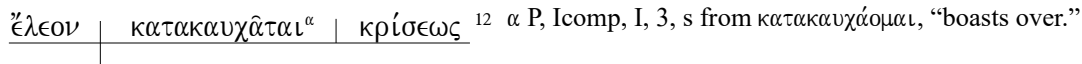
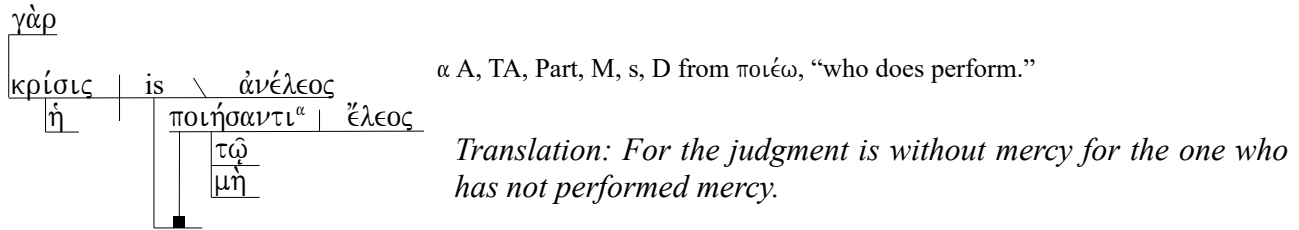
Considerations: In verses 12-13, James provides the second motivating force for not showing favorites. First, James provides the legal reason a person should not be a hypocrite. “Speak so and do so,” is a way of saying “practice what you preach.” The readers were not performing what they said; they were saying one thing and doing another. But by showing partiality to the rich they were not performing the requirements of the law, and hence were not understanding the dangerous position they were in. In this case he is undoubtedly referring to those Christian Jews who had violated the “royal law.” They claimed to keep all the law, but they offended in this one point. James says, “Speak and do.”

The reason James gives for not acting the hypocrite is based on legal judgment. The participle μέλλοντες with the concessive ὡς indicates that the judgment of the Mosaic law is deserving, though not able to be applied. The reason for this is because the forensic law of Israel's Mosaic code could not be enforced directly during the dispersion, under the Roman legal system. From this sentence one understands that the “law of liberty” is not grace requirement, as some have it, but is Mosaic law with judgment attached. The law of liberty is the means by which judgment would normally come, were Israel independent and *living in the land*. So, Israelites, perform what you say you believe, which means that you cannot continue to show preference to the rich, else you are guilty of violating the Mosaic code. How was the Mosaic law one of liberty? While Israel kept the law, it remained at liberty, but having violated the law severely, God removed Israel from independence, from national liberty.

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2:13 ἡ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος. κατακαυχᾶται ἔλεον κρίσεως.

Two simple declarative sentences. These are the twelfth and thirteenth sentences in the paragraph.



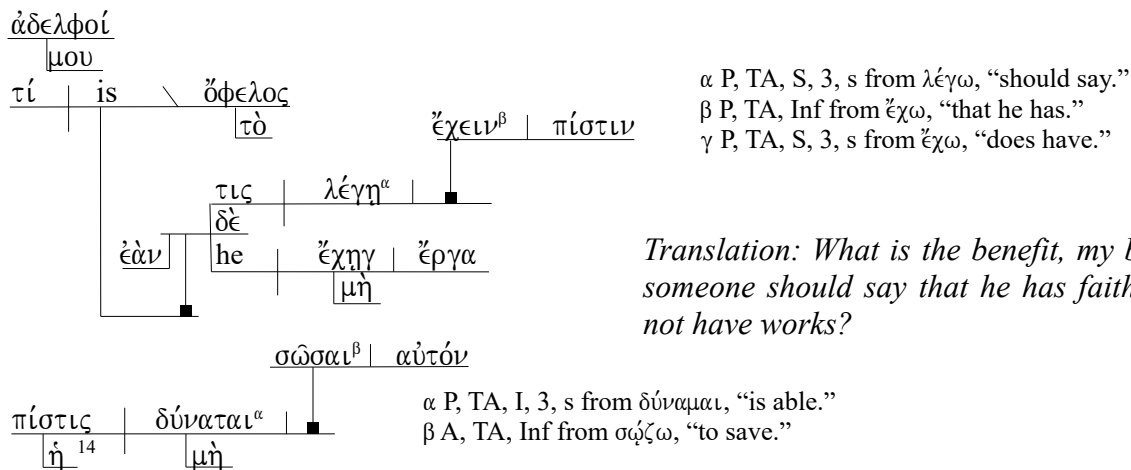
Translation: Mercy boasts over judgment.

Considerations: The meaning of these two sentences is clear. “The judgment” refers back to the judgment applied through the law of liberty in the previous sentence. This judgment is without mercy. Mercy is the withholding of deserved punishment. Nothing will be held back, and death is the ultimate wage to be paid. In their despising of the poor, the Christian Jews were judging them to be less than the rich, whom they deemed blessed by God. The principle is clear. For the one who has not performed (ποιήσαντι)¹³ mercy, judgment is without mercy.

Mercy boasts over judgment sums up what’s being taught. Mercy is superior to and should be adopted over judgment.

2:14 τί τὸ ὄφελος ἀδελφοί μου εἰάν πιστιν λέγη τις ἔχειν ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη; μὴ δύναται ἡ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;

Two sentences. The first is a complex interrogative conditional sentence of the third class. The sentence begins a new paragraph, which extends through vs. 17. The second is an interrogative simple sentence.



Translation: His faith is not able to save him, is it?

Considerations: The introductory sentence to this controversial two-paragraph section continues the discussion of being merciful to the poor Hebrews living under the Mosaic system. Many have

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attempted to make it applicable to today, but it is not. It deals with the issue of pre-grace daily living, not with salvation or justification by faith.

The discussion beginning with vs. 14 has produced much misunderstanding. Faith versus works is the topic, and James' comments have caused many to discount James as a church epistle. One extreme position even has James belonging to a different, previous dispensation. Others, attempting to justify the inclusion of James as a church epistle, tend to reinterpret the plain meaning of the words. Few see James for what it actually is: an early transitional epistle written before the spreading of new revelation regarding Christian living. The specific nature of the epistle's original audience is forgotten or ignored, and the Christian Hebrew audience is treated as though it were a later assembly that Paul had founded. In fact, Paul had not yet written, and the audience is not a single assembly at all, but was scattered Jews who knew nothing of grace living. While much of the remedy for righteous living that James provides his audience is not applicable to the later body of Christ, the nature of the life problem is clearly a broad one, one that is still being experienced today.

The key to understanding this paragraph is contextual. The word "to save" means, in this context, "to save from the judgment of law." It is not a reference to Paul's salvation by faith through grace found in Ephesians 2:8-9. This confusion of the various meanings of the verb *save* has caused great consternation by those who do not understand the transitional context of James. When one *does* understand that context, and realizes that James and his readers were still operating under law, the confusion dissipates. The context is about violation of the law of liberty, which we have already defined as being the Mosaic moral code, with its judgmental aspects still viewed as the motivational factor for daily living.

But let us make no mistake here. The law was ultimately unenforceable under the Roman system. And forensic law without implementation of punishment doesn't work well.

In the context of Mosaic law, and the requirements that Jesus made for entering into the earthly kingdom of God, James' argument here makes perfect sense. Again, we must remember that salvation to Jews under the Old Testament system was not solely spiritual and individual. It was also physical and collective. God had already judged Israel as being in violation of the Law, and had them taken captive, first by the Assyrians, and then by the Babylonians, and this condition continued in the Greek and Roman eras for both believing and unbelieving Israelites. Hence, the law was harsh, and God was harsh when He no longer allowed Israel to be a national entity in the land. From James' perspective, and ours today, the return to the land is still to come. Unbelieving and rebellious Israel was and is still under Gentile domination.

Do not be deceived. Not all Israelite individuals taken into captivity were unbelievers. Many, such as Daniel and Ezekiel, were devout believers and refused to compromise their faith. Nevertheless, Israel was punished *collectively*, and Israel as a whole was removed from the theocratic kingdom as it then stood, including the righteous ones, such as Daniel and his friends. The Davidic kingdom came to an end, and has not yet been revived. (No, the modern state of Israel is not a revival of that kingdom. In fact, it is not a kingdom at all, since there is no king. It is, in fact, a representative democracy, with socialistic overtones.)

The first sentence in this verse is a rhetorical question, which sets the scene for the rest of this chapter in James. The answer is simple and to the point. It is of no benefit if a person says he has faith, but

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James is not saying to ignore the needs of non-Jewish people, but is simply emphasizing the immediate priority. Paul, in Galatians 6:10 expressed the same idea to later Gentile grace believers. One must prioritize one's responsibilities, else the work becomes ineffective.

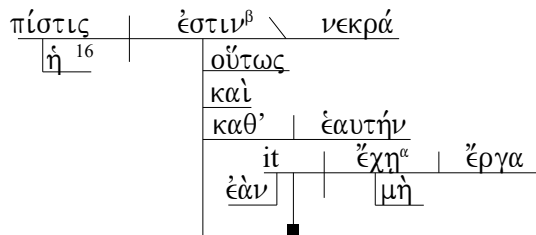
The second condition James mentions is not hyperbolic. Brothers and sisters were undoubtedly lacking daily food, and, according to the royal love, needed to be fed. But rather than meeting the physical needs of those in question, the response that they were actually getting, and this from Christian Jews, was quite callous. It consists of making a statement without providing a remedy to the situation.

Now, here we must refer to a bit of grammar. The statement in vs. 16, “*and anyone of you should say to them, Go in peace, warm yourselves and fill yourselves,*” shows a shocking lack of concern. It assumes that the individual is actually observing the condition of these poor, and responds in a most arbitrary way, a way of dismissing the very need which he observes. The grammar is quite condemning, “Go” he says, an imperative mood verb. “Warm yourselves and fill yourselves,” he says. Both verbs are again in the imperative mood. The Greek forms are reflexive, and are specific to the condition of being inadequately clothed against the elements, and lacking daily food. Simply stated, the response is, “take care of yourselves,” something they are obviously unable to do, rather than, “let me help.”

Again James asks, “What is the benefit?” Obviously, there is none, either for the one speaking, or for those in need. James then draws, in the next sentence, the obvious conclusion.

2:17 οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις ἐὰν μὴ ἔργα ἔχη νεκρά ἐστίν καθ’ ἑαυτήν.

A complex conditional sentence of the third class. This is the fourth sentence in the paragraph.



α P, TA, S, 3, s from ἔχω, “it does have.”
β P, Icop, I, 3, s from ἐμί, “is.”

Translation: So also the faith by itself is dead if it does not have works.

Considerations: No other statement in James has received more attention than this short conditional sentence. The noun phrase “the faith” refers back to the faith of vs. 14. James uses the noun faith sixteen times in this epistle. He uses the word 13 times in Chapter Two alone. Here we have the first of three times he says that faith without works is dead (SA vs. 20 and vs 26).

Much of the confusion lies in the meaning of the word *faith* itself. Without commenting on the various arguments that have been made over the word, we must simply realize one two-part fact. There are at least five distinct ways the word faith is used in the New Testament, and two of those ways have been confused in this passage, which confusion divides many Christians into two camps. Some, who are not as distinctive as they should be, hold that the word *faith* has only one content. They believe that James uses the word faith here in essentially the same way that Paul does in passages like Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace you are saved through faith.” Others correctly hold that faith in Ephesians 2:8 has a different content than here in James.

Note that we use the word *content* of the word *faith*. The concept of word content is rather simple. Everyone has experienced the fact that words do not have precisely the same use in every context. Take the word horse. The literal meaning is a four-legged animal with a distinctive appearance, which can be

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ridden, raced, and used to pull wagons, etc. However, several metaphorical contents have been used of the word. We have heard sports commentators speak of a football player carrying the ball on a run as “a horse.” There is such a thing as a carpenter’s horse, usually called a saw-horse. People even talk about “horsing around,” and turn the noun into a verb. Words have various contents.

Faith is one of those words. For the purpose of the current discussion we will limit ourselves to two, 1) faith as a means to salvation (Ephesians 2:8), and 2) faith as a means for daily living. The basic, literal meaning of the word is simply “belief.” When one becomes a Christian, he believes the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) as the means of salvation.

The first content, saving faith, is probably the use most often considered by many believers. The person becomes a Christian by this faith. His faith is the means to applying salvation, and this faith is the *only means* to salvation. No works are involved with faith for salvation, none at all. Furthermore, the act of faith for salvation occurs *only one time* in an individual’s life, and then it is over. A person only gets saved once. This does not mean that the individual quits believing the gospel once he gets saved, but that the nature of the continuing faith is of a different content.

The second content, living faith, follows from the first. Before the second content can be applied to an individual, that person must have exhibited the first content. Nevertheless, faith for daily living is not precisely the same faith as faith for salvation. Daily faith occurs over and over, rather than occurring only once. It has ups and downs, as a person grows in the Lord. A person begins with a limited content of daily faith, and as the individual studies the word of God, more faith results because the number of truths he is believing grows. He learns how to live the Christian life, and that life is lived by the on-going faith in the Scriptures which teach the daily walk doctrine. So, the word faith in this context refers to believing the word of God about how to operate during one’s daily life, which we call “living faith.” In the context of James and his readers, it refers to believing the Old Testament Mosaic legal system, and therefore, living by it. To say you believe it without doing it produces dead faith, since that faith is without the works of the law. Such faith is dead because it does not function, it does nothing, as though it were a corpse, just lying there.

This daily faith is mentioned many times in Scripture. One phrase, “the just shall live by faith,” was first uttered in the Old Testament (Habakkuk 2:4), and was repeated by New Testament writers three times (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). Sadly, many of the reformers misunderstood this statement to refer to saving faith, but it does not. The subject of the sentence is the just individual, the person who is justified before God. The verb “live” in each case refers not to gaining life, but to daily living, which is clear by each context. Daily faith, belief to live according to God’s program of daily righteousness, is the most commonly used content of the word faith in the New Testament.

Grievous errors in doctrine have resulted from this confusion. Some, because of this confusion, actually teach that the believer must operate according to the Old Testament law. A believer, they say, must continue to keep the law, or else he was never a believer in the first place! His saving faith was false, else he would live the daily Christian life by that same faith. *But it is not the same faith!* It is a different aspect of faith that continues past the single act of saving faith.

And it is that daily faith of which James speaks here. In this case, we state again that he is referring to faith in the Mosaic code, which was the only currently revealed means of living the Christian life for these early Hebrew believers. Later, when Paul and others began to teach grace living, that faith changed its object from the Mosaic law and its motivating punishment, to grace requirements with its

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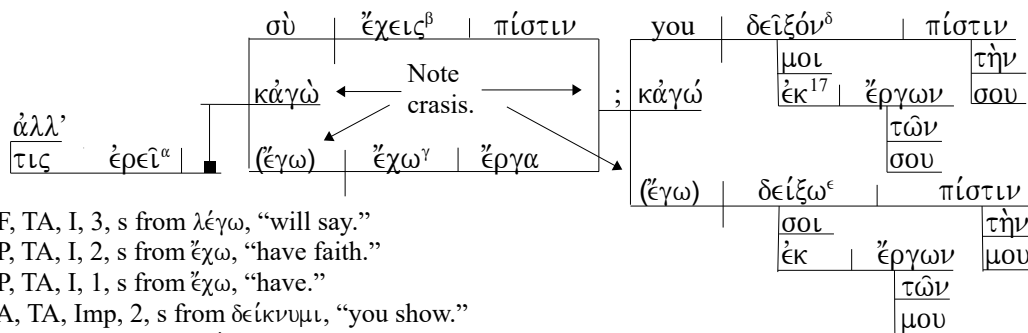
grace provision to keep the daily requirements. Herein lies the difference between the two faiths. *Saving faith* for today has as its object the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. *Living faith* today, though not in James' day, has as its object the grace teaching of the New Testament Scriptures, Scriptures which had not become available at the time of James' writing.

We must keep in mind that the faith teaching of James required obedience to works, and if a person did not do the works, his faith was dead. As noted, James means by the word *dead*, that the faith was not functional; it was not doing the job intended for it. The individual Jewish Christian's faith was not actually on the Mosaic law at all as it should have been at that time, and he was playing the hypocrite. Why? Because he claimed he was a believer of the Mosaic law, while at the same time as not doing the Mosaic law.

The believer today should never apply James 2:17 to either himself, or others. The *object* of daily faith has changed since the new Pauline revelation came to be.

2:18 ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις καὶ γὰρ ἔργα ἔχω. δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου ἐκ τῶν ἔργων σου καὶ γὰρ δεῖξω σοὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν μου.

A complex declarative sentence with a complicated set of dependent clauses as the object of the main verb. This sentence begins a paragraph which extends through 2:19.



¹ F, TA, I, 3, s from λέγω, "will say."

² P, TA, I, 2, s from ἔχω, "have faith."

³ P, TA, I, 1, s from ἔχω, "have."

⁴ A, TA, Imp, 2, s from δείκνυμι, "you show."

⁵ F, TA, I, 1, s from δείκνυμι, "will show."

Translation: But someone will say, You have faith and I have works; Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you by my works my faith.

Considerations: Again James uses the verbal argument to make his point. He puts words into the mouth of an uncertain individual (someone) who is doing legal works, who compares two views of faith and works. The first statement from this individual indicates the person to whom he is communicating has faith, while he, himself, has works. Evidently, the statement is an accusation, meaning that the individual only has faith, but has no legal, visible works, though this is not explicitly stated. However, the first two statements set up the second communication, which also has two statements. The individual speaking to the one who has faith commands that individual to show him his faith without his works, while he will show his faith by means of his works.

Many have drawn wrong conclusions from this passage. In an attempt to make it relevant to today, they say that the "someone" who is speaking "wrongly disparaged faith."¹⁸ This is simply not so. The hypothetical speaker is simply indicating that *in the legal sense* a person who has no works cannot demonstrate his faith, while the one who does have works shows his faith by means of his works, thus showing by works evidence that he has faith as well. One must keep in mind that the faith they are both

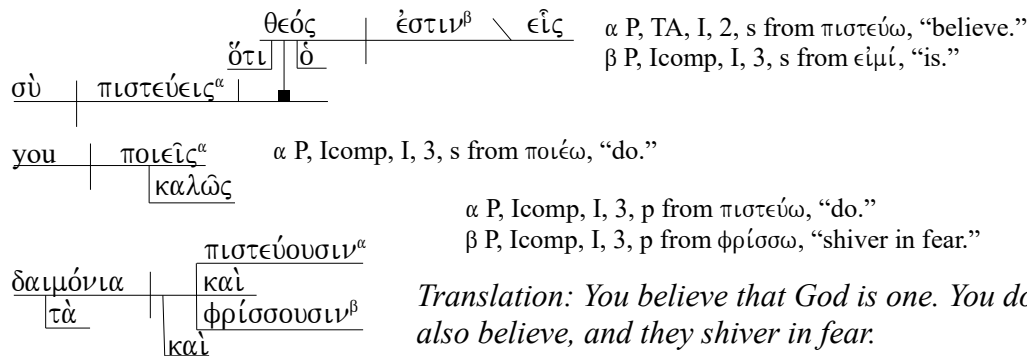
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claiming to have is faith in the Mosaic law for daily living. That faith can only be demonstrated by keeping the Mosaic requirements.¹⁹

James' point is well taken in the context of the daily living requirements of the Mosaic law. The theocratic Mosaic system was geographically based, and related to a specific people in the land context. It was as much a civil law as it was a theological law, since it had to deal with all the potential problems in the land, including those between individuals. Today, we think of this as civil law.

Today, believers have good works built in when they are following the spiritual requirements of grace living. We learn that the spiritual believer does good works that God has previously prepared for him to do. Note 2 Timothy 3:17 and Ephesians 2:10. There is no need for law requirement here, because if one is truly following the grace teaching, the good works come to him automatically, and with spiritual insight, he is enabled to perform them. If, on the other hand, today the believer is ignoring his opportunities to perform good works, he, as a believer, is most likely not walking by the Spirit, and is in either a condition of ignorance of the grace provision, or in rebellion against it.

2:19 *σὺ πιστεύεις ὅτι ὁ θεός εἷς ἐστιν. καλῶς ποιεῖς. καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσοουσιν.*
Three sentences. The first sentence is complex declarative. The second and third sentences are simple declarative. These are the second, third and fourth sentences in this paragraph.



Considerations: While we diagrammed verse 19 as a separate statement, it may be a continuation of the statement by the hypothetical “someone” of verse 18. A normal understanding of these three sentences requires us to conclude that the writer is comparing the belief of the individual who does no works with the belief of demons. He is not saying, however, that the source of the human’s faith has its source in satanic or demonic interference. It is a simple comparison to illustrate that belief alone does not produce good works. In a sense, it is the lack of righteous works that is being compared, rather than the quality of the faith.

It is significant that James uses as his object of faith an important truth about God, rather than an object of faith for justification. One does not get justified by believing that God is one unless it is in the context of the gospel of salvation. One fact often eludes teachers of Scripture, and that is that there is an assumption of background data that is included in the gospel itself. Today, the simple gospel is the death and resurrection of Christ, but the belief in that gospel, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:2, can be in vain, that is, without a purpose. One reason for this is a re-definition of the words of Scripture. If one believes in a false Christ, one cannot be saved. If one rejects the deity of Christ, for instance, no belief in the death and resurrection of Christ is valid for salvation.

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In this instance, the thing being believed by both Christian Jews and demons is that God is one. In this, the Hebrew Christian did well. This was the central tenant of Judaism at this time, as expressed in the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4, and was regularly discussed by the rabbis. As a Christian, James knew that Christ and the Father were different persons, so his statement here must refer to the Jewish concept of the “aloneness” of God. It is a statement of monotheism, the fact that there is only one God, while there are various persons that inhabit that singularity (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Furthermore, James deliberately uses a doctrine that is undeniable by demons. As spirit beings, they inhabit the same spiritual realm as the Godhead, and fully understood the singularity of God. The concept of shivering in fear is a metaphor to express the intensity of the fear that demons have (they have no bodies, so they don’t really shiver). Even so, their works cannot be called anything but evil. Under the Mosaic system, correct belief, even in the central tenants such as the oneness of God, did not guarantee correct action, nor did it guarantee salvation from the judgments of the law.

The whole point James was making to the law-bound Jews was that their belief in the Mosaic code, and in the one God of the Mosaic code, is of no benefit, and is even hypocritical, if they do not meet the works requirements of that code. It is upon this basis that he continues in the next paragraph.

2:20 θέλεις δὲ γινῶναι ὡς ἄνθρωπε κενέ ὅτι ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.

A complex interrogative sentence. This sentence starts a new paragraph which extends through the end of the chapter, 2:26.

	ὡς ἄνθρωπε		πίστις	ἐστίν ^γ	\	νεκρά	
	κενέ		ὅτι	ἡ ²⁰	χωρὶς	ἔργων	
	δὲ	γινῶναι ^β	■	■	τῶν		
you	θέλεις ^α	■					

α P, TA, I, 2, s from θέλω, “do desire.”
 β A, TA, Inf from γινώσκω, “to know.”
 γ P, Icop, I, 3, s from εἰμί, “is.”

Translation: But do you desire to know, O empty man, that faith without works is dead?

Considerations: This paragraph is straightforward, unless one interprets it apart from its context, historical and doctrinal. We mention this because of the great preponderance of interpretations that do provide such an interpretation. How would James’ Hebrew readers have interpreted the paragraph’s various elements? We will attempt to answer that question.

Note how James addresses his readers. Previously, he addressed them as brothers and sisters, but now, he uses the generic ἄνθρωπος, preceded by the emphatic ὡς with a negative adjective κενός, *empty*. In what sense are these people empty? They are not producing the good works required of the law, they are empty of those works. This is not a friendly injunction, but an outright rebuke. Many, such as J. Ronald Blue, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, attempt to soften this paragraph, and remove the rebuke from consideration. This is done because of the over-all non-contextual approach that he takes to the interpretation.

The sentence is in the form, again, of a rhetorical question. “Do you desire to know?” The implication of the positive question is that they should desire to know, but perhaps they did not. What should they desire to know? That the previously mentioned *faith* apart from the previously mentioned *works* is dead! James takes us all the way back to verse 2:17. See the extensive notes there on faith and works.

This sentence introduces the examples that James gives to prove his point. One has to do with Abraham, the Hebrew patriarch, and the other deals with Rahab, the prostitute.

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2:21 ἀβραάμ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ἀνενέγκας ἰσαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον.

A simple interrogative sentence. This is the second sentence in the paragraph.

ἀβραάμ	↔	πατὴρ		ἐδικαιώθη ^α	α A, TP, I, 3, s from δικαιώω, “was justified.”
ὁ		ἡμῶν		οὐκ	β A, TA, Part, M, s, N from ἀναφέρω, “when he had offered up.”
				ἐξ	ἔργων
				ἀνενέγκας ^β	ἰσαὰκ ↔ υἱὸν
				ἐπὶ	θυσιαστήριον
				τὸ	αὐτοῦ

Translation: Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered up Issac his son on the altar?

Considerations: The Jewish connection is quite clear in this negative rhetorical sentence. Was not Abraham justified by works? Yes, he was, is the assumed answer. James identifies Abraham as “our father,” in the sense of “our ancestor.” Abraham was revered as the first patriarch of the nation Israel.

It is important to keep original incident in its historical and doctrinal context. While James’ readers still saw themselves as related to the Mosaic law, they understood that Abraham *was not* so related. He lived during the time between Adam and Moses when the pre-Israelite believers were under no law from God. They operated solely on the basis of personal understanding of what was right and wrong, and as a result, much evil was done by man against man. But Abraham believed God, and was justified, that is, counted as righteous. This is recorded in Genesis 15. Furthermore, God had direct communication to Abraham through revelation. He was, in many ways, a unique individual.

But do not think that because Abraham was not under law for daily living, that he was under grace. Some have supposed so and attempted to apply living grace to pre-Mosaic believers. In fact, Abraham was under *no* operating requirement for daily living.²¹ And because of this truth we can identify the meaning of the word *justified* as used by James when referring to offering of Isaac, which took place many years *after* Abraham’s imputed justification by faith in Genesis 15. Had Abraham not offered Isaac on the altar, there would undoubtedly been no direct consequence to his refusal. He was not under any forensic law. But he did offer up Isaac because he had already believed God for imputed justification. In vs. 22 James will explain how Abraham’s first faith related to his later faith.

James continues his series of rhetorical questions, in this case, a negative question requiring a positive answer, which causes us to ask, How was Abraham justified by works? And in doing so, he makes a plain distinction between the two uses of the word justified.

The answer lies in the meaning of the word *justified* as viewed by Jews at that time, which is not the first thing that sincere Christians think of when they see the word justified today. Consequently, many attempt to prove the unprovable by reinterpreting the context to mean something that James would never have considered, since they do not adequately account for the change of content from Paul’s use to James’ use of the word *justified*. The most common error seems to understand James to say that a man who doesn’t work wasn’t actually saved in the first place. Albert Barnes seems to hold this view.²² J. Ronald Blue in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* seems to hold a similar position, though his terminology is couched in such a way as to make it impossible to be certain.

James uses *justified* in the then common sense of *being seen to do the right thing.* It is being justified in the sight of men, as well as in the sight of God. It is temporal, visually based justification. Some

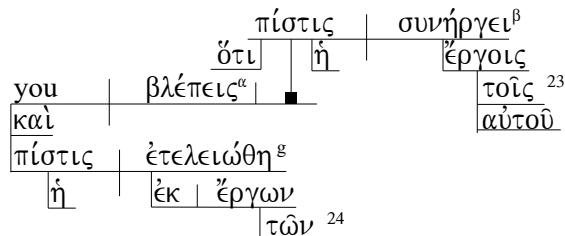
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have tried to force Paul’s meaning of being declared righteous by God onto this use, but such an attempt is fruitless. James refers not to the initial justification of the unbeliever, but to God’s relationship to His theocratic subjects, whether believer or unbeliever. However, James does so using a non-theocratic individual, Abraham.

It is also important to remember that not every Israelite under the Law of Moses was justified in the ultimate sense that Paul means. Yet even unbelieving Israelites could be justified in their daily walk. They could do, and in fact often did do, the right thing. They often did obey the law, not out of piety perhaps, but out of a desire to fit in, to continue in Israel, to not be judged, etc. But by the time of his offering Isaac, Abraham had previously been justified in the Pauline sense of initial justification, though he was no member of the theocratic people. Thus, he was justified in a different way many years later, when he offered Isaac. That was functional justification, not forensic justification, which occurred many years earlier.

Abraham offered up Isaac on the altar (Genesis 22), an observable act by which Abraham was justified. This was not imputed righteousness, but earned righteousness. Again we state, this event took place many years after Abraham was declared righteous by faith (Genesis 15). Were the two events related? Most certainly, as James points out. But they must not be confused. There are two types of justification going on here, which are pointed out in verses 22 and 23 below.

2:22 βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελειώθη;
A compound-complex interrogative sentence, with a noun clause as the object of the first verb. This is the third sentence in the paragraph.



^α P, TA, I, 2, s from βλέπω, “do see.”

^β P, Icomp, I, 3, s from συνεργέω, “was working together.”

^γ P, TP, I, 3, s from τελειόω, “was completed.”

Translation: Do you see that his faith was working together with his works and by the works the faith was completed?

Considerations: Again we have a positive rhetorical question. James expected his readers to see the truth presented. In the case of the offering of Isaac, it is clear that Abraham’s faith was operating. Abraham’s work, the offering of Isaac, was based on the previous promises of God concerning Isaac, that he would produce many offspring. How this was to happen Abraham may not have known, but Abraham still believed God. Perhaps he believed God would restore life to Isaac, as many have speculated. At any rate, Abraham’s faith was indeed “working together” with his work of offering. James’ audience could then see that the faith of Abraham was completed by the work.

The word we have translated “was completed” is sometimes translated “made perfect,”²⁵ but the primary meaning is to bring something to completion, to make it complete. The meaning of the word *completed* is the key. It is opposed to partial, incomplete. Before the offering of Isaac, according to the Hebrew way of thinking, Abraham’s faith in Genesis 15 was incomplete.

Even today such is true. One becomes a biblical Christian by believing a set of simple facts, the death and resurrection of Christ, for the purpose of being saved. That single, unrepeatabe act of faith was

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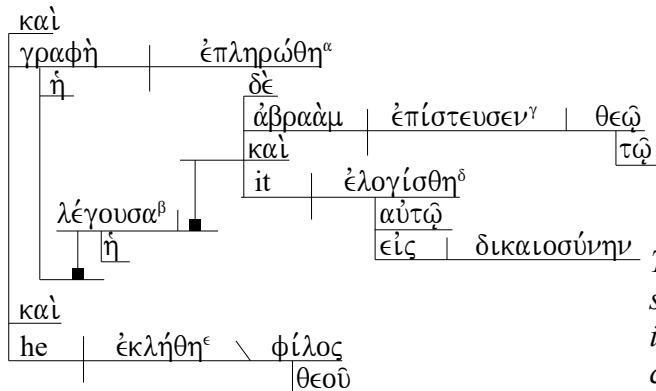
God's means of applying salvation to the individual. But one's faith does not stop there, as he continues to live and learn new things. Living by faith continues, and a series of new acts of faith must proceed from the original, one time only, act of saving faith.

Unlike saving faith, living faith is on-going, and is repeated each time a new truth is illuminated by the Holy Spirit in the mind of the believer. Such on-going faith may never end, as it must be nurtured and refined by further study of Scripture, and further correct application to Christian living. From James' perspective, that on-going faith had as its object the totality of the Mosaic Law. It is in that sense that James indicates that Abraham's faith was completed by his works.

Abraham's incomplete faith, incomplete in the sense that it was the first faith act of a number of later faith acts, is indicated by James in the next sentence.

2:23 καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφή ἣ λέγουσα ἐπίστευσεν δὲ ἀβραάμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην. καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη.

A compound-complex sentence with an articular adjectival participle which has a compound dependent clause as its object. This is the fourth sentence in the paragraph.



- α A, TP, I, 3, s from πληρώω, "was fulfilled."
- β P, TA, Part, Ff, s, N from λέγω, "which said."
- γ A, TA, I, 3, s from πιστεύω, "believed."
- δ A, TP, I, 3, s from λογίζομαι, "was imputed."
- ε A, TP, I, 3, s from καλέω, "he was called."

Translation: And the Scripture was fulfilled which said, And Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called a friend of God.

Considerations: This sentence presents the first act of faith in James' argument. This act of faith required no works, and James does not say that it does. Such a false view is a misreading of the paragraph. This first act of faith was sufficient for what it accomplished, but it did not accomplish everything. It was, in fact, the first in a series of acts of faith, but each had a different object. When Abraham believed God in Genesis 15, he only believed God about one thing. Here is the immediate context of the first act of faith of the man who would later be called Abraham:

Genesis 15:1-6: 1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward. 2 But Abram said, Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 Then Abram said, Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir! 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir. 5 Then He brought him outside and said, Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. And He said to him, So shall your descendants be. 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. (NKJV)

At the time of this direct revelation, Abraham was an old man and childless. His wife, Sarah, was barren. Note what the Lord said, and what Abraham then believed. A miracle was to happen and he

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was to bear an heir who was not Eliezer of Damascus, but a child of his own body. Furthermore, Abraham was to have a huge number of descendants.

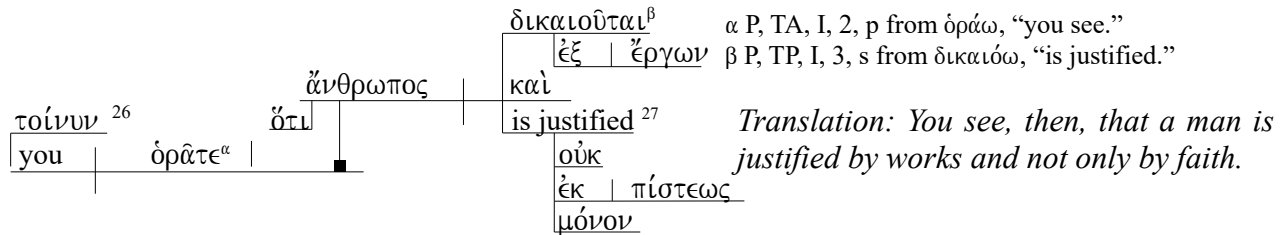
It was this single, non-repeated act of faith in God’s statement that was the means of the imputed justification of Abraham which occurred many years before he offered Isaac. That single act of faith was accounted by the Lord to Abraham for righteousness, that is, for justification. It is the very nature of the act that it could not be repeated, and it accomplished what God planned for it to accomplish, the declaration of Abraham’s justification.

But this was not the complete faith of Abraham. He also needed to believe further revelation of God, which he did, though not for imputed justification. A different further non-imputed justification took place when Abraham offered Isaac at the command of the Lord. He was *seen* to have been justified in his daily life by the offering.

So the Scripture was fulfilled, which does not mean that one can find a prediction in Scripture about this incident. Rather, the word *fulfilled* has several meanings, one of which is that the incident portrayed has been used to teach a truth to a later generation, as it does here.

2:24 ὁρᾶτε τοίνυν ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.

A complex declarative sentence. This is the fifth sentence in the paragraph.



Considerations: James conclusion is stated in a clear and concise way: It is something that the audience *can see* (you see, in the sense of understand), that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. The visual element in this works-based justification must not be discounted.

Many attempt to soften this meaning of the sentence by saying something like J. Ronald Blue says in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, “James emphasized the joint role of faith and... actions... working together. Faith is the force behind the deed. The deed is the finality of the faith.”

But a careful analysis indicates that the sentence states, but does not emphasize, the joint role of faith and works. Nor does James indicate, as Blue says, that “faith is the force behind the deed.” Nor does the word *complete* mean that “The deed is the finality of the faith,” by which we assume that he means the initial faith resulting in imputed righteousness (Genesis 15). This view is based on wishful thinking, and lack of understanding the doctrinal distinctions between initial justification which was imputed and occurred only once in Abram’s life, and that daily justification which happened several times during the individual’s life during Abram’s day (and later under the law) was earned. Sanctification, which is what daily justification is, was by works in the entirety of the various Old Testament programs. Both involved faith, but initial justification involves faith alone. Therefore, this statement must indicate that daily justification, that is, sanctification, was *at that time* not by faith alone, but was by means of work and faith as a joint enterprise.

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However, we must understand that such is not true today! Today, grace for daily living has been revealed, primarily (though not exclusively) through Paul’s writings, and today both initial, imputed justification, and daily practical justification are by faith alone. How can this be? A new day has dawned for sanctification by grace which had not been revealed until some years after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time of writing, James knew nothing of this grace-based sanctification.

If we take initial imputed justification to be identical to personal legal daily justification in James, as so many do, Paul’s doctrine of *justification by faith rather than law is being refuted by James*. But if, on the other hand, one realizes the law-based daily living emphasis in transitional James, the normal meaning and structure of the sentence does not in any way refute Paul’s doctrine, because there are two different acts of faith in view, and two different kinds of justification in view. Only one of those kinds combines works and faith, and that is **NOT** Paul’s initial justification by faith, with which we are persuaded that James agrees. There is simply no way that Paul’s justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law taught in Romans 4 can be in view in James 2:24. Nor can Paul’s doctrine of sanctification (daily justification) as taught in passages such as Romans 6-8 be in view in James, who knew nothing of that truth when he wrote.

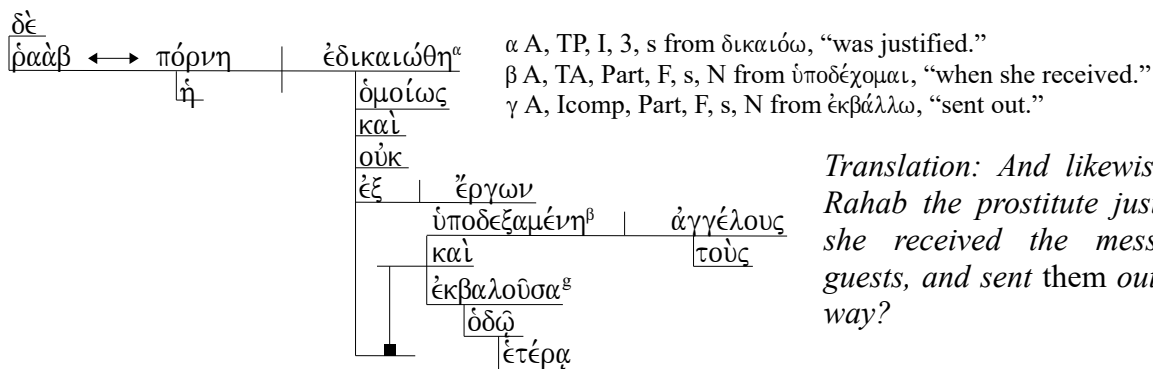
So, should one apply the doctrine of daily justification by a combination of works and faith today? Clearly, no. According to the later teaching by Paul, the daily Christian life is motivated by something other than law, which is the motivating factor that James uses in the previous context. James is applying the “royal law” which he previously presented. That law carried condemnation to those who did not perform it. But the law does not condemn Christians today in any sense (Romans 8:1ff).

Paul’s approach to works is never to teach a legal means to produce works. Rather, he teaches that a believer’s works were “previously prepared,” and that they are the works of God himself working through the believer, rather than the works produced by the obedience to law, works maintained through rigorous self effort.

James’ second illustration in the next sentence strongly supports this view. Rahab, a Gentile woman, may or may not have been a justified believer at the time of the incident portrayed, as was Abraham in Genesis 15 and 22, but she was still justified by her works. If she was a believer at the time, it was a recent faith.

2:25 ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ραὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἑτέρα ὁδῶ ἐκβαλοῦσα;

A simple interrogative sentence. The sixth sentence in the paragraph.



Translation: And likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute justified when she received the messengers as guests, and sent them out a different way?

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Considerations: Note the copula δέ, the weak adversative conjunction, between this sentence and the previous. It sets up both a contrast and a continuation all at once. The contrast is that this person is not one who was to be revered during her life. Indeed, at the time of her justifying work, she was a practicing prostitute, something that the Mosaic law clearly forbids. Nor was she an Israelite under the Mosaic code, and in that way she was similar to Abram.

It is likely that James chose Rahab as an illustration of the kind of justification he meant because she was both a prostitute and a non-Israelite. She could not be confused with someone like Abraham and his on-going relationship to Yahweh. Rahab believed what she understood about the crossing of the Red Sea, and Israel's victory over its enemies. She concluded that Yahweh had given Canaan to the Israelites. She states in Joshua 2:11, "...for Yahweh your God is God in heaven above, and on earth below." Was she therefore justified in the Genesis 15 sense at this time? Perhaps, but note that James does not even refer to the above facts about Rahab, only that she was a prostitute.

Because of that wording, it is possible that she was no monotheist, and believed in national gods, of which she thought Yahweh was one, perhaps the head god, since she says He is God in heaven above and on earth below. Was this justifying faith in the sense of Genesis 15? It is impossible to tell, but we know that she eventually married into the Israelite people, bore children, and became one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ's humanity.

At any rate, James mentions none of this. He simply recounts the central act she performed, saving the spies lives by sending them over the wall. It is this act that is a perfect illustration, since it resulted in others in Israel knowing about it, because the spies proclaimed that she and her family were to be spared from death.

Again we have an illustration of being justified for being seen to do the right thing, the essence of James' argument concerning justification by works, being *seen to do the right thing* according to the word of Yahweh.

2:26 ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρὸν ἐστίν· οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων νεκρά ἐστίν.

A compound declarative sentence. The seventh and final sentence in the paragraph without a conjunction between the clauses.

γὰρ ²⁸			
σῶμα		ἐστίν ^α	\ νεκρὸν
τὸ		ὥσπερ	
χωρὶς		πνεύματος	
·			
πίστις		ἐστίν ^α	\ νεκρά
ἡ		οὕτως	
χωρὶς		ἔργων	καὶ
		τῶν	

α P, Icop, I, 3, s from εἰμί, "is."

Translation: For just like the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Considerations: James is drawing this topic of discussion to a conclusion and is ready to summarize his teaching, which he does succinctly. Note the colon (·) between the two clauses. This could be two sentences, but the association is so close I chose to make them one sentence without a conjunction between.

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The final summary of James' presentation of the truth of justification by works is a comparison between life in the physical body and faith. The word spirit here may refer either to the human spirit, which leaves the body upon death, or of the actual *breath* of the body, as the word πνεύμα can mean that as well as spirit. It also leaves the body upon death. Today, many commentators prefer the idea of breath over the human spirit, which does seem to fit the context well enough.

So there is a similarity between the body without breath, and faith without works. Both are dead, dead in the sense that they are not functioning, they cannot perform to any benefit.

Faith without works is dead; it is non-functional. This cannot be referring to faith for initial justification as Paul presents it. Rather, it must refer to the original readers' faith in the Old Testament Mosaic system. Without performing the works of the law, their faith in the law system is seen to be ineffective, not functioning. The law was designed to produce action, not simple academic belief. This is what James is ultimately accusing at least some of his readers. Their faith in the law was dead, shown by the fact that they were not doers of the law.

Can it be said of a believer today who is not applying grace truth for daily living? No, it cannot, simply because James did not have that in mind, and none of the context applies to the teaching of the grace epistles, including those of John, and even Peter, who never use such terminology. Paul's solution to the problem of not living the grace life is to instruct believers how to do so, not to make accusations without solution. What James is promoting is self-effort, something Paul would never do, whose righteous living is the result of the application of grace through understanding and acceptance of the truth, not through coercion, and the threat of law.

In the next chapter, James begins to deal with several more problems that were apparently festering among the early Jewish Christians.

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Endnotes

- 1 The expression “our Lord of Glory” is not part of the name of the Lord Jesus in this instance, but an expanded title, expressing truth about Jesus beyond His actual name.
- 2 This is a rather complicated third class condition. The apodosis is an interrogative, so the Greek sentence ends with an international question mark (;). The protasis is extremely complicated. I diagrammed it as a triple compound clause, with the third clause having a triple compound predicate because of the peculiar way in which James uses his verbs, especially the two uses of εἴπητε. They appear to be parallel, so I chose a compound predicate rather than a fourth compound in the main protasis structure.
- 3 I take πτωχούς to be an accusative of general reference with the understood verb “to be.”
- 4 The -ομαι form used with this verb seems to emphasize the subject as acting. Some call this an “indirect middle,” though the voice is clearly transitive active. The idea that the -ομαι form of a verb that is regularly written with the -ω set of endings has somehow changed voice to something called the middle voice cannot be sustained. The change of ending is not because that ending becomes a different voice, but indicates a change of emphasis of the verb that would not be evident with the -ω set of endings.
- 5 This participle clause is literally translated, “the one which was called upon you.” It apparently refers to the name of Christ, by which these new believers were being identified in the synagogues.
- 6 As a transitive active -ομαι ending verb, ἐργάζομαι means to perform or accomplish. The regular English idiom with the object sin is “commit.”
- 7 Inferential (illative) γάρ.
- 8 James begins this sentence with an indefinite relative clause as his subject. Indefinite relative clauses acting as subjects are rare. “Whoever” is the subject with a compound predicate made up of two verbs: 1) whoever *would keep*, and 2) *should stumble*. Both verbs are indicative mood, but they have two distinct forces. The first verb is a future of intent, hence the helping verb *would*. The idea is that the person intends to keep the law, but, since *keep* is future tense, the actual keeping is unfulfilled. The second verb is a future of possible result, hence the helping verb *should*. While trying to keep the law, if he possibly should stumble in one thing, he “has become guilty of all,” that is, he is viewed as guilty of having broken all the points of the law. It seems evident that the second verb “should stumble” is a conditional future, and the predicate of the main clause acts as the result of that stumbling, almost as though it were the apodosis of a conditional sentence.
- 9 The adjective ὅλον means “entire, without distinction as to its parts.”
- 10 The critical text has both τηρήσει and παύσει as the aorist subjunctives τηρήσῃ and παύσῃ.
- 11 ἐνί is the neuter locative of εἷς, the number one, “one thing.”
- 12 The translation is inaccurate here, because it indicates a preposition phrase “over mercy.” However, the word *over* does not occur, and is part of the verb meaning (κατακαυχάομαι). Some translate the verb “boasts against,” because it is the verb καυχάομαι with the prefixed preposition κατά, which can mean *against*. However, that translation does not seem to fit any better than “over.”
- 13 I have translated this aorist participle as a past perfect “has not performed” since the elliptical main verb is understood to be present. Aorist participles generally indicate time prior to the main present tense, indicative mood verb in the clause with which they are associated.
- 14 Possessive article correctly translated “his.”

Endnotes

- 15 Many consider χορτάζεσθε and the previous verb θερμαίνεσθε to be passive. They are better considered voiceless reflexives. The -ομαι form of an -ω verb is very flexible as to its force, and often the change from the -ω set of endings indicates some kind of emphasis on the subject of the verb. It is a matter of context and grammatical logic which one must consider to determine what the emphasis is.
- 16 An article of previous reference, “the previously mentioned faith.” See vs. 14.
- 17 TP. Some ancient manuscripts have χωρὶς here, rather than ἐκ. In either case, the correct translation is *without* or *apart from*.
- 18 See the strange statements in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* on this passage, especially verses 18 and 19. The writer (J. Ronald Blue) goes so far as to say that the “you” of the context may be a Gentile convert, rather than one of the scattered Hebrews. Such a set of conclusions indicates a strong desire to apply this passage to believers today, even to the point of violating the historical and literary context.
- 19 This argument cannot be used concerning those who live under grace principles today. Contextually, in James’ mind the operating principle for daily living is based on the Mosaic requirements, and their legal condemnation for failure. Today, there is no condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:1), and the means of keeping God’s requirements does not come from the individual, but by means of the internal working of the Holy Spirit. Today, the believer does not need to generate works or keep law; God does the generating and keeping.
- 20 Both articles in the ὅτι clause, ἡ and τῶν, are articles of previous reference.
- 21 Paul explicitly states that those who lived from Adam to Moses were under no requirements. Note the statements in Romans 5: 13-14 “For until law, sin was in the world, but sin is not charged, because there is no law. ¹⁴ But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over the ones who had not sinned in the likeness of the transgression of Adam...” Paul says that no one between Adam and Moses sinned like Adam sinned, because no law from God was in force during that long period.
- 22 *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, Electronic edition, E-sword, under the verse cited.
- 23 An article of previous reference.
- 24 This is a possessive article, and must be translated *his*, as opposed to *the*. This is also true of both the articles with the two occurrences of πίστις.
- 25 The translation “made perfect” is followed by the KJV, the NKJV, Darby, and the old American Standard Version.
- 26 τοίνυν is an inferential introductory particle. The conclusion is inferred from the previous discussion.
- 27 The emphasis of the sentence is in the first predicate of the dependent noun clause where the verb is written, rather than the second, where the verb is not written, but understood from the grammar. James is clearly teaching justification by works, and there is no way one can get out of it.
- 28 The γάρ is illative, meaning that the this statement is inferred from the previous discussion.

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3:1 μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε ἀδελφοί μου εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα ληψόμεθα.

A complex imperative sentence with a ὅτι clause as the object of the participle. This sentence is the first in a paragraph that extends through verse 5a.

<p>ἀδελφοί μου σου πολλοί</p>	<p>γίνεσθε^α</p>	<p>διδάσκαλοι</p>	<p>ληψόμεθα^γ</p>	<p>κρίμα μείζον</p>
	<p>μὴ</p>	<p>we</p>		
		<p>ὅτι</p>		
		<p>εἰδότες^β</p>		

α P, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from γίνομαι, “do be.”
β Pf, TA, Part, M, pN from οἶδα, “knowing.”
γ F, TA, I, 1, p from λαμβάνω, “we will receive.”

Translation: Do not be many teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive greater judgment.

Considerations: This is the topic sentence of the paragraph that extends through 5a, and sets the tone for the rest of the remarks in this section concerning wisdom among the local leaders of James’ audience. This was intended by James to be applied narrowly to teaching leaders in the synagogue, so-called Rabbis. The entire chapter is addressed to these leaders in the synagogues.

Such leaders were called “teachers.” The word generally used among Hebrews for a teacher was *rabbi*, which at that time does not appear to be a technical term to identify so-called “clergy,” nor was it limited to leaders in synagogues. For instance, Jesus, an itinerant teacher, was called Rabbi in Mark 9:5 and in John 1:38. See also John 1:49. Nevertheless, it is probable that James means the teachers in the synagogue, rather than the open-air teacher like Paul in Athens. Such was not unknown, certainly, but no one attempted to regulate such generally available acts of teaching.

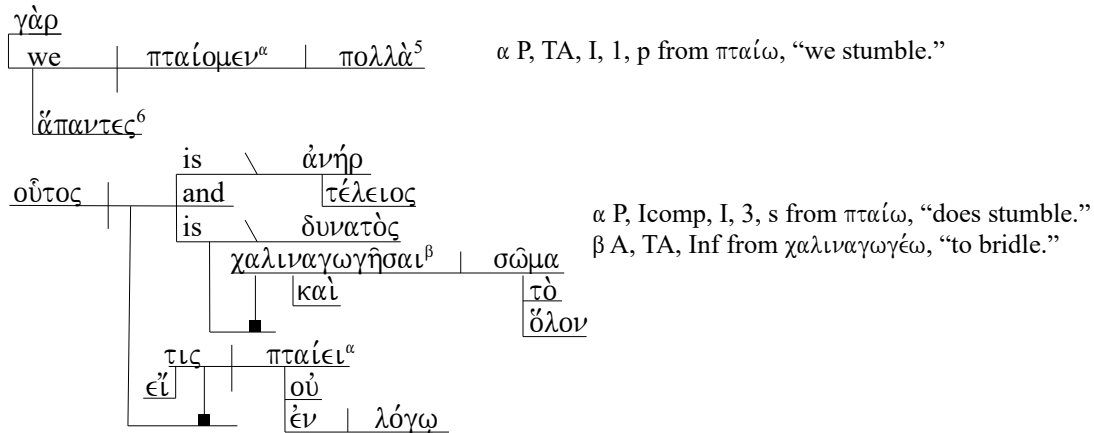
This statement by James is by way of a warning, then, to teachers in the synagogue.² “We will receive greater judgment,” shows that James included himself among the teachers. We know from the Acts that James was a leader in the Jerusalem assembly. It was dangerous being a teacher among the Israelites. The “we” is categorical, which includes all teachers of the Jews of whom some, though not all, were acting unrighteously in their teaching. They will receive greater judgment, probably meaning greater than non-teachers. Among the dispersion Hebrews almost any Jewish man would be allowed to teach in the synagogue, either from within, or from without such as the traveler Paul. This passage is probably addressed to the resident teachers, not the transient ones.³

Does James mean that the teachers will be judged more harshly by God or by man? Using Paul as an example, and given the general tone of James’ epistle, it appears that James refers to the danger of speaking perceived heresy in the synagogue. Paul was punished greatly for his ministry among the dispersion Jews, and some ancient sources (the Babylonian Talmud, for instance) state the importance of maintaining purity of teaching, and standing against perceived error, such as that by the apostle Paul.⁴ It seems, then, James speaks of a temporal judgment by man.

3:2 πολλὰ γὰρ παίομεν ἅπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ παίζει οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ δυνατὸς χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα.

Two sentences, the first a simple declarative, the second a negative complex conditional of the first class with a compound predicate in the apodosis. These are the second and third sentences in this paragraph.

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Translation: For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in word, this man is mature, able to also bridle his whole body.

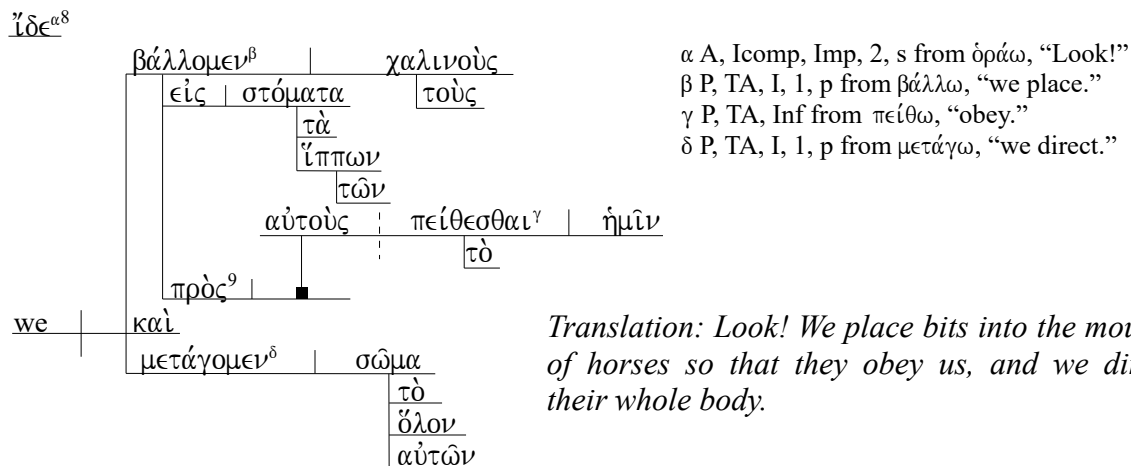
Considerations: James continues to include himself categorically among the teachers in the first sentence. The word *stumble*, πταίω, actually means *to trip, to cause to stumble*. All teachers metaphorically stumble from time to time, in many ways. It is part of the process of learning, and re-learning, and it is not to be expected of a teacher that he never makes mistakes.

However, in the second sentence James makes the context of this particular act of stumbling clear. Some were stumbling *in word*. Again James refers to communication. He is encouraging teachers to be careful what they communicate in their teaching. If such care is taken, James reckons such a man to be mature, able to “bridle” his whole body. James uses the cause and effect argument here. Again, no grace provision is mentioned, but an expectation of self control required of a teacher of Scripture.

Bridling a horse keeps it under control, causing the entire body to move in a certain direction or even stop moving. It is a perfect metaphor for taking care in the area of communicating God’s truth. This begins a series of metaphors for the tongue.

3:3 Ἴδε, τῶν ἵππων⁷ τοὺς χαλινοὺς εἰς τὰ στόματα βάλλομεν πρὸς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μετάγομεν.

A simple declarative sentence with a compound predicate. The fourth sentence of the paragraph.



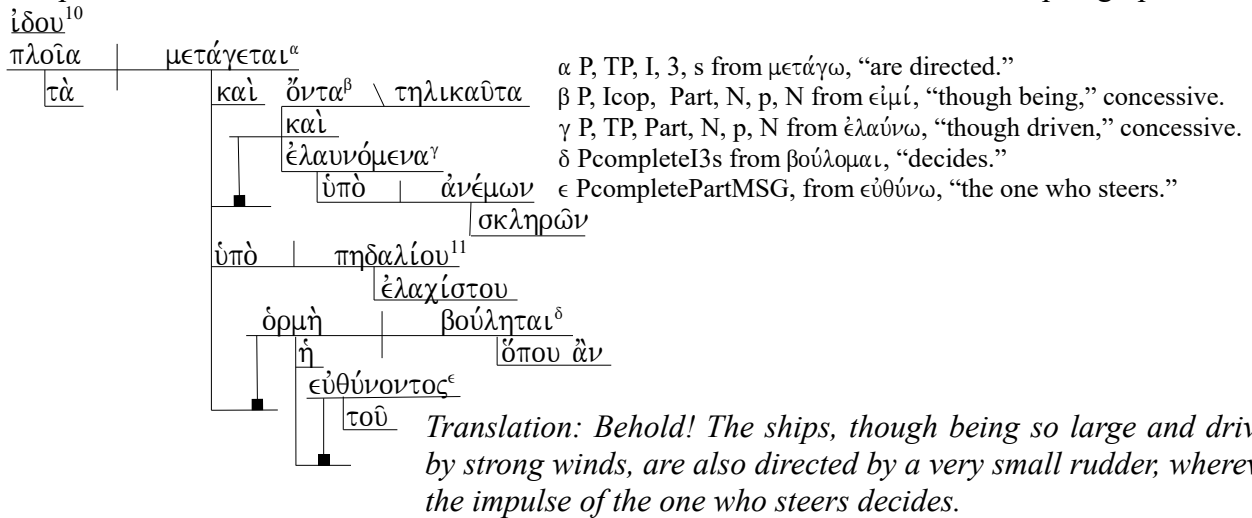
Translation: Look! We place bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, and we direct their whole body.

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Considerations: James, continuing the “we” section, specifies the part of the harness which controls the horse, the bit in the mouth. The purpose of this comparative illustration is to continue the discussion of communication. The point of the metaphor is that the whole body of the horse is controlled by a small part, the bit, which is analogous to the tongue of the teacher in vs. 2. James uses two more metaphors to emphasize his point.

3:4 ἰδοὺ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ σκληρῶν ἀνέμων ἐλαυνόμενα μετάγεται ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἂν ἡ ὄρμη τοῦ εὐθύνοντος βούληται.

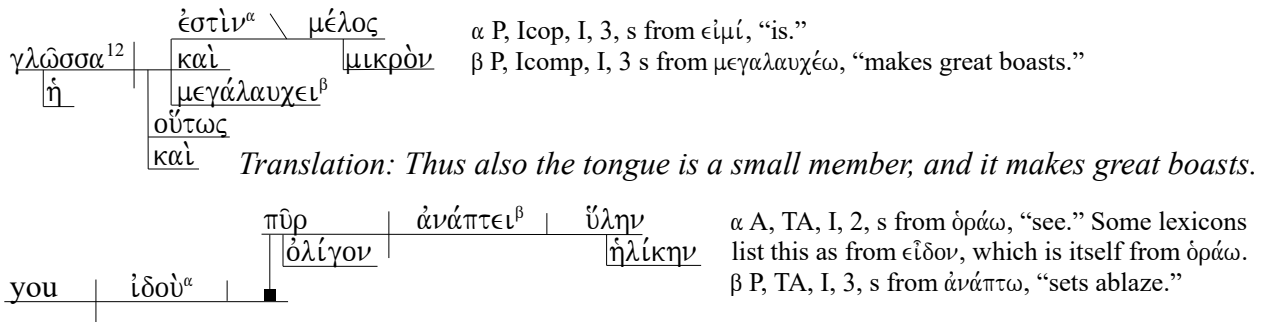
A complex sentence with an adverbial clause of direction. The fifth sentence of the paragraph.



Considerations: The second metaphor for the tongue is a very small ship’s rudder, which controls the direction of the large vessel. The metaphor is extended by the following elements: 1) The large ships being driven by strong winds corresponds to the large human being compared to the small tongue. Like a ship, the human being is not operating in a vacuum, but is being effected by outside sources, strong winds. 2) The responsibility lies with the one who steers, who decides where the ship will go; likewise the responsibility of the person who decides what the tongue will say.

3:5 οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ μεγάλαυχεῖ. ἰδοὺ ὀλίγον πῦρ ἥλικην ὕλην ἀνάπτει.

Two sentences. The first is simple with a compound predicate; the second is complex with an object clause framed as an indirect question. It is the sixth sentence of the paragraph. The second sentence begins a new paragraph which extends to verse 12.



Translation: See how big a forest a small fire sets ablaze.

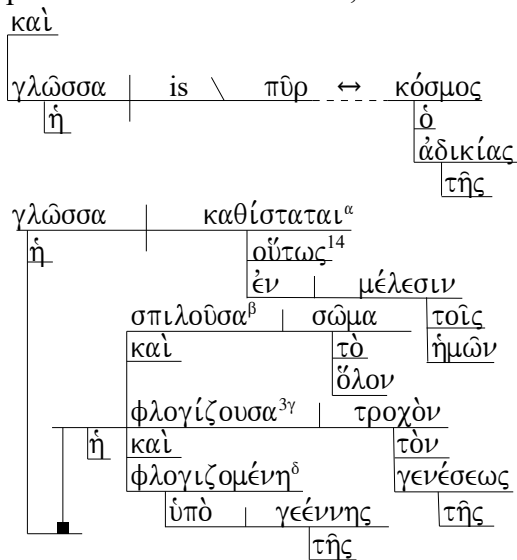
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Considerations: Strangely, we find the application of the ship/rudder metaphor from verse 4 in the first sentence of verse 5. Like a small rudder directing a large ship, the tongue, a small member, makes great boasts. The verb *boasts* occurs only here in the Greek N.T. Thayer says the word is, “from *μεγάλα* and *αὐχέω*); *to be grandiloquent; to boast great things, to bear oneself loftily in speech or action.*”

The third metaphor also points out the big/small contrast, a large forest which a small fire sets ablaze. The tongue as fire metaphor continues into the first sentence of verse 6.¹³

3:6 καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ, ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας. οὕτως ἡ γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν ἡ σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα καὶ φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς γεέννης.

Two sentences, the second and third of this paragraph. Both are simple declarative, the first with an apposition to the main clause, the second with a triple compound articular descriptive participles.



- α P, TP, I, 3, s from καθίστημι, “is set in place.”
- β P, A, Part, F, s, N from σπιλόω, “which stains.”
- γ P, TA, Part, F, s, N from φλογίζω, “sets on fire.”
- δ P, TP, Part, F, s, N from φλογίζω, “being set on fire.”

Translation: And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. Thus the tongue is set in place among our members, the one which stains the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of existence, and being set on fire by Gehenna.

Considerations: Again the first sentence begins with an application of the metaphor of the previous verse. The structure is unusual, as the apposition is not simply κόσμος in apposition to πῦρ, but the entire phrase ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας is in apposition to the main clause, ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ, which I’ve indicated by the broken line between the two. (ATR misses this, and consequently struggles with the entire appositional phrase.)

The word κόσμος is itself a metaphor for a large amount, though not a long period of time, not equivalent to αἰών, as some have it. τῆς ἀδικίας is a genitive of quality: The world is qualitatively unrighteous. This short sentence is an indictment of the communication of the teachers in the Jewish synagogues. Already some had abandoned normal interpretive procedures for unacceptable allegorical approaches.

The metaphor of the tongue as fire is explained more fully in the second sentence. Several elements of this explanation are evident.

1) The main clause, ἡ γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, indicates that the individual’s tongue, in this case, the communication of the Jewish teachers, was not produced by the individual. It is set (passive voice) among “our” members, whereby James includes himself in the statement. James

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had a definite doctrinal purpose in this statement, the idea that the tongue (communication aloud) exists because of the very nature of the individual, James himself included. The nature of the individual is the issue. We must keep this in the context of teaching, not general communication. Many have chosen to derive principles from this passage, while ignoring the purpose of James' writing to his particular audience of which he was a part. The next phrase, the first participle phrase, must be kept in that cultural historical context to make any sense.

2) The triple compound descriptive participles contain idiomatic information, sometimes of difficult interpretation. The first participle phrase, σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα, indicates that the tongue stains the whole body. The word *stains* is metaphorical, referring to a moral or ethical stain, which causes the entire body to be viewed as defiled. This must be viewed figuratively as the acts of the body, rather than the body itself. In other words, what one communicates produces further action of the body, which defiles the body. This would have been a very strong image to Jews; they viewed ceremonial defilement very seriously, having been steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures.

3) The second participle phrase, φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως, is quite difficult to interpret. Many ideas have been brought forth as its meaning. For instance, ATR quotes various individuals, “‘One of the hardest passages in the Bible’ (Hort)..., Vincent suggests ‘the wheel of birth’... The ancient writers often use this same phrase (or *kuklos*, cycle, in place of *trochos* [wheel]), but either in a physiological or a philosophical sense. James may have caught the metaphor from the current use, but certainly he has no such Orphic or Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls, ‘the unending round of death and rebirth’ (Ropes).”

We translated this participle phrase, “and sets on fire the wheel of existence...” The word wheel is used as a metaphor, indicating something that goes round and round, that is, something which is repeated. However, the word translated “of existence,” is γενέσεως, from γενέσις, which primarily means source or origin. It is the word found in the LXX as the title of the first book of the Bible, which has come into English as Genesis. A secondary meaning is birth or nativity, though it is unlikely that it can mean such here, though metaphorically, it can also mean the process of life, that which proceeds from birth, as it seems to mean in James 1:23. Finally, Thayer and others list as a third meaning *existence* or *life*, apparently in the more general sense of the life of mankind as a whole, rather than the individual.

It seems that the meaning of this idiom may have been lost in antiquity. It could mean this, or it could mean that, but no one seems to be able to figure out definitively what the structure actually means. The best that this writer could come up with is that the tongue sets on fire, or tends toward the destruction of, the process of daily living, which seems to be the position of BKC. However, we must not state this dogmatically, as there simply is not enough data available to require a specific meaning.

4) The final participle phrase, φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς γέεννης, is somewhat easier to understand. The passive voice participle (the same root as the previous participle) should be translated “being set on fire.” What follows is James' statement of the source of the fire, *Gehenna*, which is often translated “hell.” Some have supposed that it refers to Satanic influences from hell, which is foolish. Satan has no current relationship to the place of his ultimate judgment, and Dante was in serious error by stating so.

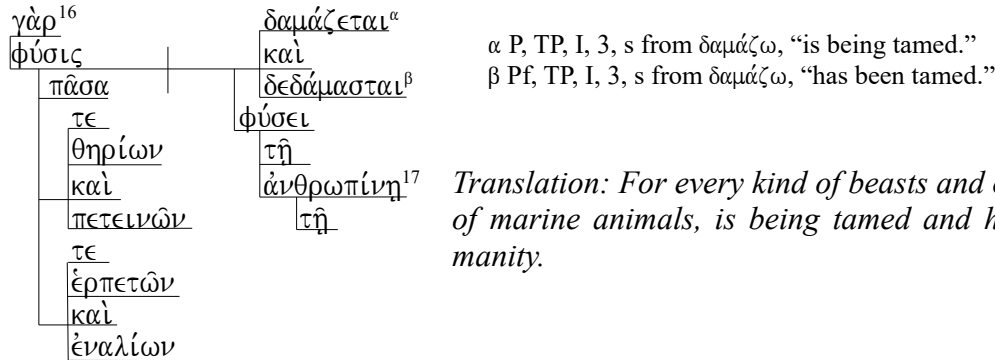
In fact, Ghenna was an actual place on earth where trash was burned, the Valley of Hinnom outside the walls of Jerusalem, where fire was always kept ablaze.¹⁵ As such, it made a good metaphor for perpetual fire, such as the lake of fire mentioned in Revelation. However, here it is best to understand in the Jewish sense of a place of destruction, and to think of the tongue being set on fire by

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means of destruction, indicating the nature of the problem with which James was dealing. Like the perpetual fire in the literal Valley of Hinnom, the tongue, as communication, can destroy metaphorically when misused in the synagogue; such misuse resulted in the spiritual destruction of the people who were being abused by the leadership.

3:7 *πάσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν ἑρπετῶν τε καὶ ἐναλίων δαμάζεται καὶ δεδάμασται τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ.*

A simple declarative sentence with a compound predicate. This is the fourth sentence of this paragraph.



Considerations: As a negative illustration, James uses the nature of man (τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ), literally, *by the nature of the human*. The phrase draws attention to the superiority of human nature compared to the nature (kinds) of animals. The same word, φύσις, is used of every “nature” of various animals, who are subject to mankind.

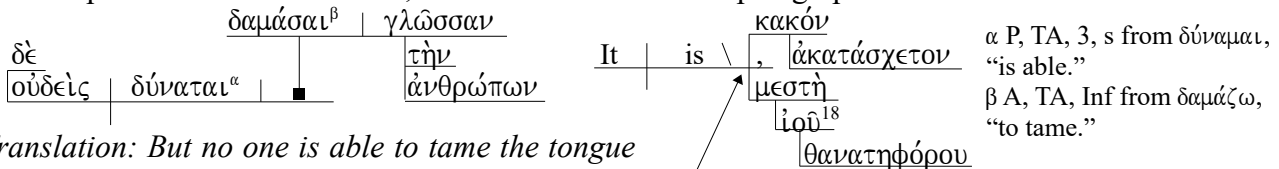
Two categories of living creatures compose the comparison, each category with two kinds of animals. Man has tamed various kinds of animals from each category. The first category is “beasts and birds.” The word *beasts* (θηρίων) is a diminutive of θῆρ, small animals, but came to be used of any quadruped. The word *birds* means something that flies, but here is used of birds rather than insects or other types of flying animals.

The second category consists of reptiles and marine animals. The word *reptiles* (ἑρπετῶν) is from the verb ἔρπω, to creep or crawl, and includes both serpents and legged reptiles. The word for marine animals (ἐναλίων) is actually an adjective used as a substantive, meaning “of the sea,” hence any marine animal.

These four classes of animals seem to come from Genesis 9:2. However, here we have an hyperbolic statement, an exaggeration for effect, a common and legitimate figure of speech.

3:8 *τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δύναται ἀνθρώπων δαμάσαι. ἀκατάσχετον κακόν, μεστὴ ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου.*

Two simple declarative sentences, the fifth and sixth of the paragraph.



Translation: But no one is able to tame the tongue of men. It is unrestrainedly wicked, full of death-bringing poison.

Asyndeton. No conjunction exists between the two predicate complements, so I supplied a comma.

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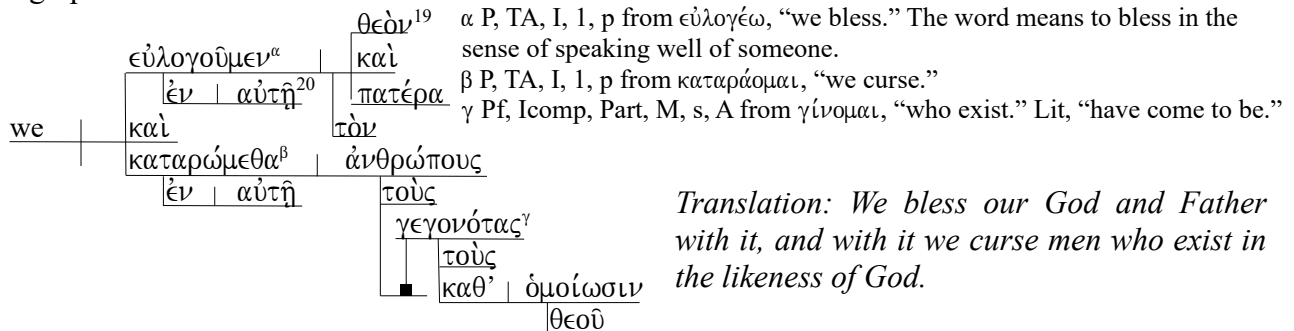
Considerations: These two sentences present a contrast to the previous statement. Man has tamed every kind of wild beast, bird, reptile and marine animal, “But no one is able to tame the tongue of men.” All kinds of negative communication comes from men, which led James to use a hyperbolic statement in the second sentence.

A hyperbole is an exaggeration for effect, such as we have here. James says that the tongue is wicked without restraint. Of course, such is not universally true. People do restrain their speech, which James knew. He is using a hyperbole to indicate one great truth, that speech can harm people. The word wicked (κακόν) is often translated evil, which is misleading. Some communication is wicked because it can produce ill effects, either physical or spiritual. Those in authority in the synagogue were doing just that. James becomes even more precise in his terminology.

He says that the tongue is “full of death-bringing poison.” Another hyperbole, with a concessive function. The purpose of poison is to kill, and therefore it brings death. The tongue is similar, in that what one says, especially a synagogue leader, can harm an individual *as though* the speaker were administering poison. Such is the responsibility of being a teacher. If one misrepresents God’s communication to man, he is administering poison, poison which could be a metaphorical death to the recipient. The teacher must take care to not misrepresent God’s word, ultimate wickedness, similar to poisoning a victim.

3:9 ἐν αὐτῇ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας.

A simple sentence with a compound predicate and an articular participle. The seventh sentence of the paragraph.



Considerations: The tongue is viewed as an instrument by James. He returns to the “categorical we,” that is, teachers in the synagogues. The contrast is striking, and clearly illustrative of the problem with which James is dealing. There is an implied hypocrisy in the contrast presented by this statement. It is regularly suggested that this is a condition of unbelieving mankind, but such is not possible. James was addressing believers, and he himself was a believer. No, this is intended for the believing teachers of the dispersion Jews. He does not mean that all teachers “bless and curse.” Had some been led astray by regular Jewish practices? Possibly, but there is no direct corroboration of that in Scripture.

“Bless” means to speak well of, and has been brought into English as eulogy. It is a broad word which can include praise and thanksgiving under certain circumstances.

One occasionally hears ignorant preachers equating curse with “cussing,” which is defined in a variety of ways, such as “taking the name of the Lord in vain,” or, in some instances, using foul language.

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Cursing is neither. “Taking the Lord’s name in vain” is highly misunderstood today. Consider the following reasons it does not mean *curse*:

1) In the Old Testament God had a proper name, and it wasn’t “God.” The Hebrew name was not to be pronounced because the people of Israel were afraid of taking the name in vain. This name cannot be translated directly into English.

2) It is impossible to take the name of the Lord in vain if you do not know the name of the Lord. It is made up of four Hebrew letters, all consonants, often referred to as the *tetragrammaton* (four letters). Since there are no written vowels in Hebrew, and since the word was not spoken aloud for approximately four thousand years, we can no longer use it today.

3) It is transliterated into modern English as *Yaweh*, which is certainly not how the Hebrew word was pronounced.

4) The ten commandments, which contain the requirement not to take the Lord’s name in vain, are forensic²¹ and no longer applicable to believers. It is evident that in the present age, no one can take the name of the Lord in vain.

5) Using the words God and damn in a vile way today is not equivalent to using the Lord’s name in vain. Rather, such is an act of blasphemy (lit. slander, a different problem altogether, which is often confused with the commandment). However, slander is one of the meanings of the word “curse,” since cursing someone in the name of God is slander, claiming that God is doing something that He is not doing.

The word *curse* carries the idea of bringing down an imprecation upon someone, while desiring for a hurtful thing to happen to them. It does not mean to speak bad or dirty words, so it is not equal to the idea of *cussing*. It is often associated with calling upon a deity to hurt someone, to bring a curse upon them. Friberg says concerning this verb that it means in the middle form “as stating that a supernatural power will cause harm to someone....” See Luke 6:28, which shows that cursing people did occur in Jesus’ day among the Jews.

God does not curse people today, for that is reserved for a future day (Matthew 25:41). However, it appears that Jesus did curse *things*. Peter considered the words of Jesus concerning a fig tree in Mark 11:14 a curse (see Mark 11:21).

Cursing is common in animistic religions and various kinds of superstition based beliefs, such as voodoo. Today, God does not damn people, which means to bring supernatural judgment on them physically, or to consign them to hell, and it is a despicably slanderous idea to think so.

So, just what were these religious leaders doing? It appears that they were appealing to God to bring harm on people, to put a “curse” upon them. Perhaps they were cursing the Gentiles in their communities. However, this is not an acceptable act for any Christian. It is especially onerous when one realizes that this was happening in James’ day among Jewish teachers. The reason James gives for not doing so is because of a doctrine that is not often taught today, except in a very cursory way. With their tongue they were cursing men “who exist in the likeness of God.” When God created mankind, He did so in His own likeness. Much debate has been entered between theologians in this area, which is beyond the scope of these notes.

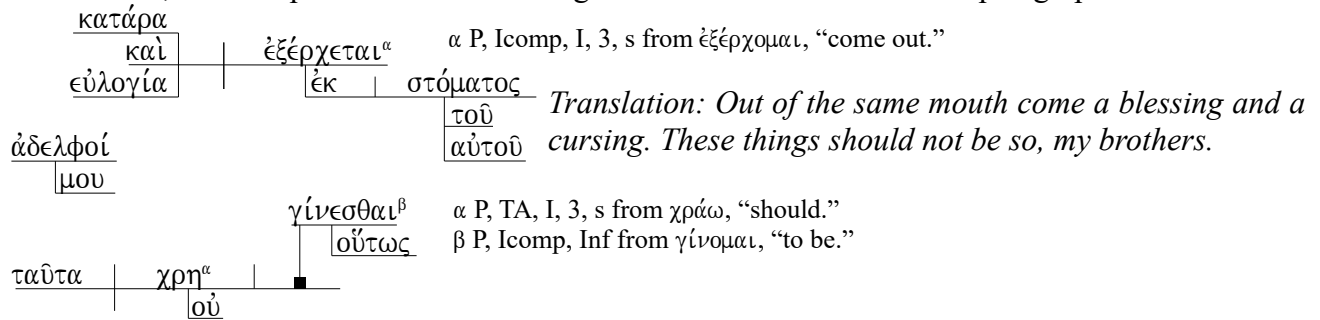
No matter what a person’s conclusion is concerning likeness, the basic meaning is clear. There is a similarity in the non-physical nature of both man and God, who created him. This probably involves

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self-awareness, and the ability to think in spiritual terms. Therefore, to curse a human being, ultimately call upon God to condemn him to ultimate judgment, is something no one should enter into, especially a synagogue leader. Such condemnation must be left in God’s hands alone.

3:10 ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ στόματος ἐξέρχεται εὐλογία καὶ κατάρα. οὐ χρή ἀδελφοί μου ταῦτα οὕτως γίνεσθαι.

Two sentences, both simple declarative. The eighth and ninth sentences of the paragraph.

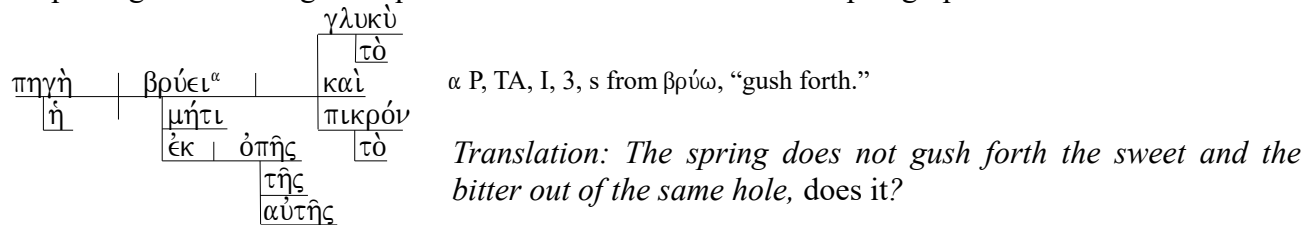


Considerations: The anomaly of both a blessing and a cursing from the same mouth is expressed in this and the next two verses. It is, according to James in the next few verses, contrary to nature for this to happen. Hence he indicates that these two things should not come forth from the same source.²² The illustrations he uses for this are telling.

“**These things ought not to be**” is a strong negative. “To be” is not from εἶμι, as one might expect, but is the present infinitive of γίνομαι. The idea is that these two things, blessing and cursing, ought not to continue to occur from the same source. James is not just condemning the cursing, but is railing against the hypocrisy of the two kinds of speech from the same individual, a hypocritical act indeed.

3:11 μήτι ἢ πηγὴ ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρῦει τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρὸν;

A simple negative interrogative question. The tenth sentence of this paragraph.

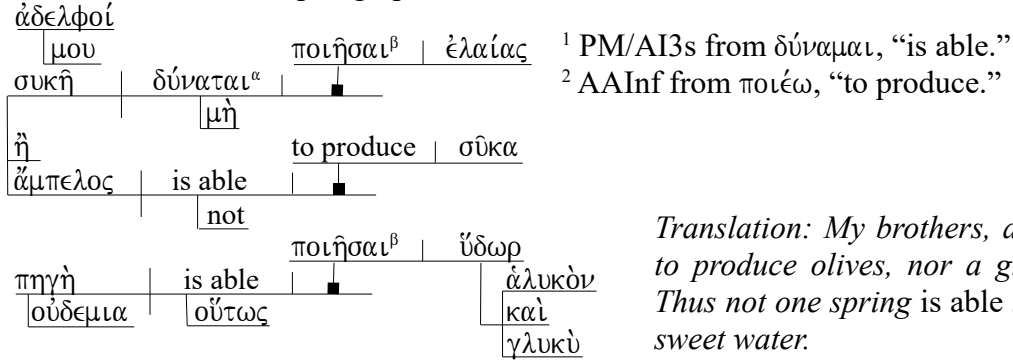


Considerations: In nature, something which produces two opposite things cannot be. The first illustration of this, formed as a rhetorical question with an obvious answer, is that of a spring. A spring cannot produce both sweet and bitter water at the same time. A spring is an apt illustration, in that it produces sweet water which is beneficial to its drinker, or else bitter, undrinkable water which can bring harm. Mixing the two is not possible in nature, so how should blessing and cursing come out of the same human source? Herein lies the hypocrisy with which James was dealing, and why he spends so much time on the issue.

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3:12 μὴ δύναται ἀδελφοί μου συκὴ ἐλαίας ποιῆσαι ἢ ἄμπελος σῦκα; οὕτως οὐδεμία πηγὴ ἄλυκόν καὶ γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ.

Two sentences, the first is compound interrogative, the second is simple declarative. The eleventh and twelfth sentences of this paragraph.



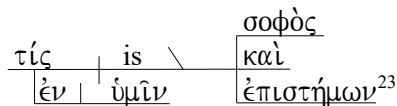
Considerations: The illustration continues by comparing two kinds of trees. A fig tree cannot produce olives, nor an olive tree figs. Then James returns to the figure of a spring, though he uses sweet and salty as the products. James’ argument is clear, and commanding. Some teachers are engaged in a practice that is contrary to God’s program at that time. Some have suggested that they learned this practice from the imprecatory Psalms of David. Such Psalms were time and circumstance limited and dealt with the anointed of the Lord bringing God’s judgment upon those who defied the national program of the theocratic kingdom. The psalmist was born along by the Holy Spirit to produce those writings. The imprecations of David are not a blueprint for later practice.

James returns to the basic illustration to emphasize the idea of source. As brothers in Christ, leaders should be analogous to the sweet water spring, producing that which is beneficial to the one who drinks, but this is not all there is to it. James is calling into question the very moral character of the leadership by their being the source of both sweet and salty. This terrible situation had to stop.

Summary: We conclude from the first paragraph of chapter three that there was a serious leadership problem among the teachers of the dispersed Israelites. This problem was one of moral character, which James identified as both blessing and cursing coming from the same source, that is, out of the mouths of the so-called teachers. Specifically, there was hypocrisy involved, as well as the moral violation of calling a curse down upon an individual, contextually, upon a fellow in the synagogue.

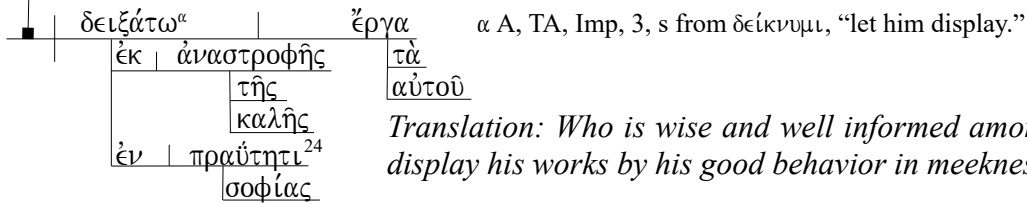
3:13 τίς σοφὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμων ἐν ὑμῖν; δεῖξάτω ἐκ τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἐν πραύτητι σοφίας.

Two sentences. The first is simple interrogative, and the second is simple imperative. These two sentences begin a new paragraph which extends through verse eighteen.



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The wise and well informed one



Translation: Who is wise and well informed among you? Let him display his works by his good behavior in meekness of wisdom.

Considerations: James is still addressing the leadership in the Jewish synagogues. He presents the solution to the problem of the first paragraph by indicating strongly what was needed, being wise and well-informed. Again we note that is the character of the individuals that is at issue. Can anything be less wise and ignorant than calling down a curse? Contextually, the prepositional phrase ἐν ὑμῖν is a locative of sphere referring to the group of leaders, not the Israelites in general. Among that group of teachers there must have been some that met the requirements of teaching leadership.

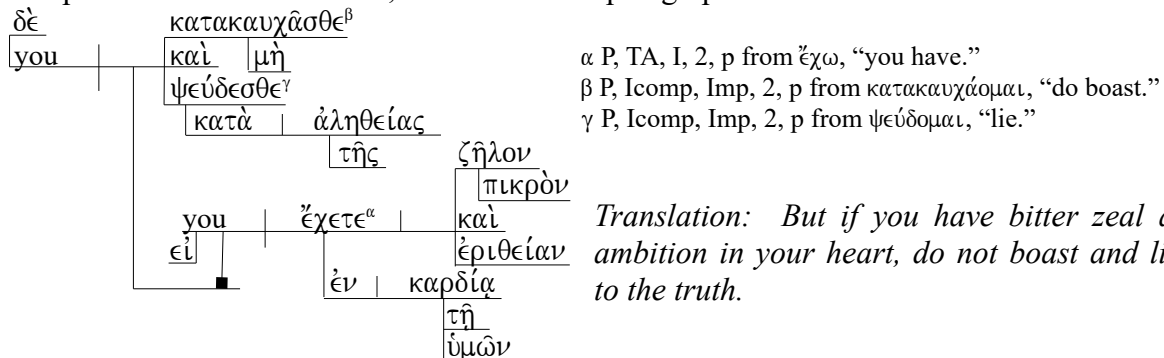
James calls upon such leaders to display (an imperative) their works. They *must* be seen by their *good behavior*, a clear reference back to “doing” as opposed to just “hearing.”

The prepositional phrase “in meekness of wisdom” (ἐν πραύτητι σοφίας) indicates the correct attitude of the one working. “Meekness” is not shyness, but more akin to controlled boldness that maintains humility, and does not include vindictive practice, which was displayed by those teachers who were cursing others. James discusses this vindictiveness beginning in the next sentence.

Does of wisdom refer to 1) meekness characteristic of wisdom (descriptive genitive), 2) meekness consisting of wisdom (genitive of apposition), or 3) meekness brought about by wisdom (objective genitive)? We must discount 1) and 2) as wisdom in James denotes not the internal attitude but the revelation from God, whereas meekness is primarily internal. Number 3), meekness brought about by wisdom, is the best understanding, since meekness correctly understood (see End Note in diagram) can only come about by a correct understanding of the wisdom of God as revealed in Scripture.

3:14 εἰ δὲ ζῆλον πικρὸν ἔχετε καὶ ἐριθείαν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν, μὴ κατακαυχᾶσθε καὶ ψεύδεσθε κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας.

A complex conditional sentence, the third in this paragraph.



Translation: But if you have bitter zeal and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie contrary to the truth.

Considerations: In verses 14-17 James identifies the specific wickedness in the minds and actions of the ungodly teachers among the dispersion Jews, as well as his solution to the problem.

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The sentence before us is a first class condition, indicating that, indeed, some teachers had “bitter zeal and selfish ambition” in their hearts, that is, in their minds. It was this condition that prompted the previously wicked hypocritical action of blessing and cursing some of their fellows. From Paul we know that both zeal (sometimes translated jealousy) and selfish ambition are works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20ff). These actions come out of the indwelling sin principle. Because of the tenor of this chapter, we understand that these teachers were in a perpetual state of carnality. When we get to verse 17 below, we will see James’ solution to this problem.

As a work of the flesh, zeal is the act of striking out against an opponent because of possible personal loss, or loss in position or authority. This striking out can take many forms, but all are a sub-set of zeal. In this case, zeal consists of teachers striking out verbally against their victims, specifically cursing them. It is likely that the teachers were being either challenged as to their fitness as leaders, or were reacting out of bitterness toward those they were supposed to be teaching. In this case, the adjective *bitter* refers to the attitude, while *zeal* refers to the act.

Associated with the zeal was another work of the flesh, selfish ambition. The inclusion of this word is profound, as it implies political in-fighting within the synagogue. The word is sometimes translated “dispute,” but they are those disputes that arise from desiring a position of political power by attracting followers. Marvin Vincent makes the following statement concerning the word:

From ἐρίθος (*erithos*), hired servant, ἐριθεία (*eritheia*) is, primarily, *labor for hire*. . . , and is applied to those who serve in official positions for hire or for other selfish purposes, and, in order to gain their ends, promote party spirit or faction. (Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, IV, pg. 165.)

Herein lies another reason for the cursing of others, a desire to lord it over them, to keep them in their place. A person who promotes his own party is one who desires to tell others what to do in areas that are none of his concern. This was not friendly debate, but contained attempts to control the teaching of others.

Since the conditions of zeal and selfish ambition prevailed in the hearts of some teachers, James commands those who are “wise and well-informed” to expunge such attitudes and actions. In a two-fold imperative, he commands that first they do not boast, and second that they do not lie, two things that the wicked teachers were evidently doing in their factional debates.

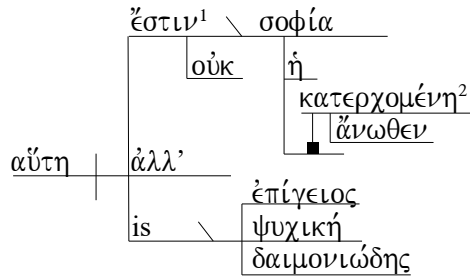
While the verb *boast* does have a positive use in Scripture, here the use is purely negative. It is equivalent to bragging about one’s superiority in some area. The exact form of the boasting that was occurring in the synagogues is not stated by James, but it was evidently accompanied by lying, a satanic temptation. The probability is that some were lying about themselves so as to promote themselves, which James forbids. James says that this lying is contrary (κατά) to the truth, by which he undoubtedly means that in their debates, the abusive teachers were misrepresenting the truth, probably in reference to the actual teaching of Scripture.

We can see from this short sentence the serious problem among the teaching function in the synagogues of the dispersion. The carnality among teachers was working itself out in such a way as to be extremely abusive to those who they opposed.

3:15 οὐκ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ σοφία ἄνωθεν κατερχομένη ἀλλ’ ἐπίγειος ψυχικὴ δαιμονιώδης.

A simple declarative sentence, with a compound predicate. The fourth sentence of the paragraph.

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Translation: This is not the truth which comes down from above, but is earthly, soulish, demoniacal.

¹ PcompleteI3s from εἰμί, “is.”

² PcompletePartFSN from κατέρχομαι, “which comes down.”

Considerations: The word “this” refers back to the untruth of the previous sentence. James describes that falsehood as to its source and character. It is not the truth that comes down from above. These wicked teachers were perverting the truth of Scripture, the wisdom from above, and misapplying it in some way, a great temptation that is still with us today.

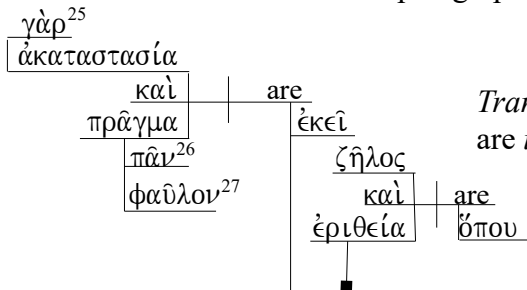
One such perversion can be illustrated by the claims of a “preacher” who was once prominent in our local area. He claimed Scriptural authority to himself, and likened himself to Old Testament prophets who were not to be questioned. He had the word directly from God. When some disagreed, stating that his teaching was contrary to Scripture, he claimed their view a perversion of the truth, and that his “revelation” re-interpreted the meaning of the Bible. He claimed apostolic authority as though he were Peter or Paul. At some point he faded away, having done much harm to his gullible victims.

It is possible that such, and more, was being taught in the synagogues of the dispersion Jews of James’ day and beyond by those who claimed messianic or prophetic authority, and led many Jews astray. Much suffering and harm came from such displays of arrogance and profound lies.

The three-fold description of the lies are “earthly, soulish, demoniacal.” The meaning of “earthly” is clearly a reference to the untruths not being from above. Their source is the earth. The word translated “soulish” is used in Scripture to refer to that which is natural, not of the spirit. Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 2:14 of the unbeliever. Here it is used as the opposite of supernatural. It comes out of the physical relationships of humans on the earth, and is therefore natural. The word “demoniacal” identifies the source of the lies in the activity of demons. This is consistent with other Scriptures that identify lying as being a temptation of Satan.

3:16 ὅπου γὰρ ζήλος καὶ ἐριθεία ἐκεῖ ἀκαταστασία καὶ πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα.

A complex declarative two-clause sentence. Both are noun clauses, the “be” class verbs are understood. This is the fifth sentence of this paragraph.



Translation: For where zeal and selfish ambition are, there are instability and every kind of contemptible activity.

Considerations: This sentence is introduced by an inferential (illative) γὰρ. The statement is inferred from verses 14 and 15. Again James refers to zeal and selfish ambition, explaining that they are accompanied by other problems. Instability indicates that a state of disorder exists, a state among his

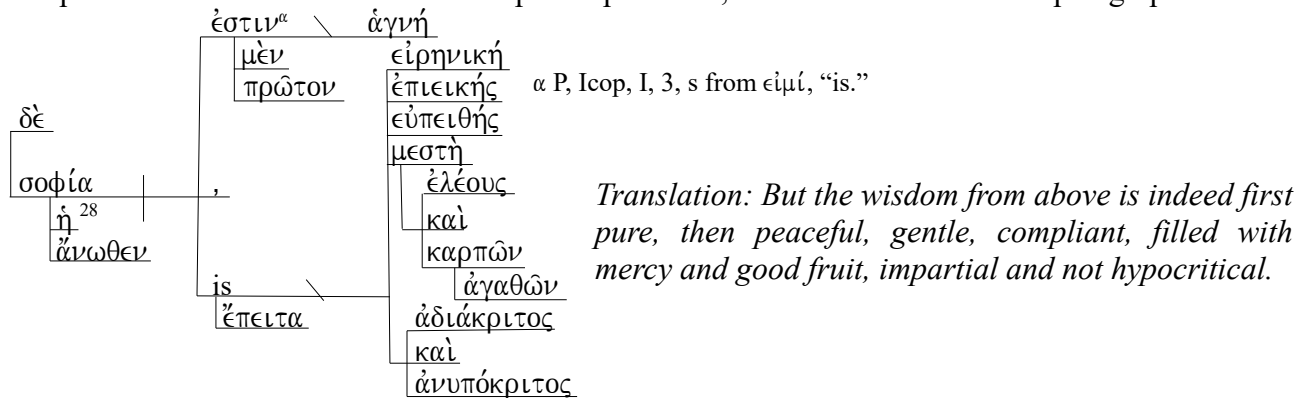
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readers that was evident to James. If they wondered why so much instability was evident, James provides the answer: it is the fault of the wickedness of the zealous and ambitious teachers. Furthermore, every kind of contemptible activity accompanies the same wickedness.

It appears that the Jewish communities were rife with wrong-doing, which is associated with a perversion of the teaching from such leaders.

3:17 ἡ δὲ ἄνωθεν σοφία πρῶτον μὲν ἀγνή ἐστὶν ἔπειτα εἰρηνικὴ ἐπιεικὴς εὐπειθὴς μεστὴ ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀδιάκριτος καὶ ἀνυπόκριτος.

A simple declarative sentence with a compound predicate, the sixth sentence of the paragraph.



Considerations: The last two sentences in chapter three are an appeal to right living. The problems which were so prevalent among the dispersion synagogues needed to be replaced by positive attitudes and actions. This is James' solution to zeal and selfish ambition mentioned above.

The wisdom from above refers to the revelation of God found in the Hebrew Scriptures, not to the individual wisdom of the believer. Such wisdom, we have been told, is not earthly wisdom which was currently at hand (3:15). This above wisdom is described in eight ways by James.

1) First it is pure. James grammatically distinguishes the first quality of God's wisdom from the remaining seven, not because it is more important, but because it is basic to all the rest. If such wisdom is not pure, it is contaminated, as is earthly wisdom. The implication is that there is no taint of unrighteousness in God's revealed wisdom.

2) Then the seven other descriptions of wisdom naturally follow from its purity. The word *peaceful* actually carries the idea of being able to produce peace. It could be translated "peaceable," which is somewhat awkward. Nevertheless, God's wisdom is opposed to the strife and turmoil that was occurring among the Hebrews at this time.

3) The word translated gentle (ἐπιεικὴς) is difficult to render into English, as it contains the concepts of being fair and considerate of others, something that was apparently rare among the dispersion Jews. ATR correctly writes that there is no equivalent word in English.²⁹

4) The word compliant (εὐπειθὴς) originally emphasized obedience, being compliant to requirements, but came to be associated with reasonableness, being open to reason.

5) & 6) The actual adjective describing wisdom is full, which I have translated *filled*. The word *full* is indeterminate, and must be accompanied by some content. In Greek that content is expressed by the

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two objective genitives *of mercy* and *of good fruit*. This is an awkward construction in English, so I have paraphrased it as English expresses the same thought, “filled with mercy and good fruit.”

In this case, *mercy* carries the idea of not demanding retribution against wrong-doing. Here it is not so much a legal word, as a personal relationship word. If someone treats you wrongly, do not demand satisfaction by returning the wrong doing. Show mercy.

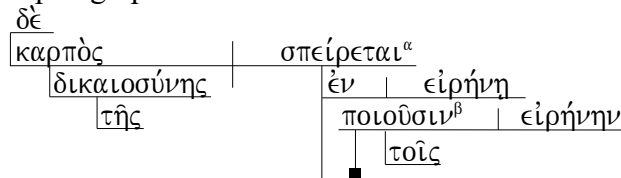
Good fruit is actually plural in the original, “good fruits.” Fruit is used in the sense of those things which are produced by God’s revealed wisdom, and it will be explained in the following verse in specific terms. The word *good* is used as a qualifier, indicating that this fruit are positive, beneficial products of wisdom.

7) & 8) The final two qualities of revealed wisdom are closely associated grammatically. Unlike the previous two, which are subsets of “filled,” these two stand directly parallel to numbers 2-4, and are closely associated in meaning, *impartial* and *not hypocritical*. Both are negative qualities, not positive, which reinforces the teaching.

Here James returns to the basic problem he addressed in beginning in Chapter Two, playing favorites and hypocrisy. In a sense, these two words sum up the problems facing Christian Hebrews among the dispersion Jews. But God’s wisdom does not allow these two activities, as they are contrary to His very nature.

3:18 καρπὸς δὲ τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἐν εἰρήνῃ σπείρεται τοῖς ποιούσιν εἰρήνην.

A simple declarative sentence with an articular instrumental participle. The seventh and last sentence of this paragraph.



^α P, TP, I, 3, s from σπείρω, “is sown.”

^β P, TA, Part, M, s, L from ποιέω, “by the ones who make.” An instrumental participle.

Translation: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by the ones who make peace.

Considerations: This sentence almost seems to be an afterthought, but in fact, it is a bridge, a segue between the thoughts of Chapters Three and Four.

James repeats the word *fruit*, but here it is singular. The fruit consists of righteousness (genitive of apposition), which produces many correct actions (hence the plural form *fruits* above). James must mean legal righteousness, the keeping of the legal requirements, as that has been his approach all along, which is consistent with the revealed wisdom of the Old Testament, the Scriptures then available to the Dispersion Jews.

Here, however, we have an extension of the fruit metaphor. The fruit of righteousness “is sown in peace,” another reference to the problems within the Jewish community. Peace here means peace between people, its most common and normal meaning. Right living produces the natural product of peace between people.

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The passive voice verb “is sown,” refers to the activities of right living people who are described by the participle phrase, “by the ones who make peace.” Peace between people must be maintained under law; it is not a natural result of the human condition because of the principle of indwelling sin. Herein we have again the implication of legal rather than a grace-based lifestyle. James and his readers knew nothing of the fruit of the Spirit peace, at least, not as a direct result of indwelling. That information had to wait for Paul’s writings to be understood.

Endnotes

- 1 The present imperative, when negative, often forbids the continuation of a practice. So the translation “Do not be many teachers” (μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε) could be stated, “Stop being many teachers.” The reasons for this prohibition are expressed in the rest of the paragraph. It seems clear that James had received word of many being allowed to teach in the synagogues who were disqualified because of their aberrations in doctrine and practice.
- 2 We observe again that the synagogue was not a place of worship, which was limited to the temple in Jerusalem, but a place of learning and association. Almost any man could teach in these places, as they were, at the time, very loosely organized. The Hebrews did not think in terms of the “clergy-laity” distinction, and there were no “professional” rabbis. Oesterley observes, “...there was very little restriction in the matter of teachers; almost anyone would be listened to who desired to be heard.” *Expositor’s Greek Testament* on James 3:1, pg. 449.
- 3 See *Expositor’s Greek Testament* on James 3:1, pg 449. “It is the greatest mistake to suppose that διδάσκαλοι here is equivalent to Rabbis in the technical sense.”
- 4 See *Expositor’s Greek New Testament* on James 3:1, pg 449-450.
- 5 πολλα is a substantive neuter adjective. ATR (WP) makes it a cognate accusative or general reference. Actually, it’s a substantival adjective acting as a direct object.
- 6 ἅπαντες is a simple adjective with more force than πᾶς, but not as strong as ὅλος. Here it modifies the pronominal suffix of the verb, which it follows. “We all” in the sense of the whole group under discussion, teachers, of which James was one, hence the *we*. See the previous sentence notes on διδάσκαλοι.
- 7 The emphatic placement of the genitive τῶν ἵππων is quite unusual. It is actually part of the prepositional phrase εἰς τὰ στόματα (see diagram). James must have wanted to get to the point quickly here, so as to force his comprehension on the readers.
- 8 TP, the critical text has εἰ δὲ here, a difficult reading. The majority text reading is preferred. Even though it is an aorist imperative verb, ἴδε technically is an expletive, used as an interjection, much like the English “Look!” Such expletives are truncated sentences, with an understood subject, but in modern speech, as in Biblical times, such considerations are ignored.
- 9 πρὸς with the articular infinitive τὸ πείθεσθαι (to obey) indicates purpose.
- 10 ἴδου is another aorist imperative interjection.
- 11 A πηδάλιον (from πηδός, an oar) was originally an oar used for steering a boat, but came to mean a rudder. According to Liddell and Scott, Greek ships generally had two rudders connected with a bar, and worked by a tiller.
- 12 ἡ γλῶσσα, the tongue, is a figure of speech called personification. Note that the tongue is said to make great boasts, when, in fact, it is the person who operates the tongue.
- 13 One wonders what those who made the chapter and verse divisions were thinking. The application of each of these two metaphors was placed in the verse following, in which the second sentence begins a new illustrative metaphor. Often chapter divisions are placed in the most awkward positions. Perhaps it would be better to eliminate all the chapter and verse divisions in the New Testament and just number the paragraphs and sentences.
- 14 The adverb οὕτως is placed first in the actual clause. It could be considered introductory to the entire sentence, since it inferential. But the adverbial idea is strong, and it is the verbal idea of

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being *set in place among our members* that is the actual inference, so I decided to diagram it as an adverb rather than an inferential particle, like γάρ.

- 15 Concerning γέεννα, Friberg's Lexicon states, "...literally *valley of Hinnom*, a ravine south of Jerusalem where fires were kept burning to consume the dead bodies of animals, criminals, and refuse...." Friberg then goes on to say, "...figuratively in the Gospels and James for *hell*, a fiery place of eternal punishment for the ungodly dead (MT 5.22)." There are three errors in this second statement.

First, if Gehenna refers to the lake of fire, it is a mistake to use the word "eternal" of it. The lake of fire is a created place, and is in no sense eternal in the sense that God is. Indeed, the word translated "eternal" is sometimes used in the sense of "on-going, perpetual."

The second error pertains to the reference to Matthew 5:22, where the phrase "Gehenna of fire" is mistranslated "hell of fire" (ASV), or "hell fire" (KJV). The reference there is actually an allusion to capital punishment rather than the eschatological condemnation of the lake of fire.

The final error is Friberg's reference to the current epistle, James. The word Gehenna is used only once, here in 3:6, and is clearly not a reference to the lake of fire, or even of Hades. Contextually, it is a reference to destruction (see Considerations).

- 16 The γάρ here is explanatory, not inferential meaning that this sentence is inferred from the previous discussion. Rather, it is an illustration from nature concerning taming.
- 17 ἀνθρωπίνος is an adjective form of the noun ἄνθρωπος. It literally means *human*, though here I have translated the instrumental use with τῇ φύσει as *by humanity*, a paraphrase at best. But the literal translation "by the nature of the human" is meaningless in standard English.
- 18 ἰοῦ is sometimes considered an "adverbial genitive of reference." This is inaccurate. While it shares a form with the genitive, the so-called adverbial genitives are nothing of the sort. They are simply nouns used as adverbs, a not uncommon occurrence in language. True genitives are purely adjectival nouns, another regular language use.
- 19 An interesting TP occurs here. The critical text has τὸν κύριον καὶ πατέρα rather than τὸν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα. The critical text cannot be right. Here we have a clear example of the fallacy of the textual techniques of the critical editors. Even Oesterley, who generally accepts the critical text as superior, agrees that the correct reading is θεόν rather than κύριον, "Κύριον can scarcely be right; Θεόν is not, it is true well attested..., but it is required on account of the καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ...." *Expositor's Greek Testament* in James, page 453. By "not well attested" Oesterley falls into the trap of thinking that the Egyptian text type is superior because it is older, a view that simply cannot stand. The majority text is just as "well attested" as the Egyptian, and generally more grammatically correct. The idea that the majority text was "adjusted" to make it so is foolish, as it is much more likely that errors would depart from good grammar, rather than tend toward it. The assumption of the critical editors that the more difficult text is to be preferred is assuming that the majority text was willfully changed, a very unlikely circumstance. It is much more likely that transcription errors or willful changes occurred in the Alexandrian text community. James 3:9 is an excellent example of that fact.
- 20 The two prepositional phrases ἐν αὐτῇ, are instrumentals. The tongue is viewed as an instrument that produces either blessing or cursing.

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- 21 The ten commandments are not applicable today, but not because they are irrelevant, but because they are forensic. Their morality is still legitimate, but each has penalty attached as a means of forcing compliance. Today believers are no longer under any law to force compliance (Romans 6:14). Under the law, the only means to keep the law was the threat of death. Under grace, that threat is eliminated, having been replaced by grace ability to meet the requirement. When we say that the ten commandments are not applicable today, we do not mean that believers have no requirements, but grace requirements are not forensic, they have no penalty attached, only provision for accomplishment. To use the ten commandments today as they were originally intended to be used is impossible, for today's believers are not under a theocratic government as were the Israelites under law. The Israelites could, and did, execute people for violating the ten commandments, but believers today have no such authority.
- 22 The issue is the source of the cursing and blessing, not the time of the events. James does not necessarily mean that an individual would bless God, and immediately turn around and curse his fellow. The cursings were undoubtedly the result of the synagogue debates over Scripture that were causing a rise in temper, and an uncontrolled verbal assault was the result.
- 23 The adjective ἐπιστήμων looks like a genitive plural, but is actually a nominative singular. The genitive singular ending is -ουος.
- 24 The word translated *meekness* (πραΰτης) occurs twelve times in the N. T. The adjective form *meek* (πραΰς) occurs four times, three occurrences in Matthew, and one in 1 Peter. It is a highly misunderstood word, and there is no English equivalent. Vine makes an excellent argument concerning this word: "The meaning of *prautes* is not readily expressed in English, for the terms meekness, mildness, commonly used, suggest weakness and pusillanimity to a greater or less extent, whereas *prautes* does nothing of the kind. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find a rendering less open to objection than 'meekness'; 'gentleness' has been suggested, but as *prautes* describes a condition of mind and heart, and as 'gentleness' is appropriate rather to actions, this word is no better than that used in both English Versions (Vine means the KJV and the English Revised). It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power. The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but the Lord was 'meek' because he had the infinite resources of God at His command. Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all." W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Electronic Edition, E-Sword. Under the word.
- It is obvious from a New Testament study of the uses that Vine is accurate in his assessment of this word. It is a word of restrained internal power, rather than weakness.
- 25 Inferential γάρ is the most common use of γάρ in the New Testament. It is sometimes called illative γάρ by grammarians.
- 26 The adjective πᾶς, when in an anarthrous construction as here, can mean "every kind of" in the singular, and "all kinds of" in the plural.
- 27 The adjective φαῦλος has various shades of meaning. Here it means bad in the moral or ethical sense, though not necessary malignantly evil.

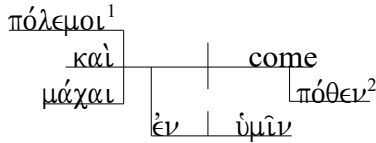
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- 28 An article of previous reference.
- 29 See ATR *Word Pictures*, under the verse.

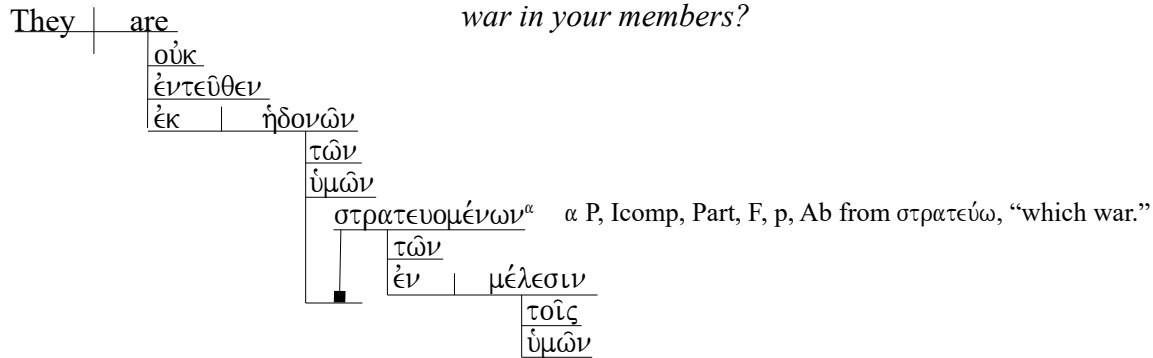
Epistle of James
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4:1 πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν;

Two simple negative rhetorical interrogative sentences. The verbs of both sentences are elliptical. Begins a paragraph that extends through verse 6.



Translation: From where come wars and fights among you? Are they not from here, from your pleasures, which war in your members?



Considerations: Here we have a question and answer, with the answer also couched in the form of a question. This is sometimes called the catechetical method, though it is a method often used by good teachers who knew nothing of Socrates. After Paul wrote, knowledgeable Christians would answer the first question by saying that wars and fights come out of the principle of indwelling sin, the flesh. James does not use Paul’s terms, but asks a second negative rhetorical question which expects the positive answer, “They come from your pleasures.” *Pleasures* may have been James’ way of expressing what Paul would have termed the lust of the flesh.

The word wars (πόλεμοι) refers to the state of war in which they were engaged. The word fights (μάχαι) indicates the individual conflicts that believers had with one another. This is in direct contrast to the peaceful wisdom from above James presented in 3:17-18. The obvious answer to the question presented is that this strife does not come from God, from above, but out of the internal fallen nature of the warriors. Paul often used the word flesh to refer to this spiritual enemy. He also calls it indwelling sin in Romans 7. James probably would not have, as yet, been aware of this terminology.

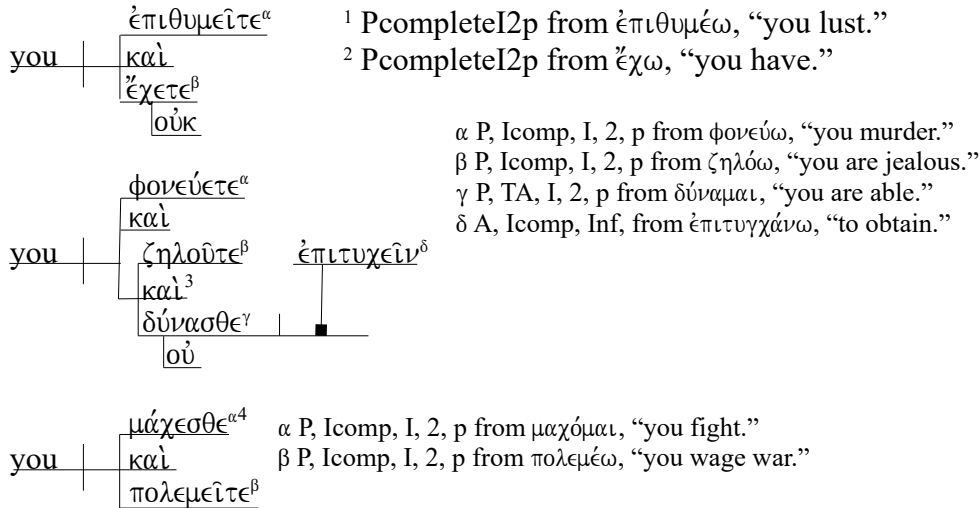
The warring between the Christian Hebrews started within the individual, which worked its way out through the members of the physical body. James uses members here much as Paul did, referring to parts of the physical body. The word pleasures (ἡδονῶν) is used only twice in the N.T. See Luke 8:14. The word has come into English as the root for *hedonism*, the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake. Such pleasure does not satisfy, and must become a regular part of life.

The desire for pleasures produced strife between believers, since the indwelling sin principle renders a person susceptible to more of the works of the flesh. An individual is not drawn to every work of the flesh equally, so James must be referring to a problem between certain individuals who were involved in fighting and personal warfare. Strife may have been wide-spread, but it would not have been universal.

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4:2 ἐπιθυμείτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε. φονεύετε, καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν. μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε. οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς.

Sentences three through six of this paragraph. Each are simple declarative. The first three have compound predicates. The fourth contains an articular infinitive as the object of the preposition.



Translation: You lust and you do not have. You murder and you are zealous but are not able to obtain. You fight and wage war.

Considerations: James continues the discussion of strife and pleasure from the previous verse. “You lust” refers back to the pleasures of the previous statement. They lust for the fulfillment of their pleasures, the works of the flesh, but they do not have. The problem with the flesh-works is that the pleasure is transitory. It’s virtually over once the process stops. Often there are dangers, as with drunkenness, which produces a lack of self control. Others, such as sexual promiscuity, can have long range negative effects, some quite dangerous, such as disease. The flesh-works do not satisfy over the long term.

“**You murder,**” is not to be taken absolutely. James is possibly referring to judicial murder, murder through the courts, which seems to have been occurring. While it is possible that individual murder could take place, it must have been rare, else the Roman authorities would have responded forcefully.

“**You are zealous but are not able to obtain**” should be considered a separate but parallel element to “**you murder.**” The καί following ζηλοῦτε is adversative (but), unlike the positive καί (and) following φονεύετε. Being zealous refers to striving to obtain the object of one’s desire at the expense of others. One attempts to obtain satisfaction, to get what one wants, but is not successful, and frustration results.⁵

“**You fight and wage war**” repeats the idea of vs. 1, though here in an accusatory verbal form. Since the accusation immediately follows the statement about not obtaining, the implication is that the warfare and fights include keeping things from others. “I want it, and you can’t have it. It’s mine!” It sounds like children fighting over a toy.

The final sentence in this verse is misplaced. It goes with the next statement in vs. 3. (Or vs. 3 should be part of vs. 2, either works). The two sentences form a couplet which segues from vs. 2 into James’ harshest accusation yet in vs. 4.

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you | ἔχετε^α
 οὐκ | ὑμᾶς | αἰτεῖσθαι^β 6
 διὰ | τὸ | μὴ

α P, Icomp, I, 2, p from ἔχω, “you have.”
 β P, Icomp, Inf from αἰτέω, “do ask.”

Translation: You do not have because you do not ask.

4:3 αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε.
 A complex declarative sentence, the fifth of this paragraph.

you | αἰτεῖτε^α
 καὶ 7
 λαμβάνετε^β
 οὐ
 you | αἰτεῖσθε^γ 8
 διότι | κακῶς
 you | δαπανήσητε^δ 9
 ἵνα | ἐν | ἡδοναῖς
 ταῖς
 ὑμῶν

α P, Icomp, I, 2, p from αἰτέω, “you ask.”
 β P, Icomp, I, 2, p from λαμβάνω, “you receive.”
 γ P, Icomp, I, 2, p from αἰτέω, “you ask.”
 δ A, Icomp, S, 2, p from δαπανᾶω, “you may spend.”

Translation: You ask but you do not receive because you ask wrongly, in order that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Considerations: The discussion segues into a new problem. James continues his discussion concerning wrongful pleasures producing strife, but adds a new element in the second sentence in vs.2, *asking*. Now, asking is not praying. So many make a false assumption here, and include all communication to God under the heading of prayer. However, prayer is a specific act of communication that involves worship.¹⁰ Asking (αἰτέω¹¹), on the other hand, means to make a request of a superior, in this case, God.

The second sentence in vs. 2 indicates that they were not receiving because¹² they had not asked. Some believe they had not asked God because they realized that what they wanted was not legitimate. But the sentence in vs. 3 is explicit. They *were* asking, but for the wrong purpose.

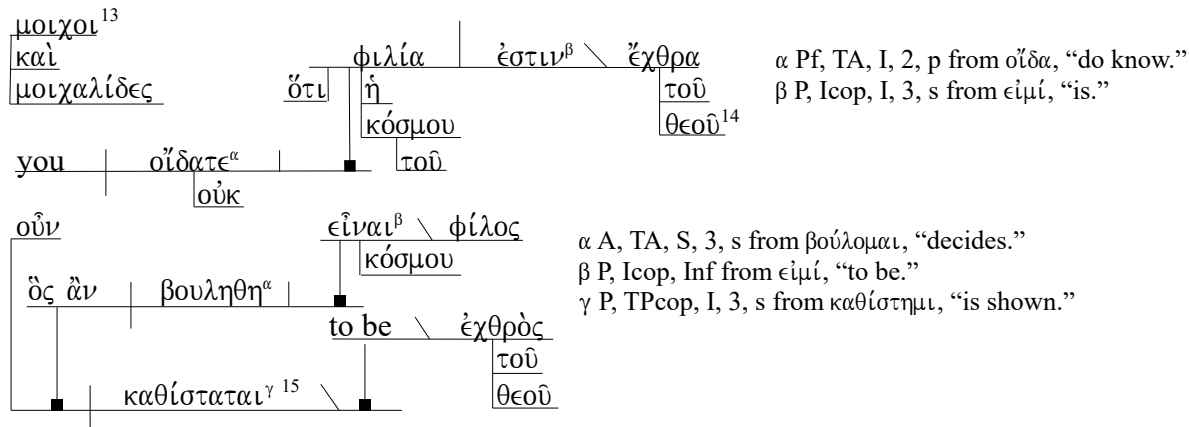
The original readers were asking, but they were not receiving. There is no true paradox here between the statement that they were not asking in vs. 2, and that they were asking in vs. 3. The paradox is only a literary device to emphasize that they were asking wrongly, which indicates that the nature of the asking was incorrect. It’s not so much what they were asking for, but why they were asking. Asking God for things with the wrong purpose is not true asking at all, which defines the asking of vs. 2.

The purpose for their asking is found in the ἵνα clause, “in order that you may spend it on your pleasures.” The word for pleasures is the same as vs. 1 above. They were not asking in order to honor God, but in order to pleasure themselves.

4:4 μοιχοὶ καὶ μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὃς ἂν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται.

Two sentences, the sixth and seventh of the paragraph. The first is complex interrogative, the second is complex declarative.

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Translation: Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred of God? Therefore, whoever decides to be a friend of the world is shown to be an enemy of God.

Considerations: The harshest of James’ direct address statements begins this sentence. There is a textual problem here. The critical text has only “adulteresses.” The reason Metzgar¹⁶ gives for the critical text reading is that it fits with the references to Israel as an unfaithful wife. However, this is specious, as James is not addressing the nation, but a subset of the Hebrew people, dispersed Israelites, and ultimately a subset of the subset, those of the dispersion who are Christians. The nation of Israel did not exist at this time, of which James was aware. I take it then, that the superior reading is as found in the majority text.

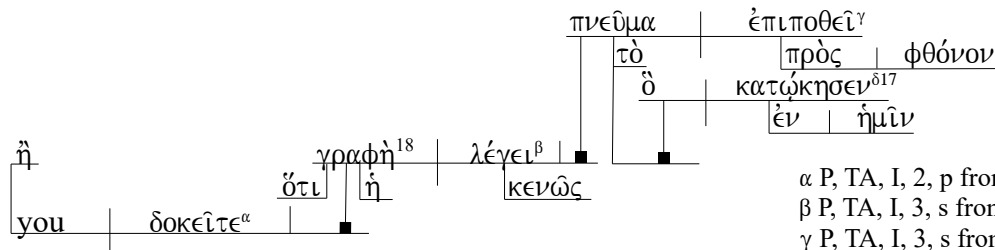
“Adulterers and adulteresses” leaves no one out of James’ condemnation of the dispersion Hebrews, as he uses both masculine and feminine forms. This, as noted, is not referring to Israel as an unfaithful wife, but to literal adultery openly entered into, and reported to James. The rhetorical question which follows gives us a clue as to what was happening.

The rhetorical question “Do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred of God?” expresses the nature of the adultery in question. The negative cast of the question implies that they ought to have known this truth, as it is repeatedly expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures. James is referring to the “world” of the Gentiles in which these Jews were immersed. They had gone beyond the allowed interaction with such, and had entered into their immoral practices. As a result, James makes the precise answer to his question, “Therefore, whoever decides to be a friend of the world is shown to be an enemy of God.” Hence, we see the vile nature of the adultery involved, into which even Christian Jews had evidently entered. One of the weaknesses of the Mosaic law at this time is that it could not enforce its prohibitions. Adulterous Jews could not have been executed by stoning. And the Roman authorities were ambivalent about sexual aberrations.

The world, then, is the “world system” of which both Paul and John taught a Christian separation. But here in James the solution is not New Testament grace provision of Paul and John, but the Old Testament gracious provision of God, which becomes clear in the next two sentences.

4:5 ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκησεν ἐν ἡμῖν;
A complex interrogative sentence, the eighth of the paragraph.

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Translation: Or do you suppose that vainly the Scripture says, The spirit who He caused to dwell in us yearns with envy?

- α P, TA, I, 2, p from δοκέω, “do you suppose.”
- β P, TA, I, 3, s from λέγω, “says.”
- γ P, TA, I, 3, s from ἐπιποθέω, “yearns.”
- δ A, Icomp, I, 3, s from κατοικέω, “He caused to dwell.”

Considerations: James has no specific Scripture in view in this sentence, but is referring to the general teaching of the Hebrew Bible.

The key to understanding this rhetorical question is the conjunction “or,” which indicates that James is continuing his discussion of the previous sentence, which places his readers in a negative light as being friends with the world and enemies of God. This, in turn, is because of their fighting and warring with one another. The sentence before us, then, further explains this tendency in man, which dictates our understanding of the meaning of the words.

The verb δοκεῖτε with its object ὅτι clause helps in our understanding of the comparison. The implication of the question is that they were supposing that the statement of the ὅτι clause was true. But it was not. The first part of the ὅτι clause has as its subject “the Scripture.” As noted above the Scripture refers to the Hebrew Bible. Does the Hebrew Bible speak vainly? Obviously not, but James’ audience had abandoned its normal teaching. The word *vainly*, κενῶς, is from κένος, *empty*, and refers to a lack of content in the Hebrew Scriptures. In other words, James is accusing his readers of assuming that their Scriptures did not speak to the issue at hand, that is, the issue of friendship with the world and enmity toward God. But, in fact, it did. Repeatedly Israel is warned away from consorting with the Gentile world system.

The supposed difficulty in interpretation centers on the object clause, πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκησεν ἐν ἡμῖν, which I have translated, “The spirit who He caused to dwell in us yearns with envy.” Many translations and interpretations of this clause exist. J. Ronald Blue presents his view in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*:

The ambiguous sentence that follows is not a direct quotation of any passage in Scripture. Rather than assume that James quoted some other sacred book, or some unknown Greek translation of the Old Testament, or that he simply referred to the general sense of Scripture, it seems more reasonable to assume that he focused on the quotation in Jas 4:6, a statement clearly taken from Pro 3:34: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

We have previously stated that James is, in fact, referring to the general teaching of the Old Testament. He certainly is not referring directly to the quotation in the next verse from Proverbs 3:34. Because he forgets both the “or” and the previous sentence, Blue finds the interpretation of this statement almost impossible, as shown when he summarizes the various views:

This is one of the most difficult verses to translate in the entire letter. A very literal translation would be, “Or think you that vainly the Scripture says to envy yearns the spirit which

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was made to dwell in you, but He gives great grace.” Is the “spirit” the Holy Spirit or the human spirit? Is the spirit to be taken as the subject of the verb “yearns” or as its object? Is “envy” to be seen as “unrighteous desire” or as “righteous jealousy”? Numerous translations are possible: (a) “The Spirit who indwells you jealously yearns [for you] and He gives more grace.” (b) “He [God] yearns jealously for the Holy Spirit which indwells you and He gives more grace.” (c) “The [human] spirit which indwells you yearns to envy, but He [God] gives more grace.” The NIV favors the latter idea: Or do you think...that the spirit He caused to live in us tends toward envy, but “He gives us more grace?” (Jas 4:6)

In fact, Blue does not even interpret the phrase for himself, but simply refers to the various options that he takes from others. Sadly, this is the method many take. They read other’s views, and then choose one, or in the case of Blue, none. So, one must “go out on a limb” and posit an interpretation. One must come to his own understanding of James’ phrase, but here is my understanding of this writer.

First, one can see from both the diagram and my translation that I view the word spirit most likely to mean the human spirit, not the person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. True, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures repeatedly (though some object to this, saying that the existence of the persons of the Trinity is unknown in the Old Testament). That He is a person and acts as a person in the Hebrew Bible can easily be seen by a thorough study of the Hebrew word for spirit (רוּחַ). Indeed, we find the designation “Holy Spirit” in Isaiah 63:10, where He is said to have become grieved, וַיִּעֲצֹבוּ אֶת־רוּחַ קְדָשׁוֹ, “and they grieved His Holy Spirit.” However, this does not prove that James is referring to the Holy Spirit in this sentence.

In James’ sentence we read τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκησεν ἐν ἡμῖν, “The spirit which He caused to dwell in us.” As stated above, the Holy Spirit did not indwell people permanently in the Old Testament, though He did abide among them from time to time. The phrase “in us” is a normal translation of the phrase ἐν ἡμῖν, which cannot refer to permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the O. T. Scriptures. We must always keep in mind that James is referring to the teaching of the *Hebrew Scriptures*, which were probably the only Scriptures available to his readers when he wrote. But the human spirit *does and always has* dwelt in man. Furthermore, the word “dwell” refers to dwelling in a house, a perfect metaphor for the human spirit dwelling in the human body.

It leaves us to interpret the phrase, πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ, which we have translated, “yearns with envy.” First, we must deal with the verb ἐπιποθεῖ, yearns. The most common translation is “longs,” or “longs for.” Sadly, the KJV translates it “lusts.” The “longs for” phrase is still current in English, but it is beginning to be less used than previously. I chose “yearns” because it carries much the same meaning as “longs,” and is more common in the modern day.

Some have suggested with the word “spirit” is the object rather than the subject of this verb. (See Blue’s statement above.) The Greek *form* can be either, and since it follows the verb, some say it must be the object. This is unfortunate thinking. True, the verb ἐπιποθεῖ is usually transitive active, but what would that mean here? Commonly the object of this verb is an infinitive or a personal pronoun. What would the translation “long for the spirit with envy” mean? No one seems to know.

A second problem occurs. What is the subject of the verb? If it is translated “He is longing for the spirit,” who is longing? God? He would be the first antecedent of the pronoun subject of the third person verb (vs. 4). What would “God yearns for the spirit” mean? It makes no sense to make “spirit” the object, nor to speculate as to what the subject is. A normal reading understands *spirit* to be the subject.

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A third problem with making “spirit” the direct object is the phrase “with (or for) envy.” Only here of the nine times it is used in the New Testament does such a construction follow any form of the verb ἐπιποθέω. Four times, the active voice of this verb is followed by an infinitive (e.g. Romans 1:11). Three times its object is an accusative pronoun (e.g. 2 Corinthians 9:14), and once an accusative noun (1 Peter 2:2). When we define “envy” we will see that the human’s spirit yearning with envy makes perfect sense. Otherwise, the prepositional phrase is left hanging with only speculation to guess at its meaning.

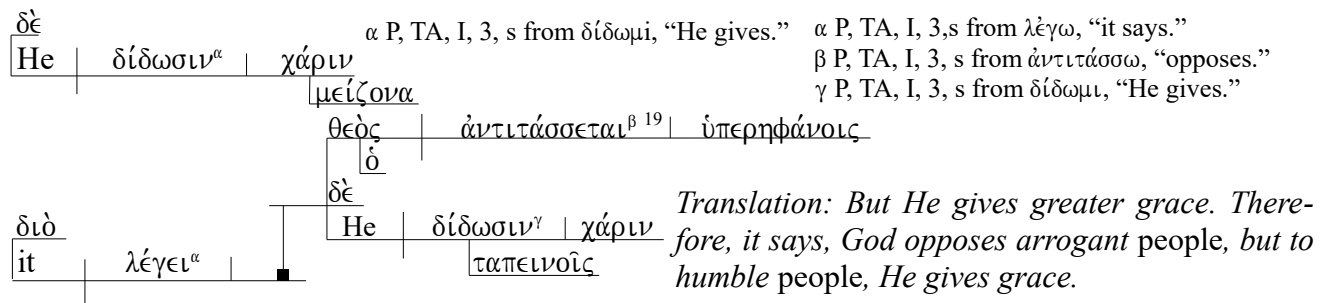
Finally, the word order is irrelevant. The subject of a Greek verb can follow it, precede it, be last in the sentence or first in the sentence. Word order does not speak to making “spirit” the direct object. So, we hold that *spirit* is the subject, a legitimate view, given that it is the *only independent noun* in the sentence.

So we must come to the word “envy” (φθόνος). It is the object of the preposition πρὸς, here correctly translated *with* rather than *for*. Like *yearn*, *envy* also occurs nine times in the New Testament. The eight other times it occurs it is used with a negative connotation. It is used of one of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:21. Pilate knew that the Jews handed Jesus over for crucifixion because of envy (Matthew 27:18; SA Mark 15:20). Envy is listed as a kind of unrighteousness in Romans 1:29. Vine correctly states that envy, “is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word.” I agree with Vine, the evil sense always attaches to this verb, including here in James.

Hence, we may interpret James’ statement as follows: The human spirit yearns with evil feelings of envy because of the prosperity of others. So, from where do the wars and fights among the dispersion Hebrews come? They come from the fallen human nature, specifically from the human spirit’s yearning with envy against others who have advantage or prosperity that they want.

4:6 μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν. διὸ λέγει, ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσεται ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

Two sentences. The first is simple declarative. The second is complex declarative. These are ninth and tenth sentences of this paragraph.



Considerations: In the statement “He (God) gives” the pronominal suffix refers back to the distant antecedent in vs. 4.

The phrase “greater grace” must be defined carefully. The basic idea of “great” is large. The O.T. idea is that grace is variable in amount, based on conditions. The comparative adjective *greater* simply means “more grace.” But then, we must ask, what is grace? For the answer to that we must analyze the second sentence in this verse carefully.

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James points out that “it (the Hebrew Bible) says,” referring to a specific passage, Proverbs 3:34. James (like 1 Peter 5:5) quotes the LXX²⁰ here. The word translated *arrogant people* refers to the haughty, the high-minded. But to the humble, God gives grace. Grace carries the idea of provision. God provides what is necessary to overcome the problem of strife to those who are humble, not to those who are high-minded. But this is conditional grace, not New Testament grace.²¹

Today, God places no conditions on believers to receive grace. To James, grace is only available to the humble, not to the high minded. The problem of high minded arrogance finds its source in Satanic temptation, not the flesh. According to James, for a person to receive this grace to overcome Satan, he must first exercise personal humility. From there comes the ability to avoid the flesh problem of wars and fights between the arrogant. James is being faithful to the Scriptures which are available to him for overcoming the problem among the dispersion Jews. But since the transition from law to grace, grace has been provided to overcome the Satanic temptations apart from any self-effort.

4:7 ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ, ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύζεται ἀφ’ ὑμῶν.

A compound declarative sentence, the first in the paragraph which continues through verse 10.

οὖν		ὑποτάγητε ^α ²²			
			θεῷ		
you		δὲ	τῷ		
			ἀντίστητε ^β		
καὶ			διαβόλῳ		
				τῷ	
he		φεύζεται ^γ		ἀφ’	ὑμῶν

α A, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from ὑποτάσσω, “subject yourselves.”
 β A, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from ἀνθίστημι, “stand against.”
 γ F, Icomp, 3, s from φεύγω, “he will flee.”

Translation: Therefore, subject yourselves to God, and stand against the devil and he will flee from you.

Considerations: By way of addressing the problem of high-mindedness in the previous verse, James presents a two-fold method for overcoming the devil. The first is, “subject yourselves.” James means to be subordinate to God’s authority, a direct command to the arrogant people of verse 6 above. An arrogant person cannot have victory over Satan, for he will receive no grace to do so. Unlike Peter, James makes this a condition for the devil’s fleeing, an Old Testament concept. The fact is, the people who were at war with one another had two problems. They were under the Satanic influence of high-mindedness, which resulted in an attitude that played into the works of the flesh. The need to subordinate oneself to God is true in all ages, though today it is no longer a *means* to causing the Devil to flee. In the Old Testament, God was the theocratic ruler of the nation Israel. Hence the subordination is different for Israel than for the believer in the current age, who is considered in a positional relationship to God. Furthermore, subordination to God does not provide the ability to resist. (See the comments from the *Expositor’s Greek Testament* below.)

The second requirement for overcoming the devil is resistance. Both Peter (1 Peter 5:5ff) and Paul (Ephesians 6:11ff) refer to this same solution. Satan must be resisted. There exists today a false doctrine about victory over Satan. Some teach that if a Christian prays for Satanic deliverance, God will provide it. But no Scripture teaches this. Satan responds, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament to resistance. Under certain circumstances, He will not stand against it.

However, unlike the Peter passage, which is based on grace provision, James is speaking solely of self effort. Note the statements by Oesterley²³ on this passage:

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The two ideas contained in these words [*stand* and *he will flee*] are very Jewish; in the first place, the withstanding of the devil is represented as being within the competence of man...; the passage in 1 Pet. v. 6 ff. which is parallel to the one before is, is prefaced by the words, “Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He careth for you,” and followed by the words, “And the God of all grace...shall Himself perfect stablish strengthen you.” The difference between the Jewish and Christian doctrines of grace...here cannot fail to be observed. It is useless to cite the words “be subject unto God,” as indicating divine assistance in withstanding the devil, because the subject of thought in either passage [Oesterley means either James or Peter] is quite independent; the meaning is not that the ability to withstand the devil is the result of being subject to God; but two courses of action are enjoined, in each of which man is represented as able to take the initiative.

The initial mechanism for the grace Christian as presented by Peter is the attitude of casting all anxiety on God, not attempting to deal with the problem oneself, as opposed to the do-it-yourself proposition of James. Such an attitude of reliance on God for overcome Satanic attack is intended to recognize the grace provision, rather than attempting to meet Satanic influence by one’s own ability.

The result of the correct attitude of reliance on God is found in the fact that the God of *all grace* will provide the strength and will establish the believer in the area of Satanic attack (1 Peter 5:10). James knew nothing of this, and presents a strictly Hebrew way of dealing with the devil. For the Christian, Satanic defense is based on God’s provision of ability, whereas for the O. T. Hebrew, Satanic defense is based on legalistic self-ability. The difference between the application of Old Testament grace and that of the New Testament is that Mosaic grace is provided based on the *action* of the ones under law, whereas in the latter, grace is based on the *attitude* of the believer for the application of grace already provided.

It is the Old Testament concept of grace that has caused some (Roman Catholics, specifically) to think that grace is bestowed based on activity. The so-called sacraments are a result of this confusion.

4:8 ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. καθαρῖσατε χεῖρας ἁμαρτωλοὶ καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας δίψυχοι.

Two compound declarative sentence, the second and third of the paragraph. I take the second sentence to be compound because of the two distributive vocatives. Therefore, the “you” must be repeated.

you	ἐγγίσατε ^α	α A, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from ἐγγίζω, “Draw near.”
καὶ	θεῷ	β F, Icomp, I, 3, s from ἐγγίζω, “He will draw near.”
	τῷ	
He	ἐγγιεῖ ^β	<i>Translation: Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Clean your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded people.</i>
	ὑμῖν	

	ἁμαρτωλοὶ	
you	καθαρίσατε ^α	α A, TA, Imp, 2, p from καθαρίζω, “Clean.”
καὶ	δίψυχοι	β A, TA, Imp, 2, p from ἀγνίζω, “purify.”
you	ἀγνίσατε ^β	
	καρδίας	

Considerations: These two sentences are closely connected. The second seems to condition the first, as in Hebrew synthetic poetic parallelism. The language is specifically applicable to those not yet understanding the grace program revealed to Paul. It was too early for that. The commands in both sentences imply no grace provision. The believers are to draw near to God as a condition of God’s drawing near to them. How to draw near is indicated in the next sentence. *Expositor’s Greek Testament*

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says, “Here again we have what to Christian ears sounds rather like a reversal of the order of things.” The Jewish idea of drawing near to God we find in Hosea 12:6 in the LXX, ἐγγιζε πρὸς τὸν θεόν σου διὰ παντός. The idea of drawing near to God was used of worship in the temple.

Again James addresses his readers by terms other than *brothers*. He says sinners, clean your hands. This probably refers to literal, ritual washing that was symbolical. The word hands here, and in that ritual washing, stand for the unrighteous activities of the individual. The command is not that God will clean them up, but that they must do it themselves by ceasing their evil practices. It is likely that the dispersed Jews were still engaged in the ritualistic practices of their religion, including constant hand washing. Such washing symbolized non-material, internal cleaning prior to worship. Today God does the cleansing (1 John 1:9).

James addresses them as double minded, a term that refers to instability. The command is to purify their hearts, again a metaphorical act of purification to prepare themselves for entering into the presence of God for worship. To the Jewish mind, the verb ἀγνίζω carried the idea of ceremonially sanctifying oneself before the Lord, ridding oneself of every thing which might cause uncleanness. See my comments on mourning below.

The instability of these readers is found in their heart, the heart being the center of the thinking process, not the emotional nature, as it is often thought of today. (The body part that metaphorically represented the emotions of man in New Testament times was the intestines, rather than the heart.) So James is saying that they must purify the way they think, and become stable in their understanding in order to come before God. The implication, though not directly stated, is that they must return to a correct understanding of their applicable Scriptures, that is, the Hebrew Bible.

4:9 *ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε. ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μεταστραφήτω καὶ ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν.*

Two imperative sentences, the fourth and fifth of the paragraph. The first is simple with a compound predicate, the second is compound.

you		ταλαιπωρήσατε ^α	α	A, Icom, Imp, 2, p from ταλαιπωρέω, “be miserable.”
		καὶ		
		πενθήσατε ^β	β	A, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from πενθέω, “mourn.”
		καὶ		
		κλαύσατε ^γ	γ	A, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from κλαίω, “cry.”

γέλως		μεταστραφήτω ^α	α	A, TP, Imp, 3, s from μεταστρέφω, “let be turned.”
		ὁ		
		ὑμῶν	εἰς	πένθος
		καὶ		
		χαρὰ	let be turned	
		ἡ ²⁴	εἰς	κατήφειαν

Translation: Be miserable and mourn and cry. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into depression.

Considerations: Here we have a couplet that is in Hebrew poetical synthetic parallelism. The first sentence carries a triple compound predicate, with three imperative verbs. Each is a command for self-induced chastisement, the second two being responses to the first. Hebrew theology of the day taught that self-chastisement opened the door to reconciliation with God (see *Expositor's*, V. 4, pg. 461). Is that the meaning here? Probably not. Rather, James is emphasizing the seriousness of the situation con-

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cerning which he writes. There is a definite prophetic feel to the two sentences before us, as though one of the later prophets had influenced the writer. The second sentence continues in a similar vein.

The second sentence also carries two further responses, but they are of a broader nature, both having antithetical elements sometimes found within synthetic parallelism. Laughter is to be turned into mourning, and joy into depression. Clearly, James' purpose is to call his readers to a different perspective than that which seemed to obtain at the time. For a Christian of this early period, their responses to the events surrounding and being perpetrated by them was altogether incorrect. Back in vs. 4, James had expressed the seriousness of the sin in which they were engaged, and their response to their situation should have been weeping and mourning rather than joy and laughter.

In the culture of the day, mourning was usually done in isolation, being separated from society at large, with only other mourners present. Joy and laughter, on the other hand, were regular parts of enjoying the company of others. The inappropriate behavior of the Jews indicated their haughty pride, which James will again address in the next verse.

4:10 ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.

A compound sentence, the sixth of this paragraph. The first clause is imperative, the second is declarative. The relationship between the clauses is causative. Because you are humble, He will exalt you.

you	ταπεινώθητε ^α	α A, TP, Imp, 2, p from ταπείνω, "Be humble." This verb is often translated "humble yourselves," as a reflexive.
καὶ	ἐνώπιον κυρίου τοῦ	
He	ὑψώσει ^β	β F, TA, I, 3, s from ὑψώω, "He will exalt."
	ὑμᾶς	

Translation: Be humble in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you.

Considerations: This single sentence is a cause and effect couplet, again in Hebrew poetic form. The fulfillment of the imperative, "Be humble," will have the effect of the second clause. For this reason, the first verb is often translated "humble yourselves." While it is not a reflexive middle, it approaches the same meaning. The aorist passive is used to emphasize what should be the characteristic attitude of the believer. James specifically presents this in doctrinal terms. It is not important to appear to be humble before men, but is absolutely required to be characteristically humble in the presence of the Lord.

The contrasted effect of the second clause is striking. True exaltation comes from God, rather than from the person. Among the Jews it was culturally imperative to be thought of as a highly prominent individual. But to the Christian Jew, the cultural practice was at odds with the spiritual truth. Christian Jew, James says, if you want to be lifted up in the presence of men, be humble in the presence of God. Give up exalting yourselves, and in your sincere humility, God will exalt you. Note again that James presents a conditional cause and effect. This is not Paul's grace teaching.

4:11 μὴ καταλαλεῖτε ἀλλήλων ἀδελφοί. ὁ καταλαλῶν ἀδελφοῦ καὶ κρίνων τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καταλαλεῖ νόμου καὶ κρίνει νόμον. εἰ δὲ νόμον κρίνεις οὐκ εἶ ποιητὴς νόμου ἀλλὰ κριτὴς.

Three sentences which begin a new paragraph, extending through verse 12 only. The first sentence is simple imperative. The second is simple declarative, though with a complicated participle subject, and a compound predicate. The third is a complex conditional sentence with a compound predicate.

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ἀδελφοί

you | καταλαλεῖτε^α | ἀλλήλων
| μη

¹ PAI2p from καταλαλέω, “do speak against.”

καταλαλῶν^α | ἀδελφοῦ
καὶ κρίνων^β | ἀδελφὸν
| τὸν
αὐτοῦ
καταλαλεῖ^γ | νόμου
καὶ κρίνει^δ | νόμον

α P, TA, Part, M, s, N from καταλαλέω “The one who speaks against.”

β P, TA, Part, M, s, N from κρίνω, “the one who is judging.”

γ P, TA, I, 3, s from καταλαλέω, “speaks against.”

δ P, TA, I, 3, s from κρίνω, “judges.”

εἶ^β ποιητῆς
οὐκ | νόμου
ἀλλὰ
are | κριτῆς
you | κρίνεις^α | νόμον
εἰ

α P, TA, I, 2, s from κρίνω, “you judge.”

β P, Icop, I, 2, s from εἰμί, “you are.”

Translation: Brothers, do not speak against one another. The one who speaks against a brother and is judging his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law. And if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

Considerations: James again expresses his constant theme of being a doer of the law, but now in a new and different context. This five sentence paragraph deals with the topic of judging a brother.

James returns to his regular direct address term, “brothers.” This section combines the problems of the previously discussed strife, with the principle of being a doer of the law.

The first sentence above is a straightforward command. The Christian Jews are not to speak against one another.

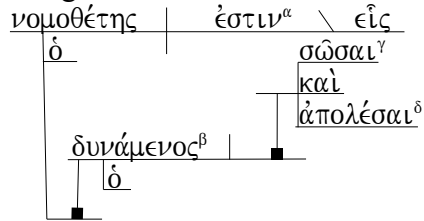
The second sentence in the verse explains the rationale of speaking against a brother. James includes judging a brother with speaking against a brother. In this case, the speaking against is an act of judging. James means judging in the sense of claiming a violation of the law, since this is the condition to which he refers in the rest of the sentence. James identifies speaking against a brother with judging the brother, that is, denouncing the brother for not observing the Mosaic Law. A claim that a brother was violating the Mosaic law was a serious charge among the Hebrews.

The meaning of the Mosaic Law was being debated throughout the Jewish dispersion communities as a general principle. This is what James is referring to when he says that the one who judges his brother judges the law, which refers to the debating as to the meaning of the Mosaic law. We know from contemporary sources that the law of Moses was being perverted in these debates. Records of rabbinical mishandling of the law can be found in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds.

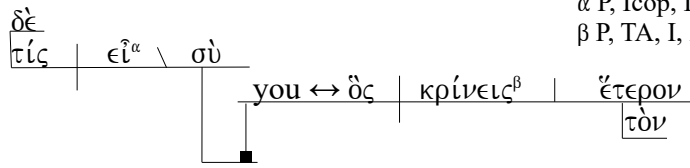
But when we come to the third sentence in this paragraph, we find that a specific event was taking place. James makes that clear by expressing the sentence as a fulfilled condition of the first class. “If you are judging the law, *and you are,*” is the meaning of the conditional clause. The debates concerning the law had gotten out of hand, and its meaning was being perverted. The Jews were spending more time debating than doing. They had become judges rather than doers.

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4:12 εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ νομοθέτης ὁ δυνάμενος σῶσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι. σὺ δὲ τίς εἶ ὃς κρίνεις τὸν ἕτερον;
Two sentences, fourth and fifth of the paragraph. The first is simple declarative, the second is complex interrogative.



α P, Icop, 3, s from εἰμί, “is.”
β P, TA, Part, M, s, N from δύναμαι, “who is able.”
γ A, Icomp, Inf from σώζω, “to save.”
δ A, Icomp, Inf from ἀπόλλυμι, “to destroy.”



α P, Icop, I, 2, s from εἰμί, “are.”
β P, TA, I, 2, s from κρίνω, “judges.”

Translation: There is one lawgiver who is able to save and destroy. But who are you, you who judges the other?

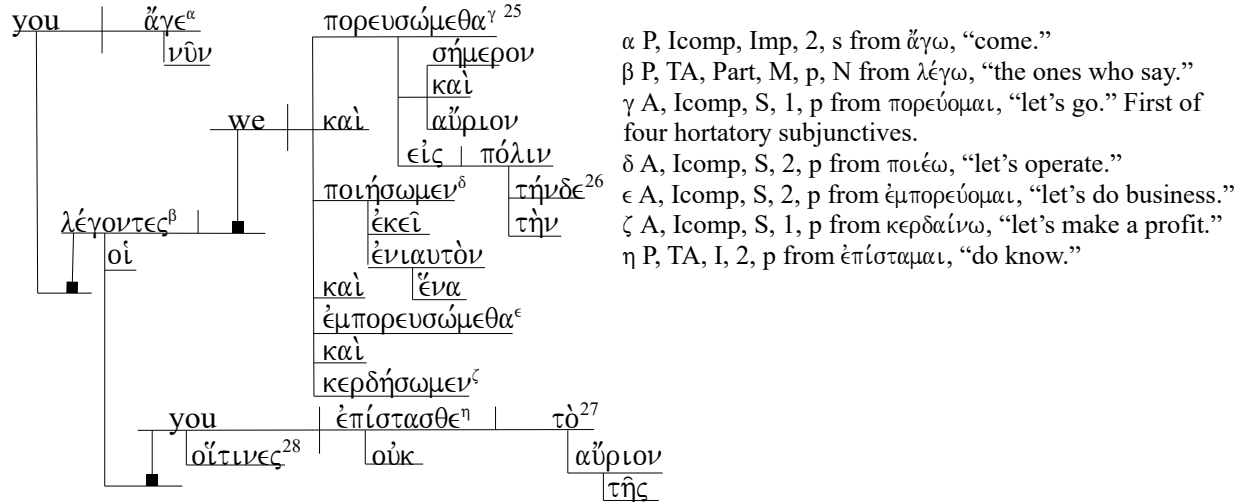
Considerations: James points out the vital error of those who are judging the law. They are assuming the position of the lawgiver. But there is only one lawgiver, and He has power that the usurpers do not, the power to save and destroy. Herein is the nature of their arrogance.

The rhetorical question of the second sentence puts these arrogant people who judge others as having violated the law in their place. They are not who they think they are; they have no authority to misuse the law that was given by God as though they were judges of the law.

4:13-14a ἄγε νῦν οἱ λέγοντες σήμερον καὶ αὔριον πορευσώμεθα εἰς τήνδε τὴν πόλιν καὶ ποιήσωμεν ἐκεῖ ἐνιαυτὸν ἕνα καὶ ἐμπορευσώμεθα καὶ κερδήσωμεν ^{14a} οἵτινες οὐκ ἐπίστασθε τὸ τῆς αὔριον.

A complex declarative sentence, beginning a paragraph that extends through vs. 17. The sentence begins in vs. 13 and goes through the first part of vs. 14. This final paragraph of Chapter Four deals with another aspect of arrogance that was being displayed among the dispersed Christian Hebrews. This one deals with doing business.

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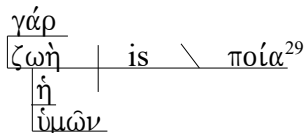
Translation: Come now, the ones of you who say, Today and tomorrow let’s go into this or that city and let’s operate there for one year and let’s do business and make a profit,¹⁴ you who do not know the events happening on the next day.

Considerations: James poses a hypothetical situation which evidently reflects a regular practice among the dispersion Hebrews. Though the grammatical construction is complicated, the meaning of the sentence is clear, and stands as an indictment of the arrogance of merchandising as practiced by the dispersion Jews. Little thought was given to God’s program in their merchandising plan, and the assumptions of their arrogance comes out plainly in James’ statement.

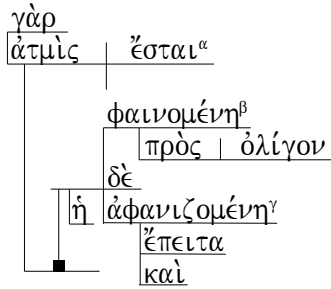
The words, “Today and tomorrow” are a distributive expression. In English we would say, “Today or tomorrow let’s go,” etc.

Now, James is not condemning the merchandising. Rather, he is condemning the attitudes and assumptions of Christian Jews who should have known better than to plan without giving thought to God, as he will express in the next sentence. This begins to be brought out in the last clause of the diagram, “you who do not know the *events happening* on the next day.” As noted, this relative clause has a concessive force, and could be paraphrased, “even though you do not know.” So James begins his correction by showing their inherent lack of knowledge. They cannot know what will happen tomorrow, whereas God not only knows, but has included it in His perfect plan.

4:14b ποία γάρ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν; ἀτιμὶς γὰρ ἔσται ἡ πρὸς ὀλίγον φαινομένη ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ ἀφανιζομένη. Two sentences. The first is simple interrogative, the second is simple declarative with compound descriptive participles. These are the second and third sentences of the paragraph.



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α F, Icomp, I, 3, s from εἶμι, “will be.”
 β P, Icomp, Part, F, s, N from φαίνω, “which appears.”
 γ P, Icomp, Part, F, s, N from ἀφαιίνω, “disappears.”

Translation: For what kind of life is yours? For it will be a vapor which appears for a little time but then also disappears.

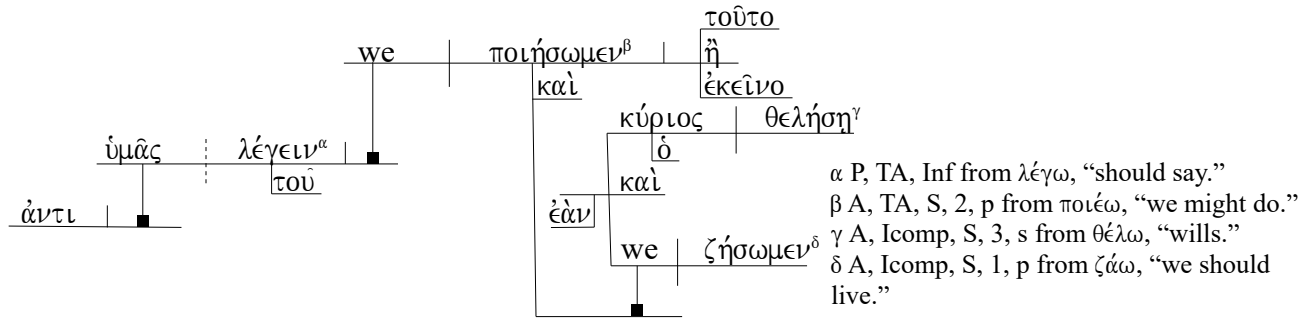
Considerations: These two short sentences identify the irrationality of the presumption that the Jews would be able to do business at their own determination. The first, “For what kind of life is yours?” calls into question the very nature of such presumption, that is, the uncertainty of life itself. James rebukes the unthinking presumptuous attitude of some of his Hebrew brothers, who go through life confident and prideful at their accomplishments.

The second sentence strongly points out the ephemeral nature of human existence. Physical life is transitory, and relatively unimportant. If there is anything that a thinking Christian should understand that in terms of his own personal existence, the physical part of it is a minute speck in the age program of man. Self-satisfaction and a prideful spirit in accomplishments during time are foolish, and are the cause of further problems in daily living.

The solution to this problem James presents in the next two sentences.

4:15 ἀντὶ τοῦ λέγειν³⁰ ὑμᾶς ἔάν ὁ κύριος θελήσῃ καὶ ζήσωμεν καὶ ποιήσωμεν τούτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο.

This is a complex idiomatic sentence with a clausal infinitive as the main verb, and a compound condition of the third class as the object of the infinitive; it is the fourth sentence of the paragraph.



α P, TA, Inf from λέγω, “should say.”
 β A, TA, S, 2, p from ποιέω, “we might do.”
 γ A, Icomp, S, 3, s from θέλω, “wills.”
 δ A, Icomp, S, 1, p from ζάω, “we should live.”

Translation: Instead you should say, If the Lord wills and we should live, we also might do this or that.

Considerations: This strange structure is elliptical, and refers back to the statements of verse 13-14a, which it assumes and upon which it depends. The articular infinitive λέγειν is used like a subjunctive, and could be paraphrased, “instead of which you ought to say.”

James had a specific understanding of the will of God. The verb he used here, θέλω, carries the idea of God’s broad desirous will, not His more restrictive determinative will (βούλη). God’s desirous will expresses that which is righteous and good, but one does not know what his determinative will has decided, either actively or permissively. So James countered the presumption of verses 13-14a with a doctrinal truth. One does not know all the narrower determinative will of God, because the entirety of His

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desirous will, out of which the determinative will comes, exists only in God’s mind. However, one can know all the desirous will that one needs to please God, which is revealed in Scripture.

So the correct attitude is to realize the broader desirous will of God, including those aspects which He has determined as revealed in Scripture, are kept by Him apart from human knowledge, and one should only plan based on possibility, not arrogant certainty. James uses the clause “and we should live,” to indicate the individual’s dependence for his very life on the nature of God’s desirous and determinative program. No one can guarantee their own life from one second to the next.

4:16 νῦν δὲ καυχᾶσθε ἐν ταῖς ἀλαζονείαις ὑμῶν. πᾶσα καύχησις τοιαύτη πονηρὰ ἐστίν.

Two sentences, both simple declarative. These are the fifth and sixth sentences of the paragraph.

δὲ	you	καυχᾶσθε ^α	α P, Icomp, I, 2, p from καυχάομαι, “you boast.”
	νῦν	ἐν	ἀλαζονείαις
		ταῖς	ὑμῶν

καύχησις	ἐστίν ^α	\	πονηρὰ	α P, Icop, I, 3, s from εἰμί, “is.”
πᾶσα	τοιαύτη	<i>Translation: But now, you boast in your vainglory. All such boasting is evil.</i>		

Considerations: James begins his discussion with the two word introduction νῦν δὲ, which we translate “But now.” He means, “as conditions currently exist,” which indicates that the problem of boasting is wide spread among his audience.

The verb boast (καυχάομαι) has two distinct uses in Scripture. One consists of boasting in God and His program. In those passages the boast has the concept of having confidence in God, and is therefore a good act of boasting. The second use we find here, the boasting of man in his own vainglory. Note that James uses the genitive of possessive pronoun *your* (ὑμῶν) with vainglory.

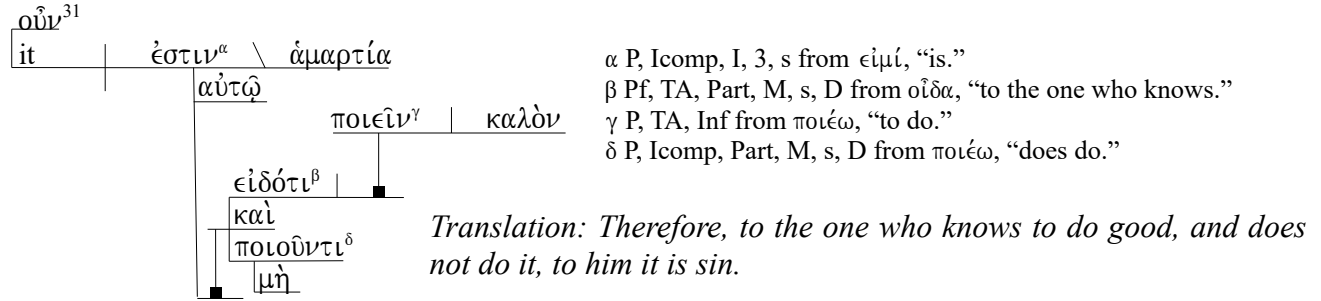
Vainglory is pride in one’s self-achieved circumstances of life, in this case, the assumption of control in the year-long plan to buy and sell (vs. 13). The individual is giving himself credit for what he has, who he is, and what he plans to do. No Christian should have such an attitude, as all depends on God’s will, not one’s own abilities. Vainglory is used only here and in 1 John 2:16, in the phrase ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, “the vainglory of life.” John means essentially the same thing as James, though he is more explicit to his Gentile readers. Such vainglory is pretentious, and self-promoting.

For that reason, James states that such boasting is evil. The word πονηρός carries the idea of malignancy, that which grows and becomes widely reproduced. Boasting in vainglory is not an isolated act, but feeds on itself.

4:17 εἰδότες οὖν καλὸν ποιεῖν καὶ μὴ ποιοῦντι ἁμαρτία αὐτῷ ἐστίν.

A simple declarative sentence with compound dative participles. This is the seventh and final sentence of the paragraph.

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Considerations: James concludes this paragraph with a strong doctrinal statement, which consists of the application to the current circumstances of a broad Biblical principle. That he is applying the principle to the current section is expressed by the word οὖν, which we translate *therefore*. It takes us back to the immediate context of boasting. *The question arises, have these boasting, prideful Israelite Christians been committing acts of sin?* Many today would, unthinkingly, say yes, they were. James, however, realizes that they may or may not be doing so. It is possible that their acts do not meet the Biblical definition of sin acts.

Sin is a specific, not a general, problem. Not everything that is bad or unrighteous is sin, and James understands that. To the extent that someone does not understand the wrong that he is doing (in this case, boasting), he is not sinning. One must know to do good, before the doing of evil is sin. James had already defined sin carefully in the first chapter. Paul also makes similar statements concerning sin, as does John. The modern idea that all unrighteous acts or thoughts are sin is unbiblical, and is often used by ignorant preachers to apply guilt to people. To call a person guilty of sin because he does something wrong is pernicious, and should be avoided at all costs. Only those acts which are known violations of God’s requirements, entered into willfully, are sin.

James has made known a truth which some of his readers possibly had not known. Perhaps they were unthinking in their boasting, and in their presumptuous attitudes. Now they know to do good, which in this context refers to ceasing their boasting. If they continue boasting, they sin.

Some have sought to make James (and Paul) teach with these words the so-called “sins of omission.” Rather, these are sins of commission, the sin of knowing that one should not boast, and doing it anyway. To do “good” here is a positive act, not a negative one. If one is not doing good, he is doing evil, for the good thing is the omission of the known evil thing, boasting in vainglory. It is important to remember that sin acts are *acts*, not the lack of acts.

But, what of a person who knows to act, and refuses to do so. Is he committing sin? He certainly has an unrighteous attitude, and he may be a moral or ethical coward. But the only person who could possibly count such a person as guilty of sin is God Himself. No human can read another human’s mind. To say that someone knows to act, or how to act, is dangerous, unless he tells you so. But to use the idea that he “should have known,” which is sometimes used to pronounce a person guilty of sin, is to assume the prerogatives of God. We must be very careful here, and not assume something should be done that is not explicitly and propositionally stated in Scripture.

Finally, we must keep in mind that God has forgiven the believer’s sins. Redemption (deliverance from penalty) is specific in this area. Colossians 1:14 states concerning Christ, “...in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins....”

Endnotes

- 1 This passage in James paints a dark picture among the dispersion Hebrews. James is probably including both believers and unbelievers in his condemnation. The writer for James in *Expositor's Greek Testament*, W. E. Oesterley, wrote, "These verses reveal an appalling state of moral depravity in these Diaspora congregations; strife, self-indulgence, lust, murder, covetousness, adultery, envy, pride and slander are rife...." (W. Robertson Nicoll, ed. *Expositor's Greek Testament*, "James," Vol. 4, pg. 456.)

Though commentators find many problems in this passage, most are self-imposed by a lack of careful doctrinal analysis and definition. The primary function of a theologian or Bible teacher is definition, and many who do not have the process of definition down clearly struggle with James four, some from its overall tone, others from specific statements.

It is true, the approach that James takes indicates serious problems, interspersed with reasons and causes that would only make sense to a Christian who had been educated in the doctrine of the Gospels. Some have railed about the incongruity of referring to the Jews in this passage in such negative terms as the ones above in *Expositor's*. Indeed, the author goes on to state, "It must be confessed that these verses [he's referring to verses 2 and 3 of chapter 4] are very difficult to understand; we have, on the one hand, lusting and coveting, murdering and fighting, and on the other hand, praying." But to the biblically literate Christian, these dichotomies pose little problem. When one understands the later writings of Paul, where carnal believers engage in terrible immorality, and on the other hand claim to be following Christian leaders, as in 1 Corinthians, the so-called "serious problems" become easily understood.

Another problem of definition in the above statement is that its author does not know the difference between praying and asking; nor does he understand the biblical doctrine of asking that is found in the writings of John, especially in John 14:13 & 14; 15:7 & 16; 16:24-26, and in 1 John 5:14-16. The true significance of asking in Jesus' name has been misunderstood by many, but James would have been well instructed in the teachings of Jesus in the upper room, and would have understood why the asking of the carnal dispersion Hebrews was not prayer, and was not true asking according the Lord's own definition.

- 2 Both sentences in this paragraph have interrogative adverbs, *πόθεν* in the first sentence, and *ἐντῷθεν* in the second.
- 3 Adversative *καί*, to be translated *but*.
- 4 The form of *μάχεσθε* is a so-called "middle," a misleading term that should be abandoned, also sometimes called deponent. However, the verb is voiceless. In this case, the form is based on the regular intransitive use of the verb. Some have suggested the reflexive force here, "you fight one another," but there is no basis for that in the context. We have a series of verbs, some with the normal active form (which are also voiceless, as is this verb), and it is clear they are parallel complete verbs. Note the parallel verb *πολεμεῖτε* from *πολεμέω*, to wage war.
- 5 Aorist tense infinitives such as *ἐπιτυχεῖν* are often used in statements to indicate subsequent action to the main indicative mood verb, as here. The idea is that the result of their being murderous and zealous was that they did not obtain their goal. Therefore the best understanding of this statement is that they were not able to obtain what they desired by the acts they were pursuing, and such leads to frustration.

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- 6 Another present “middle” form, but αἰτεῖσθαι a complete infinitive. Often thought as an intensive middle, such can only be determined by context. The most the middle form can testify to is that it is possibly intensive. However, the middle also allows other uses in different contexts, and cannot be determined to be intensive by form.

The articular infinitive in the accusative (τό) following διὰ is a normal way to indicate cause. Burton says that this construction “is nearly equivalent to ὅτι or διότι with the indicative, differing in that the infinitive gives in itself no indication of the time of action.” (*Moods*, pg. 163) See John 2:24 for another example. However, the infinitive can stand alone with the article τῷ to indicate cause. See 2 Corinthians 2:13.

- 7 Adversative καί, *but*.

- 8 In their section on the “Indirect Middle,” on page 159 Dana and Mantey state, “This usage is sometimes called the intensive middle, which is suggestive, but hardly adequate. It roughly corresponds to the Piel stem in Hebrew, but is more varied and extended in its use.” In the next sentence they state, “Moulton calls it the “dynamic” middle, and reckons that it ‘emphasized the part taken by the subject in the action of the verb’— a very pertinent suggestion. He recognizes that the variations of this use are not easy to define, but is surely overestimating the difficulties when he says that ‘the category will include a number of verbs in which it is useless to exercise our ingenuity on interpreting the middle, for the development never progressed beyond the rudimentary stage’ (M. 158).”

Moulton is much closer to being correct on this issue than D&M. In fact, the assumptions among Greek grammarians, up to and including those of today, concerning the use of the “middle” in the New Testament are *not* very well founded, and much is assumed based on context and applied to the verbal form. This is sad, and the idea that the “intensive middle” somehow corresponds to the Hebrew Piel is altogether wrong. The Piel is, by form, an intensification of the tri-literal root of the Hebrew verb. One does not need a context to spot the intensification, but one must use judgment to identify the nature of the Hebrew intensive. The -ομαι form in Greek is not an intensive form at all, nor should it be called by the misleading term “middle.” It is a form that may or may not be used in certain contexts which tend toward a certain idea of intensification, or some other function determined by context. The only thing one can say about the middle form is that it *allows* some of these functions to be understood by the context, but it simply does not of itself require any such function as does the Hebrew Piel.

- 9 Generally parsed as an active, this verb has no direct object, and therefore cannot be active voice. In fact, it is voiceless, and should be parsed as I have it, as an intransitive complete verb.
- 10 See the discussion of prayer in Chapter five for more information on prayerful worship.
- 11 In the sentence, this is so-called “middle” infinitive form from a “non-deponent” verb. It is clear that this verbal is again complete, and therefore voiceless. It should be called an intransitive complete. If this form is used as an intensive, of which it is often accused, it must be determined from the context, not from the form alone. Can the form *imply* intensity? Perhaps, but not by itself, which must be determined by the context. The statement of *Expositor’s* (W. E. Oesterley) on this verb is appropriate: “There does not seem to be any difference in meaning between the active and middle here: ‘If the middle is really the stronger word, we can understand its being brought in just where an effect of contrast can be secured, while in ordinary passages the active would carry as

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much weight as was needed' (Moulton...)."'

- 12 διὰ with an articular infinitive means *because* if the article is in the fourth form, the so-called accusative form, whereas, if the article is in the second form (the genitive/ablative) διὰ means through.
- 13 TP. The majority text reads as presented in the translation and the diagram. The critical text leaves off the masculine “adulterers,” and has only “adulteresses.” The majority reading is clearly preferred, as only the few manuscripts which follow the Egyptian text type have the masculine form eliminated. Furthermore, it seems absurd to blame women alone for what was very likely a problem initiated by men at least as much as by women. Those who hold to a normal, non-allegorical interpretation of these words struggle to justify the reason why only adulteresses are addressed in the critical text. Expositor’s view is typical of the strain which one must undergo when rejecting the majority reading, “The depraved state of morals to which the whole section bears witness must in part at least have been due to the wickedness and co-operation of the women, so that there is nothing strange in their being specifically mentioned in connection with that form of sin with which they would be more particularly associated.”

Such reasoning is nonsense. It is more likely that the masculine was dropped out of the critical text because of the allegorical use to which the Egyptian theological circles adhered, thus making this passage conform to the Old Testament limited practice of making the faithless wife a symbol of the nation Israel, rather than to individuals in the dispersion of James’ day.

- 14 θεοῦ is an objective genitive. The same word in the next sentence is also an objective genitive.
- 15 This is a rare passive copulative which retains a subject complement with an understood infinitive *to be*. Some take ἐχθρὸς to be the complement with no infinitive, but this is unlikely given the overall structure of the sentence.
- 16 Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. London, United Bible Societies, 1971, pg. 682.
- 17 The verb κατοικέω appears to be intransitive, and therefore causitive. It is often translated “made to dwell,” or “caused to dwell,” to include the aorist function in the translations. The obvious literal translation of ὃ κατώκησεν is “which dwelt,” which does not occur in any of the translations in my library. Some simply translate it “which dwells” apparently ignoring the aorist form.

However, if the ὃ is accusative, ὃ κατώκησεν can be translated “which He made to dwell.” It appears that this is the solution adopted by the original ASV translation, as well as the New American Standard translation. This is something of a circumlocution, but one which I have also adopted.

As noted, the problem in the sentence before us is the tense of κατοικέω. It is aorist indicative, normally indicating past time. If the relative ὃ (which) is nominative, the correct translation is “which dwelt.” The previous verbs in the sentence are all present, and many translate κατώκησεν as a present as well, even though it is clearly an aorist indicative.

Those who chose the present tense translation may be thinking that James considered the aorist to indicate the beginning of the act of dwelling, that is, an *ingressive aorist*. Such aorists occur in verbs indicating an on-going state. If so, the present tense “dwells” may be an acceptable translation.

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The best sense of the statement is that God caused the human spirit to dwell in man when created, and so the human spirit exists permanently in the human being. Hence, the aorist tense of the verb.

- 18 The word γραπή (singular) when used in these kinds of passages normally refers to a specific passage of Scripture, whereas if the plural occurs it refers to the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole. However, in this passage, no specific Scripture is in view, but a general teaching of the Hebrew Bible of the issue at hand is meant, that is, the issue of being a friend of the world.
- 19 The verb ἀντιτάσσω is from ἀντι (against) and τάσσω (to set in order, arrange) and carries the idea of being arranged in order against an enemy. The term carries a military association of an army arranged in ranks to fight against a similar foe.
- 20 LXX is the Roman numeral 70. It refers to the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was supposedly translated by approximately 70 scholars, circa 300 b. c.
- 21 Many expositors get this wrong. Few understand that the grace believers are provided today was presented exclusively by Paul. The dispensing of that grace was given to him, and to him alone (Ephesians 3:2). No other New Testament writer than Paul makes the claim that “the dispensation of grace of God...was given to me.” God chose Paul to initially distribute the doctrine of grace for daily living, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, for this is clearly the meaning of Romans 1:15-17. James knew nothing of this, and uses the word grace in accordance with the O.T. idea of conditional grace.
- 22 Here we have an independent clause, with no conjunctions attached, which seems to indicate a condition necessary for overcome Satanic attack. James is saying “If you subject yourselves to God, and if you stand against the devil, he will flee from you. Such conditional independent clauses are found in other places in the New Testament, and they appear to be always in the imperative mood. SA Mark, 1:17, Luke 6:37, 38, and John 2:19.

The verb ὑποτάσσω throughout the New Testament carries the idea of subordination, not merely passive submission, hence the translation *subject yourselves*. Americans particularly misconstrue the concept of subjection in this sense, because we do not live under any sort of monarchy. In the UK, for instance, the people are *subjects*, rather than *citizens* in the American sense, a profound difference. The English have a monarch, while the American ideal is that each individual is independent of, and not subject to, the government. At least, that was the original ideal, which has been lost somewhere along the way.
- 23 *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, “James,” Volume Four, pg. 459.
- 24 Possessive article to be translated “your.”
- 25 TP. The majority text has a series of four hortatory subjunctives, whereas the critical text has a series of future indicatives.
- 26 This is a demonstrative pronoun, but used to supplement the alternative sense of σήμερον καὶ αὐριον, and is often translated “such and such.” We have chosen to translate it “this or that.”
- 27 The object clause, “τὸ τῆς αὐριον” is an idiomatic phrase that means approximately, “the events of the next day.”
- 28 The relative οἵτινες introduces this concessive clause which could go all the way back to the subject of the main clause, but is logically related to the object of the articular participle. See

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diagram. Burton says (*Moods*, pg. 118, § 294), “A definite relative clause may imply a relation of cause, result, or concession, without affecting the mood or tense of the verb.”

- 29 This interrogative sentence is a noun clause. No verb exists in the original, and must be supplied by the mind of the reader. Simple declarations and questions are often formed in such a way in the New Testament, but we find the construction also in more complicated sentences.
- 30 τοῦ λέγειν is an articular infinitive used like a subjunctive.
- 31 Inferential οὐν. This is significant, since many attempt to make this statement distinct from the context, and therefore promote the false doctrine of sins of omission. It is clear, however, that doing the good thing refers back to not boasting, and the sin is to continue boasting. There is no “sin of omission” here! Oesterley, after having expressed the correct interpretation, falls into this error with the statement, “It is, however, quite possible that we have in these words the enunciation of the principle that sins of omission are as sinful as those of commission.” He then goes on to the quote from the gospels and the Old Testament supposed examples of this idea, but misunderstands the various contexts of those verses. See *Expositors*, Vol. 4, pg. 464.

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5:1 ἄγε νῦν οἱ πλούσιοι κλαύσατε ὀλολύζοντες ἐπὶ ταῖς ταλαιπωρίαις ὑμῶν ταῖς ἐπερχομέναις.

Two simple imperative sentences, the first two sentences in a paragraph which extends through verse 6.

πλούσιοι
|
οἱ
you | ἄγε^α
|
νῦν

α P, Icomp, Imp, 2, s from ἄγω, “come.”
β A, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from κλαίω, “cry.”
γ P, Icomp, Part, M, p, N from ὀλολύζω, “wailing.”
δ P, Icomp, Part, F, p, D from ἐπερχομαι, “which are coming.”

you | κλαύσατε^β
|
ὀλολύζοντες^γ
|
ἐπὶ | ταλαιπωρίαις
|
ταῖς
|
ὑμῶν
|
ἐπερχομέναις^δ
|
ταῖς

Translation: Come now, rich people; cry, wailing at your hardships which are coming.

Considerations: James brings an indictment against the unbelieving rich in a paragraph that could have been written by one of the Old Testament prophets. He addresses the rich directly. The word “you” throughout this paragraph does not refer to believers, as does the next paragraph, but to the rich¹ among the Jews of the dispersed communities. The accusations throughout this paragraph are strong and varied. This is one of the few places in the New Testament where unbelievers are the ones addressed. The tone of this paragraph recalls the prophets of old, who recognized that among the Hebrew communities there have always been unbelievers, in this case, among the rich.

Why does such a paragraph exist in an epistle written to believers? It is unlikely that the rich unbelievers would have read this epistle unless they attended a synagogue where it was read aloud. Primarily, James encourages the believers much as the Old Testament prophets did. God has not forgotten their peril. The sovereign God is in control, and the believer can look forward to the coming of the Lord, while the unbeliever dreads it. See James 5:3 and 7 below.

The first sentence sets up the topic in a negative way. He commands them to “come now,” probably a call to attention. ATR (WP) calls this an interjection, but it seems to be a separate clause logically related to the next clause, as well as to the entire paragraph. Rather than an interjection, then, it is an introductory clausal statement.

The main command is “cry,” associated with a participle which we have translated “wailing.” It is a modal participle, rather than circumstantial, as some have it, from ὀλολύζω, occurring only here in the NT. It associates the act of crying emotionally. ATR (WP) suggests the meaning, “howling with grief.”²

The prepositional phrase ἐπὶ ταῖς ταλαιπωρίαις ὑμῶν (at your hardships) supplies the reason these rich should be wailing. Hard times are in view, as the word originally referred to working so much to produce a callus. The hardships are not yet here, but are coming (ταῖς ἐπερχομέναις). Some hold that this is referring to the second coming of the Lord (see vs. 7), though *not* the coming of Christ for the believers of this age,³ but the second coming of Christ as Messiah for the purpose of setting up the kingdom. The Hebrews rightly considered His coming an act of judgment on the unrighteous, as well as deliverance of the righteous. Neither James nor his readers knew yet of the coming of the Lord for the believers of the current age. That doctrinal truth was yet to be revealed.

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However, it is equally likely that James was referring to events soon to come upon Israelites as the result of Roman persecution.⁴ If James was written between 45 and 50 AD as we believe, then the Jewish rebellion which resulted in the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD was not far away. That rebellion had consequences not just for those Israelites in Judea, but also for the twelve tribes scattered abroad. Persecution was coming within 20 to 25 years.

5:2 ὁ πλοῦτος ὑμῶν σέσηπεν καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια ὑμῶν σητόβρωτα γέγονεν.
A compound declarative sentence. The third sentence in this paragraph.

πλοῦτος		σέσηπεν ^α	α PfcompleteI3s from σήπω, “has become rotten.” β PfcopulativeI3s from γίνομαι, “has become.”
καὶ		ὁ ὑμῶν	
ἱμάτια		γέγονει ^β	\ σητόβρωτα
τὰ ὑμῶν		σητόβρωτα	

Translation: Your wealth has become rotten, and your clothing has become moth-eaten.

Considerations: The noun πλοῦτος is most often translated riches, even though the form is singular. To avoid the problem, I’ve translated it *wealth*. Thayer states that it is “apparently equivalent to πλεοτος, from πλέος full....” It occurs 22 times in the NT, but only here in James. Their wealth has become rotten; it cannot be used to bring joy or happiness. This is close to what the Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19. Among the profit-making Hebrews, wealth determined the person’s value, and lent itself to pride. The apparel of the rich has become moth-eaten. It is this external appearance of wealth which James earlier indicates becomes the object of partiality, but here, it is viewed metaphorically as producing just the opposite. Wealth does not make a person worthy, nor should his clothing be viewed as appropriate objects of veneration. In fact, they are just the opposite. Ultimately, this sentence is not about the wealth, per se, but about the character of the wealthy.

5:3 ὁ χρυσὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ὁ ἄργυρος κατίωται καὶ ὁ ἴδς αὐτῶν εἰς μαρτύριον ὑμῖν ἔσται καὶ φάγεται τὰς σάρκας ὑμῶν ὡς πῦρ. ἔθησαυρίσατε ἐν ἑσχάταις ἡμέραις.

Two sentences. The first is a compound declarative, the second is a simple declarative. These are the fourth and fifth sentences in the paragraph.

χρυσὸς		κατίωται ^α	α Pf, P, I, 3, s from κατιόω, “have become tarnished.” The subjects are considered collectively, hence the singular number. We translated it into the regular English use, as a plural. β F, Icomp, I, 3, s from εἰμί, “will be.” γ F, TA, I, 3, s from ἐσθίω, “will eat.”
ὁ ὑμῶν			
καὶ		ἔσται ^β	εἰς μαρτύριον ὑμῖν ^γ
ἄργυρος		καὶ	
καὶ		φάγεται ^γ	Translation: Your gold and silver have become tarnished, and their poison will be for a testimony against you, and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days.
ἴδς		σάρκας	
ὁ αὐτῶν		ὡς πῦρ	τὰς ὑμῶν
		τὰς ὑμῶν	

you		ἐθησαυρίσατε ^α	α A, Icomp, I, 2, p from θησαυρίζω, “you have stored up.”
		ἐν ἡμέραις	
		ἑσχάταις	

Considerations: James continues his excoriation of the rich in these two sentences. Even today, gold and silver are the metals that denote wealth. They do not decay, but they do corrode. Gold darkens

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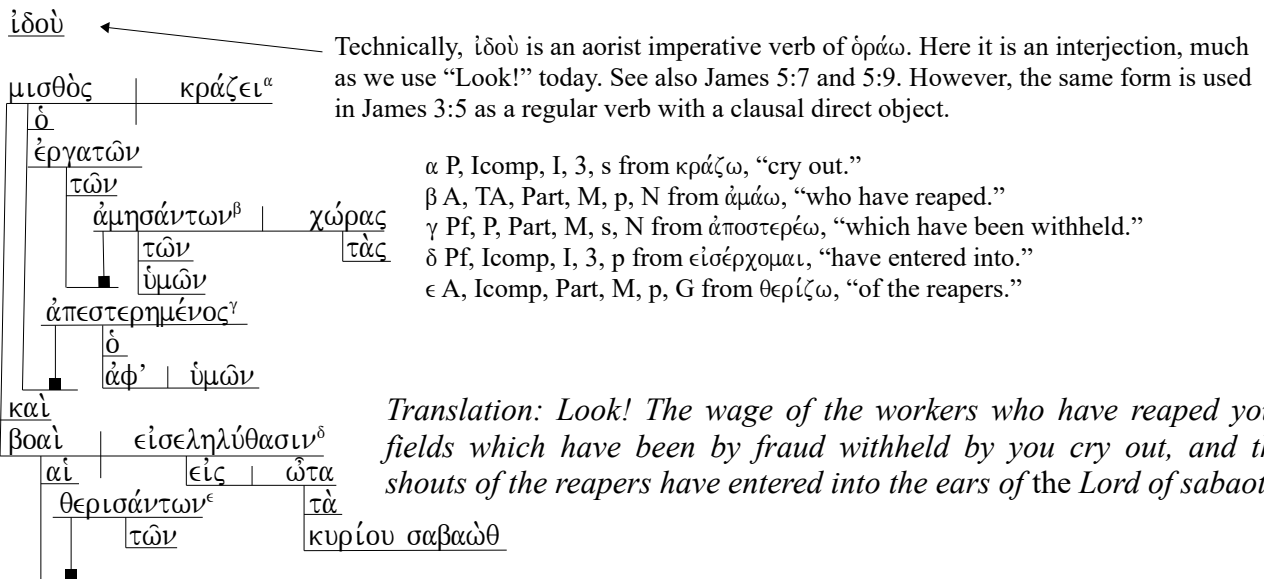
with age, and silver tarnishes, and must be continually polished to be attractive. They affect the wealthy like poison, producing two results. First, they testify against the wealthy, causing others to see them as greedy and without compassion. Second, like poison, wealth consumes the flesh of the ungodly like fire, which may be a reference to the over-indulgence that wealth can bring. The wealthy often engaged in orgiastic feasts, and this may well have been occurring among the unbelieving Jews. It appears that God’s view of the wealthy as a class is very negative. They are not to be admired.

The second sentence refers to the hoarding of wealth. The verb *θησαυρίζω* refers to storing up treasure in a vault or other secure place. The word has come into English as *thesaurus*, a treasury of words organized according to the association of ideas. The prepositional phrase “for the last days” has an eschatological emphasis.

The last days are the prophetic last days during which Israel will undergo great trials, the so-called great tribulation. That such a time will occur there can be no doubt, and it is likely that such is the meaning here, given the statement concerning hard times in the previous sentence. It means that God is going to use the misuse of their riches against the wealthy.

5:4 ἰδοὺ ὁ μισθὸς τῶν ἔργατῶν τῶν ἀμησάντων τὰς χώρας ὑμῶν ὁ ἀπεστερημένος ἀφ’ ὑμῶν κρᾶζει, καὶ αἱ βοαὶ τῶν θερισάντων εἰς τὰ ὦτα κυρίου σαβαώθ εἰσεληλύθασιν.

A compound declarative sentence. This is the sixth sentence in the paragraph.



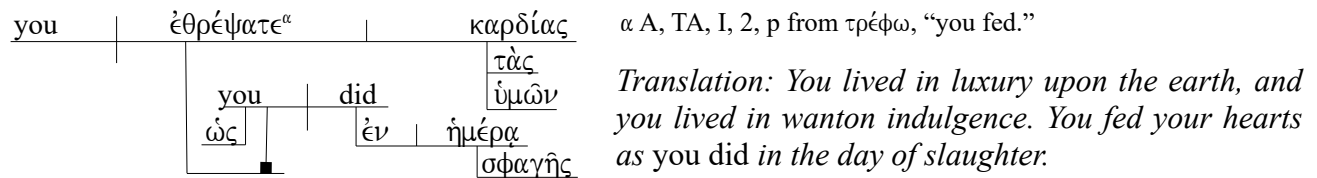
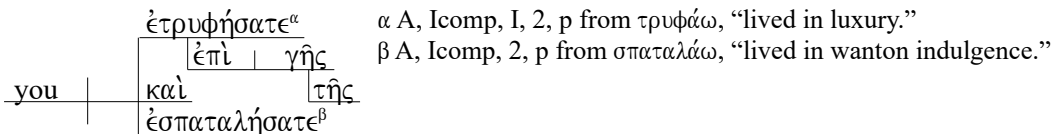
Considerations: Some things never change! The rich are cheating the wage earners. It’s the age-old story, and still goes on today throughout the world. But for these Hebrew cheats, the ultimate consequences are dire, for the fraud perpetrated against their victims are in direct violation of the Mosaic law. Leviticus 19:13 states, “You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob *him*. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.” Deuteronomy 24:14-15 says, “You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, *whether* one of your brethren or one of the aliens who *is* in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you.” (NKJV)

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Furthermore, the cries of the reapers are heard by none other than the Lord of *sabaoth*. The Hebrew unbelievers would have understood the reference immediately. They had heard the phrase “the Lord of sabaoth” many times in their synagogues, for it is used in the Hebrew Scriptures some 260 times! James may be referring to Isaiah 5:9 specifically, but the meaning is clear. The word *sabaoth* is translated “of hosts” in most versions, but the actual meaning of the phrase usually translated “Lord of hosts” is “Yahweh of armies.” The phrase is not used so much of God’s power, but of His sovereignty over the earth. See Isaiah 45:12-13. James is issuing a warning of potential coming judgment against the Jewish unbelievers who oppress their hired workers, for when the Lord returns He will return as the commander of legions of spirit beings. See Matthew 24:29-31. The coming of the Lord at the end of the time of Jacob’s trouble will bring great danger to the unbeliever, for the Lord returns not in benevolence, but as a conqueror, one who brings martial wrath upon unrighteous mankind.

5:5 ἐτρυφήσατε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐσπαταλήσατε. ἐθρέψατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγῆς.

Two declarative sentences. The first is simple, the second is complex. These are the seventh and eighth sentences in the paragraph.



Considerations: These two sentences pin-point James’ indictment of the rich. It is not their riches that he opposes, but the practices produced by the attitude of these particular rich people. They “lived in luxury upon the earth,” indicates the circumstantial evidence of their attitude. No one needs to live in luxury, to accumulate wealth for self-aggrandizement and ease of living. Such ostentation and pampering of oneself is ungodly. These wealthy, as the wealthy often do, lived in wanton indulgence. Their wealth was not used for the benefit of those in need, but to indulge their own desires, the fleshly desires of the fallen flesh.

The second sentence in this verse is somewhat difficult. The main clause, “you fed your hearts” is straightforward. It indicates that the problem of the rich, as noted above, was one of attitude. The word *heart* in Scripture refers to the organ of thinking, in this case, how the thoughts of the rich were only for their own benefit.

The subordinate clause, however, is much more difficult. It has no stated subject and verb, and must be supplied in the mind of the reader. Various understandings have been put forward as to what the subject and verb of this clause should be. The three most prominent views are as follows:

1) Some think the subject should be “beasts” and the verb should be “do,” making the clause say, “like beasts do in the day of slaughter.” This indicates that the rich are ravenous beasts who gorge themselves when they kill their prey.

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2) Others believe that it refers to the custom of having a feast when a part of the animal was consumed in sacrifice, and the rest was eaten by the worshipers. On such occasions the revelers gorged themselves without any consideration, even to the point of sickening themselves. The typical Bacchanalian feasts of the Romans were of this type.

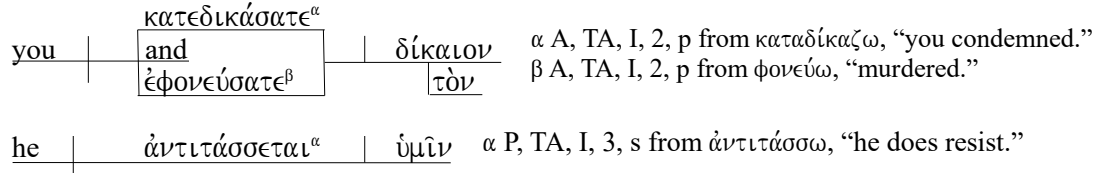
3) A third view is that the subject is the rich themselves, who are preparing themselves for the day of their own slaughter, that is, when they are to be judged by God for their indulgences.

None of these views seem to fit the immediate context very well. It is probable that the phrase “day of slaughter” was a catch phrase that had specific meaning in the culture of the day. It may have referred simply to any day when animals were slaughtered for food. Given that the first clause contains the verb “you fed,” it seems likely that the meaning is simply comparing how they ate on the day when animals were slaughtered for food, and they over-indulged on that particular day.

If this final view has any relationship to reality, the supplied subject and verb “you did” (in the past tense, because the verb of the main clause is an aorist indicative, indicating past time) is the easiest answer to the issue. This makes the main clause mean that they fed their hearts so that, like people who over-eat, their attitudes concerning their wealth took over the way they lived. They engaged in “mind gluttony,” the mental reinforcement of their personal worth because of their wealth. It is a further expression of the attitude of over-indulgence that was occurring in their society.

5:6 κατεδικάσατε, ἐφονεύσατε τὸν δίκαιον. οὐκ ἀντιτάσσεται ὑμῖν;

Two sentences. The first is simple declarative, the second is simple interrogative. These are the ninth and tenth sentences in this paragraph which complete the indictment of the unbelieving rich.



Translation: You condemned and murdered the righteous man. Does he not resist you?

Considerations: The key to the first sentence above is to understand that the noun (*the righteous man*) is the object of both verbs. Such a righteous man, one who is not guilty of any crime, was taken before courts, condemned to death, and then executed, that is, murdered. As in many cultures, the rich and powerful controlled the courts, and regularly condemned people for personal rather than legal reasons. The system was so corrupt that the righteous poor had no recourse.

The word **righteous** has the article, which may be emphasizing the righteous as a specific class. However, if the second sentence is referring back to the word *righteous*, it may be emphasizing individuality rather than class association, though the larger class is more likely to be in view.

Some hold that the second sentence is referring to God, and is a declarative statement. “He (God) does not oppose you.” This seems unlikely, as the wording would be different, since pronouns (in this case found in the personal verb ending of ἀντιτάσσεται) generally refer back to the first word in the context to which they can, in this case, *the righteous man*.

Furthermore, clauses **beginning with a negative (not)** are often interrogative rather than declarative, emphasizing the positive for an answer. A. T. Robertson simply states, “It is possible to treat this as a question.” It is impossible not to. The question then becomes, “He (the righteous man being

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is to the contrary. The Lord will return in righteousness, and His judgment will prevail. Be longsuffering!

The second sentence is a simple illustration taken from agriculture of the patience required by those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord. It is the first of three such illustrations. The Lord’s coming to establish righteousness is like “valuable fruit,” which the farmer knows is worth waiting for. The word *fruit* is a general word that refers to any produce from farming, including grains, etc.

As the farmer (γεωργός, one who works the ground) must recognize that rain comes early and later, the suffering Hebrew Christian must recognize that the Lord will come at the right time. The Greek verb translated “waits” (ἐκδέχομαι) carries the idea of eagerly waiting, expecting something. One never knows when it will rain, but it will, and as the farmer eagerly awaits the precious fruit of the earth as the result of the rain, so the believing Israelite eagerly awaits the valuable fruit of the coming of the Lord to establish His righteous kingdom.

This is a perfect illustration of the correct attitude an early transitional Christian Jew should have, as it is based on the conditions in the land of Israel, rather than those of the local situations under which the dispersion Israelite then operated. The early rains appears early in the planting season in the Levant, which is in the autumn, not the spring. Farmers in the Levant in biblical times sowed grain as late as December. The grain germinated then because of the mild winter, unlike in more northerly climates. Likewise the later rain occurs during early spring, usually from late March through May, followed by the early harvest.

The application of this patience is stated again in the next sentence.

5:8 μακροθυμήσατε καὶ ὑμεῖς. στηρίξατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἤγγικεν.

Two sentences, the first of which is simple imperative, the second of which is complex imperative. These are the third and fourth sentences in the paragraph.

ὑμεῖς | μακροθυμήσατε^α α A, Icomp, Imp, 2, p from μακροθυμέω, “be patient.”
καὶ

you | στηρίξατε^α | καρδίας τὰς ὑμῶν α A, TA, Imp, 2, p from στηρίζω, “strengthen.”
β Pf, Icomp, I, 3, s from ἐγγίζω, “has drawn near.”

παρουσία ἡγγικεν^β
ὅτι ἡ κυρίου τοῦ

Translation: You yourselves also be patient! Strengthen your hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near.

Considerations: The first sentence, “You yourselves also be patient!” is the author’s command based on the illustration of the farmer’s patience, which is seen by the word *καί*, *also*, meaning like the farmer. He then appeals in the second sentence based on the near coming of the Lord. The force of the verb is strengthened by the inclusion of ὑμεῖς, *you*, hence the translation “you yourselves.”

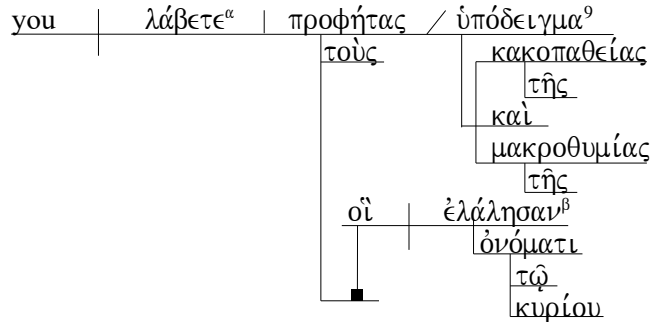
The command “strengthen your hearts” is not an appeal to their emotions, but to their mental attitudes while going through the persecution by the wealthy. A balanced biblical viewpoint for these non-grace believers was absolutely necessary.

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5:10 ὑπόδειγμα λάβετε ἀδελφοί μου, τῆς κακοπαθείας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας τοὺς προφῆτας οἱ ἐλάλησαν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου.

A complex imperative sentence. This is the seventh sentence in the paragraph.

ἀδελφοί
μου



Translation: My brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of affliction and patience.

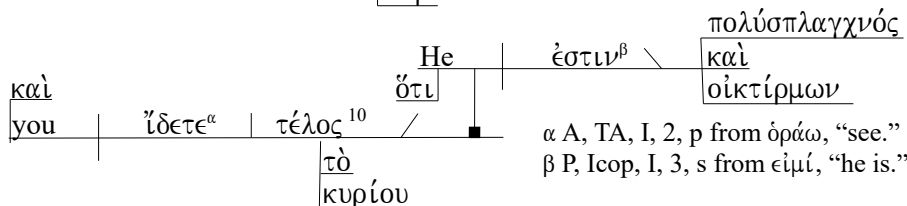
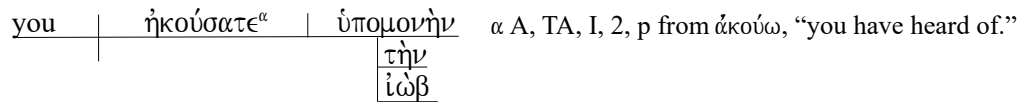
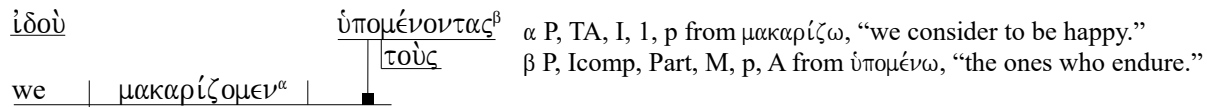
α A, TA, Imp, 2, p from λαμβάνω, “take.”
β A, Icomp, I, 3, s from λαλέω, “spoke.”

Considerations: For the third time in this paragraph James addresses his readers as brothers, but this time in the more intimate form, *my brothers*. His second illustration is from the Hebrew prophets who suffered much affliction. Some suggest *perseverance* or *endurance* for κακοπαθείας, but *affliction* fits the illustration better. The word example, ὑπόδειγμα, carries both a positive and negative use. Some examples are for emulation, as here and John 13:15, others for avoidance, such as Hebrews 4:11 and 2 Peter 2:6. Like the Hebrew Christians, the prophets were persecuted by their own Hebrew people.

The prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord suffered wrong-doing, and patiently continued in their work. So also should the Christian Hebrews, who suffered at the hands of the unbelieving Hebrews, maintain their life of honoring the Lord.

5:11 ἰδοὺ μακαρίζομεν τοὺς ὑπομένοντας. τὴν ὑπομονὴν ἰὼβ ἤκούσατε. καὶ τὸ τέλος κυρίου ἴδετε ὅτι πολὺσπλαγχνός ἐστίν καὶ οἰκτίρμων.

Three sentences. The first and second are simple declarative, the third is complex declarative. These, the eighth, ninth, and tenth sentences, end the paragraph.



α A, TA, I, 2, p from ὁράω, “see.”
β P, Icop, I, 3, s from εἰμί, “he is.”

Translation: Behold, we consider the ones who endure to be happy. You have heard of the endurance of Job. So see the thing resulting from the Lord, that He is very compassionate and full of pity.

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Considerations: We come to the third and final illustration of patience in this paragraph, that of Job. His readers had heard, probably in the readings in the synagogues, about Job. His patience was of the stronger type, called *endurance* by James, a correct translation for the noun ὑπομονή. For endurance is not simply patience, but bearing up under terrible trials, as did Job, without becoming a casualty of despair and giving up faith in God. James is appealing to his readers to remain faithful to God, even under the most difficult persecutions.

James considers those who endure to be happy. The word *happy* is usually translated *blessed*, but it means blessed in the sense of happiness, to be in a position of envy. Any Christian who understands God's program for the believer can be happy, even under the worst of circumstances. This supernatural happiness is the result of correct thinking about God and His word, and is something the unbeliever cannot ever fully understand. In this context, the basic doctrine of happiness is the expectation of the implementation of the Messianic promises, and the coming of the Lord to establish His righteous kingdom (5:7).

The third and final sentence in both this verse and the paragraph has translation problems. However, the overall sense of the statement is rather straightforward. James is appealing to his readers' knowledge of the character of God. He commands them to see the results of the Lord, which results he identifies.

The word usually translated *end*, τέλος, carries the idea of finality, but the nature of the finality must be determined from the context. In this case, the finality refers to the ultimate results of the troubles which the readers were to endure. Now, these results are not framed in terms of the relief from the suffering, but from what one learns of God's character which will encourage the endurance.

James was no psychologist, and many have wondered at his wisdom here. His reference is not psychological, but theological. In a rare grammatical construction, a clausal double accusative, he identifies the results from the Lord, that God is very compassionate and full of pity. Each of these words is somewhat unusual, and refer to human emotions. But we must take care that we do not accuse God of having capricious emotions like a human being, for we have a figure of speech here, anthropopathy, the applying of human emotions to God. God does not have emotions that are caused by circumstances, but attitudes that come from His very character. They are not capricious, unlike human emotions, for they are maintained by God Himself in an unwavering and righteous manner.

Compassion is the attitude of God by which He understands and expresses concern for those undergoing harmful, painful, or dangerous situations. The metaphorical Greek word used here, πολύσπλαγχνός, is made up of two words, πολύς, meaning *many*, and σπλάγχνον, meaning *internal organs*.¹¹

Unlike modern English which uses the word *heart* to refer to emotions, the ancient Greeks used the word which refers to the intestines, but came to refer to all the organs of the body, including the stomach, and even the heart. Anyone who has gone through an emotional circumstance knows the feeling one gets in the "pit of his stomach." The various internal organs often respond in times of emotional stress. The heart beats faster, the sweat glands secrete, the stomach becomes jumpy, and a person may even become sick to his stomach, or void his intestines especially in highly dangerous situations producing great fear.

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But God has no physical body, so again we say, we are dealing with a figure of speech, referring to an attitude of God which does not come and go like human emotional response.

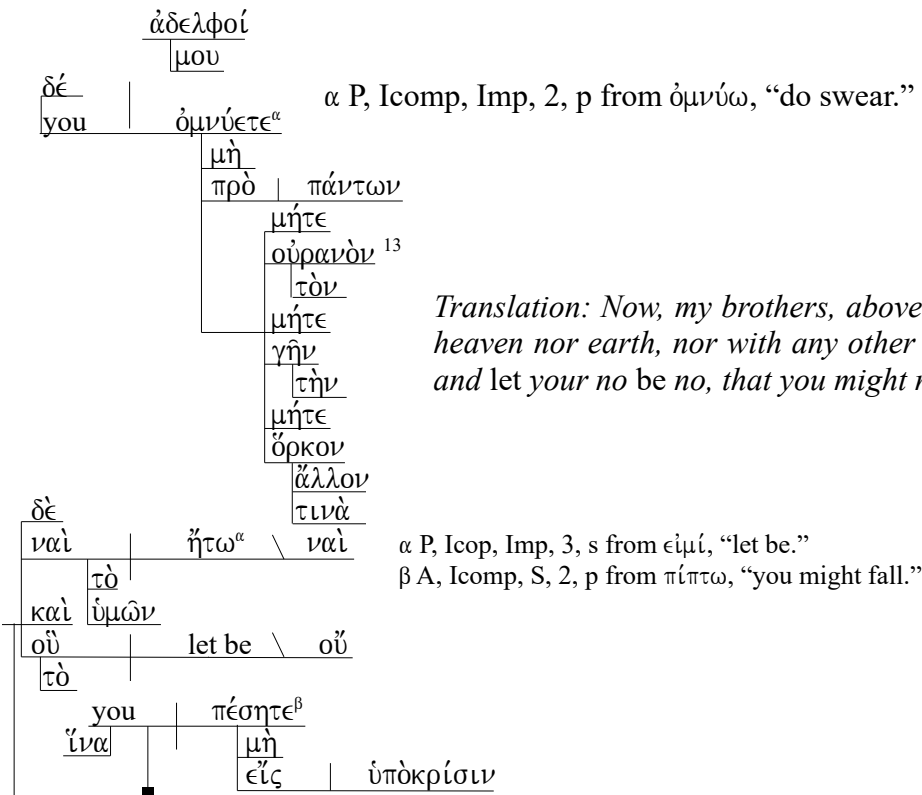
The word translated *full of pity*, οἰκτίρων, has no direct English equivalent. The previous word, which we have translated *very compassionate* has been translated pitiful, or full of pity, as well, but that translation seems to fit οἰκτίρων better.¹²

The point to these two word descriptions of God is to indicate His benevolent character. God does not directly bring hardship on believers, even though He has included such in His plan, nor does He withhold it, which would bring a false view of the way man has corrupted God’s creation; for the blame for the hardships that people foist on their fellow humans comes from their own fallen inability to be anything other than corrupt. (I do not mean to imply that man never performs kind or good acts for his fellow man, but that such acts come, not from God, but from his own perspective of self-worth, and desire to be recognized as such. Under such conditions, even unbelievers perform good works. Unbelieving man, and carnal Christians, do not seek to glorify God by their kind acts, but to glorify themselves.)

Summary: This paragraph applies the eschatological truths of the coming Messianic reign. James encourages the Christian Jews to patience based upon Old Testament illustrations, but begins by reminding them that the Messiah will come. Like so many of James’ thoughts, this passage cannot be divorced from the overarching eschatological truths with which his initial readers were already aware.

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 εἰς ὑπόκρισιν πέσητε.

Two sentences. The first is a simple imperative. The second is a compound-complex imperative.



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Considerations: These two sentences make up a paragraph that is directly associated with the troubles the brothers are having with the wealthy, and their persecution. James is recalling the teaching of Jesus on swearing, and applying it to the current situation. To swear an oath is to make a promise based on a higher authority. Yet, interpreters struggle with this passage, because they do not fully realize the kingdom-based teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Some speculate that this is a fragment of a larger section that has been lost, simply because their doctrinal understanding of Christ's kingdom teaching is so lacking. Note the theologically inept statement of Oesterley in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*: "The most natural way of understanding these words would be to take them in connection with something that immediately preceded, but as there is not the remotest connection between this verse and the section that has gone just before, this is impossible here; the verse must be regarded as the fragment of some larger piece...."

This statement verges on silliness, and a lack of careful eschatological exegesis. Like so many of his contemporaries, Oesterley underplays the *true* eschatological awareness of the original readers, especially from the Old Testament Scriptures. The generation from which Oesterley came, if they had an eschatology at all, were by and large post-millennial, and held that the kingdom could not come until the "church" had established righteousness on earth. The Scriptures teach no such thing, but their inept eschatology so alienated that generation of expositors from the pre-kingdom eschatology of the Lord Jesus that they could see no connection between the encouragement that James made in the previous paragraph with the current statements concerning not swearing an oath. James reflects the same teaching that Jesus presented concerning the pre-kingdom program (Matthew 5:33-37).

But, lest we seem too harsh against their generation, many today, even among premillennial expositors do not understand the pre-kingdom teaching of the Lord Jesus. It is easy to fall into traditional eschatology, not realizing the purpose of the discourse to the disciples found in Matthew 5-7. One premillennial teaching prevalent today is that Matthew 5, 6, and 7 present a "constitution of the kingdom." Many teach that the exposition of the law by Christ will be instituted in the coming kingdom, and that the Lord was identifying kingdom law. If that be true, James was also referring to kingdom law, because his statements in this short paragraph parallel almost exactly some of the Lord's statements in Matthew 5:33-37. Unless one allegorizes the teaching of Matthew 5-7, one must realize that the individuals to whom Christ was speaking were not yet in the kingdom, but were looking forward to it.

In fact, Matthew 5-7 must be understood as teaching anticipating the coming kingdom. Will the legal statements of Christ hold in the future kingdom of God on earth? Possibly, but that is not the Lord's emphasis, nor is it James'. The key to both James' and Christ's teaching concerning oaths we find in an earlier statement by the Lord in Matthew 5, namely in verse 20:

For I say to you that unless your righteousness is in abundance more than the scribes and Pharisees, by no means will you enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5-7 is a discourse, not to those who have already entered the kingdom, but to those who had not, and had to become eligible to do so. Now, it is important to understand that entering the kingdom of heaven¹⁴ is not part of the grace program of God. The right to enter must be earned by righteous living, as compared to the lifestyle of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day.

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Certainly, then, the situation before both James and Jesus dealt with believers who were looking forward to entering the kingdom. One must understand, however, that two groups of believers were to enter the kingdom: those who had died and would be resurrected just before the kingdom's establishment, and those who were alive, and would enter into the kingdom in natural bodies. It is to that last group that both James and Jesus directed their addresses, because the legal requirements could not apply to those who had died and been resurrected.

But, you may say, James was addressing Christian Jews after the day of Pentecost, and therefore members of the body of Christ, while the Lord was addressing those who had to go through the tribulation of Matthew 24 before entering the kingdom. Yes, exactly! But one must understand that the early believers, the firstfruits, had not yet received revelation concerning the nature of the complete change in program that had occurred in Acts 2. They were still operating under the assumptions of pre-body of Christ revelation. This was the *early transition* period, a period that would be followed by great amounts of new revelation, revelation that at the time of James had not begun to be presented.

So James, like Jesus, was teaching truth based on the pre-kingdom needs of Israelites, not upon the later teaching of Paul and the other writers of Scripture, Scripture that did not then exist, and to which James could not refer.

So then, how does this teaching on swearing relate to the pre-kingdom program? The answer is best found by looking at the same teaching in Matthew 5. Christ's discourse has several elements, one of which is the legal relationships for these pre-kingdom believers. Remember, Christ was proclaiming ways that their righteousness must be greater than that of the religious leaders of the day. In Matthew 5:21-48 four distinct issues are brought forth by the Lord which must be met for one to be eligible to enter the kingdom. The short outline below lists these four issues found in Matthew 5:

- 1) The Problem of Anger.....5:21-26
- 2) The Problem of Adultery.....5:27-32
- 3) The Problem of Swearing Oaths...5:33-37
- 4) The Problem of Retribution.....5:38-48

Each of these problems, which needed to be corrected by each believer in order to enter the kingdom, was being mishandled in Judea during the time of Christ's earthly ministry. In Matthew 5:33-37 we read the following:

³³ Again you have heard that it was said to the old ones, You shall not swear falsely, but you will pay back your oaths to the Lord.^{15 34-36} But I Myself say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven, because it is God's throne, nor by earth, because it is the footstool for His feet, nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great king, nor shall you swear by your head, because you are not able to make one hair white or black.³⁷ But let your word be yes, yes or no, no, and more than these is from the evil one.

Religious leaders of Jesus' day, particularly Pharisees, were known for oaths. But to make them non-binding, they would swear by something other than God, such as heaven or earth, Jerusalem, their own head, etc. Since God was not mentioned, they thought the oath was not binding. They were wrong, however, because each related to God or His power in some way. The careful student will understand that Christ referred to God with each element: 1) heaven is God's throne, which is a figurative

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statement that God’s presence is not limited to heaven itself, since a person is larger than his chair; 2) earth is God’s footstool, which states that God’s presence is not limited to heaven; 3) Jerusalem is the city of the great king, an eschatological reference to the person of the Messiah who will live in Jerusalem, that person being the Lord Jesus Himself, the God of the universe; 4) and finally, their own head, over which they themselves had no authority. A man cannot even determine the color of his hair,¹⁶ since God does it.

James mentions only heaven and earth, but includes the others under *any other oath*. But the whole function of swearing by something other than God was hypocritical, and a method of side-stepping the requirement of whatever one had sworn. It’s better not to swear at all, and keep your word, than to swear falsely and become a hypocrite. So, to His disciples Jesus affirms that taking an oath is not necessary. One’s emphatic statement (let your yes be yes, and your no be no) is sufficient; it is just as legally and morally binding as a statement accompanied by an oath.¹⁷ Don’t say one thing, and do something else, which is the definition of being a hypocrite.

James applies Christ’s teaching for much the same reason. The life of the dispersion Israelites, who were to be patient and enduring during their persecutions, was based on an eschatological certainty, the future coming of the Lord to establish the kingdom of God on earth, who would bring relief for the righteous believers. Therefore, be righteous in your conduct, do not swear falsely by not swearing at all, and affirm your righteous character by keeping your simple word. James begins, πρὸ πάντων, *before all things* (temporal), making this the first thing that they need to correct to attain righteous living.

5:13 κακοπαθεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν; προσευχέσθω. εὐθυμεῖ τις; ψαλλέτω.

Four sentences. The first and third are simple interrogative. The second and fourth are simple declarative in response to the interrogative. These are the first through fourth sentences in the paragraph which extends through verse 18.

τις	κακοπαθεῖ ^α	α P, Icomp, I, 3, s from κακοπαθέω, “does experience misfortune.”
	ἐν ὑμῖν	

the one who suffers misfortune

■	προσευχέσθω ^α	α P, Icomp, Imp, 3, s from προσεύχομαι, “let him pray.”
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τις	εὐθυμεῖ ^α	α P, Icomp, I, 3, s from εὐθυμέω, “is cheerful.”
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the cheerful one

■	ψαλλέτω ^α	α P, Icomp, Imp, 3, s from ψάλλω, “let him sing.”
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Translation: Does anyone among you experience misfortune? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing.

Considerations: The superficial handling of this paragraph by expositors, beginning with these sentences, is appalling. What we have here are two rhetorical questions with third person *imperatives* as the answer. The question and answer method, sometimes called the catechetical method, is designed to involve the readers more closely in the teaching process. James continues this approach in the next verse. There is also Hebrew poetic parallelism, which we will discuss as we compare the individual couplets, which consist of a question and answer.

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The first couplet is sometimes thought to refer to a physical illness, but that is reserved for verse 14. The Greek word, *κακοπαθεῖ*, refers to undergoing a mishap of some kind. The emphasis is on a negative circumstance, though not on physical illness.

The answer, “Let him pray,” is more difficult to explain. James is still in the “kingdom” mode when he makes this statement. Presumably, his audience understood something about kingdom-based prayer, the kind of prayer that Jesus taught His disciples, which, at this early transition time, was still in force, since the eschatology for the believers of the current age had not been revealed when James wrote.

In this section, James mentions prayer only as a response to negative events. Note the distinction in this verse of praying in negative circumstances, while cheerful circumstances should produce singing. This negative cast to praying is also presented in vss. 14 and 17-18 below.

Recall the context, the kingdom emphasis of earlier statements, and the legal emphasis throughout this epistle. It is fallacy to think James has abandoned his earlier approach. Recall the words of Christ’s prayer, the one He taught His disciples,

Therefore, you yourselves pray in this way: Our Father in heaven, let Your name be sanctified, ¹⁰ let Your kingdom come, let Your will happen, as in heaven, also upon the earth. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not bring us unto temptation, but rescue us from the evil one, because Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. (Translation by the author.)

Note that this is a prayer to the Father that the kingdom might come, because it was not yet present. Note also that the prayer asks that the Father’s will be done on the earth *like it is in heaven*, something that was not true then, as it is not true now, and will not be true until Christ establishes His kingdom on earth. Indeed, each element of this prayer is directed to Messianic Israelites who were to look forward to the next *positive* eschatological event for the Hebrew people, the coming of the Christ to establish His kingdom. It was this that James was teaching. Let’s paraphrase the intent of both the Lord’s and James’ teaching, “If you are undergoing afflictions on earth because of the depredations of your fellow Israelites, or the reprobate Gentiles, look forward to, and pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.”

Furthermore, the legal basis for this prayer is clear, for Christ made it clear. The Lord’s teaching for them to pray, “And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors,” is law based. In the two sentences following this sample prayer, the Lord states,

¹⁴ For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive *yours*. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

There is no grace here, only a legal motivation to forgive. This was the kind of prayer that James was encouraging his readers to pray, but is inappropriate for believers later in the transition or today. Study Paul’s prayers for examples, where he prays for spiritual benefit for believers, not relief from physical affliction.

The second couplet, which expresses the rhetorical question, “Is anyone cheerful?” is in stark contrast to the first. James has gone from a circumstance that is hurtful, to one that is just the opposite. It is a circumstance that produces a sense of well-being, cheerfulness. Again, there exists Hebrew poetical

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structure here, antithetical parallelism, where the first couplet was negative and the second is positive. James will continue this approach by reverting to the negative with his next two sentences in vs. 14.

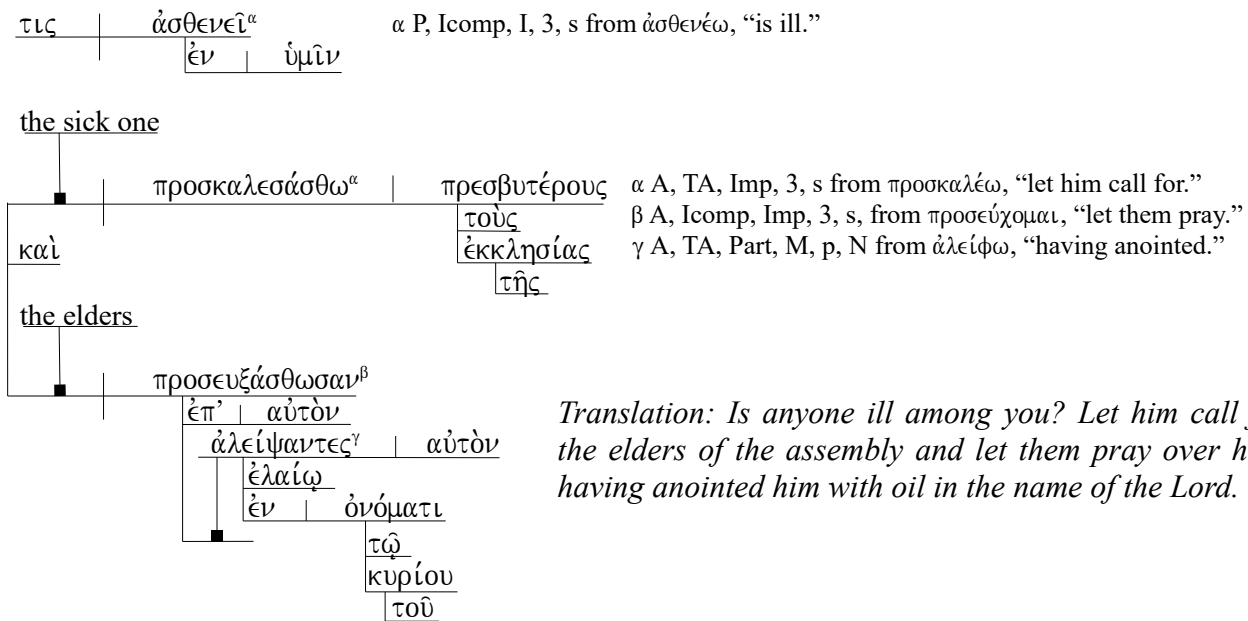
It is clear to the discerning reader that James and his audience are focused on the physical, the circumstantial. The command, “Let him sing,” is based on the good events that brought about this circumstance. Many have compared this to Paul’s use of the same word for singing, ψάλλω, without seeing the distinctions in the motivation behind the act.

James invokes singing when things are going well, when the physical circumstances are positive. The Hebrew parallelism makes this obvious. The highly misunderstood passage in Ephesians 5:19 is thought to be similar to this, but the contexts are completely different. Paul in Ephesians invokes singing *to the Lord* as the result of spiritual victory over satanic attack, and over the application of the grace appliances for achieving such a victory. Not so James, who, like his readers, is looking forward to physical release from the troubles of life at the time of the kingdom’s establishment.

Another inference which one can draw from the second couplet is the temporary nature of physical circumstances. The negative can, and often will, return to the positive. No one desires to go through the pains of life, either physical or emotional. Yet, they do not last, and generally grow less burdensome with time. As one matures through experience, one can look forward to the positive during the time of the negative, and can, indeed, see that rarely is it all negative. The immature hold on to the negative, thinking that things will never get any better. While children often respond in this way, even adults sometimes take their pessimism to the grave.

5:14 ἀσθενεῖ τις ἐν ὑμῖν; προσκαλεσάσθω τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ προσευξάσθωσαν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἀλείψαντες αὐτὸν ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου.

Two sentences. The first is simple interrogative, the second is compound imperative. These are the fifth and sixth sentences in the paragraph.



Considerations: It should be clear by now that my view is that these passages, along with most of the epistle, are no longer applicable to believers who are not going through the early transition, which

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allows the interpretation to follow the normal pattern.¹⁸ The present couplet before us, with its subsequent explanation in the next few verses, is sometimes misinterpreted, because some do not believe that they can apply it if they take it normally. There must be some way to apply the material to today, they think, because it was written to church believers. So they look for ways around the obvious meaning of the verses.

James is discussing physical healing here and in the next few verses. There is no need to avoid that conclusion, though many have tried to make it some kind of spiritual or moral remedy.¹⁹ Under the kingdom program as James was applying it here, a program which is a primarily land-based program, physical healing was common. Christ healed to establish His messianic credentials, and the disciples followed suit. The apostles in the Acts healed for a similar reason, to show their authority from God. But such healing is no longer available today, nor should it be sought. God will not heal through the individual charlatans of the current religious landscape.²⁰

The couplet is the third and final set of antithetic parallel statements, this again dealing with the negative rather than the positive. The rhetorical question, “Is anyone ill among you?” finds its response in the next sentence. James makes it clear that he is talking to his Jewish audience with the words *among you*. The “you” here are believing dispersed Christian Israelites, not the body of Christ at large. Because they are living among their unbelieving Jewish brethren, James makes sure that the readers understand that his application is limited to the Messianic Jews who have believed the messianic truth of Jesus, the Nazarene.

The response to the question is again a third person imperative. Let the sick one call the elders of the assembly.²¹ Unfortunately, the various translators of this passage have used the English *church* for the Greek word ἐκκλησία. In fact, *church* should never translate ἐκκλησία unless the word refers to the larger assembly, the body of Christ. Then the word church may be used, since the word ἐκκλησία carries a metaphorical meaning in that figure. But when used of a local gathering, the word simply means *assembly*, whether its the later local assemblies of the believers, or the earlier local assemblies in the synagogues. It is for this reason that the Greek word always refers to people, never to a building.

Indeed, the LXX uses ἐκκλησία²² to translate the Hebrew *קהל*, *gathering, assembly*. This LXX use is clearly not referring to the local assemblies of the New Testament Christians. During the ministry of Jesus and through the early transition into the new program, the Old Testament use of ἐκκλησία to refer to the congregation of the synagogue continued. See Matthew 18:17. It is in this sense that James uses ἐκκλησία, rather than the later Pauline use of the word.

So, here we have an early call to Hebrew Christians to invoke physical healing through the ministration of elders among local assemblies within the synagogue program. There were to be two parts to this invocation: 1) The elders were to pray over the sick one, and 2) these elders were to have already anointed the sick person with oil. It is this act of anointing with oil that clinches the case for physical healing in this passage.

The Greek word translated anoint here is *aleipho*, (ἀλείφω), rather than *chrio*, (χρίω). Trench correctly states that *aleipho* “is used as the mundane and profane term,” while *chrio* “is used as the sacred and religious term.”²³ Trench does not mean that *aleipho* was unimportant, only that it was a regular cultural practice of the day. For instance, those who fasted were instructed to anoint their heads, (Matthew 6:17).

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In Mark 6:13 we find the sick being anointed in this sense. *Aleipho* anointing was also done to soothe the feet when one traveled, and carried high cultural significance when done for an important person in one's home. See John 12:3 where such anointing was performed on Jesus. Also, dead bodies were regularly anointed in this sense after burial (Mark 16:1).

The anointing with oil is an especially Jewish ritual, done for a variety of reasons. Dr. McGee's statement is worth presenting here:

There are two Greek words which are translated "anoint" in the New Testament. One of them is used in a religious sense; that word is *chrío* in the Greek. From that we get the word Christos; Christ was the Anointed One. It means to anoint with some scented unguent or oil. It is used only five times in the New Testament, and it refers to the anointing of Christ by God the Father with the Holy Spirit.

The second word translated "anoint" is *aleipho*. It is used a number of times in the New Testament. In Mat 6:17 we read, "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face." That simply means to put oil on your hair so that you will look all right. Trench comments that *aleipho* is "the mundane and profane word." The other, *chrío*, is "the sacred...word." The word used in this verse in James is *aleipho*, and all it means is to rub with oil. You remember that when Hezekiah was sick, they put something medicinal on that boil he had. James is saying something very practical here. He says, "Call for the elders to pray, and go to the best doctor you can get."²⁴

Dr. McGee is correct. The Hebrews viewed various oils as means of healing.²⁵ Concerning anointing with oil, Oesterley states that such was "a common Jewish usage...as oil was believed to have the effect of curing bodily sickness...."²⁶

Note, however, that this anointing with oil was to be "in the name of the Lord." To a Hebrew of that day, the "name of the Lord" was identifiable in the Scriptures. It was the tetragrammaton, which is often transliterated *Yahweh* today. They did not pronounce the name, but recognized it as indicating their personal relationship to God. Hence, the word "name" came to be a reference to the character and good reputation of the person. Therefore, applying oil is not *purely* referring to medicinal healing, but to the combination of the physical and spiritual means in healing from a transitional Jewish perspective.

We must not reject the physical healing element here, as many do because of the excesses of the charlatans who deceive the gullible. The key to correctly understanding the application of these statements is to keep them in their historical and doctrinal context, and not attempt a broad-based application for illnesses today. When God heals today, He does so without fanfare, without public demonstration, and without human agency, so that in the renewed mind of the believer who is healed, God and God alone gets the glory! In other words, no faith healers!

The imperative verb "let them pray" translates προσεύχουμαι (*proseuchomai*). Praying is basically an attitude of worship in communication, in this case, kingdom based worship. Worship is *an attitude* in which the believer, knowing who and what God is, gives back to God all that is due Him. Other types of communication may be included or may interrupt worship communication without changing the essential character of the worship itself. Worship includes the idea of being in the presence of God "through the veil" (Hebrews 10:19-22). Confusingly, other words are sometimes translated pray, or prayer. *Deomai* (supplicate, petition), *parakaleo* (beseech, call for), *erotao* (request, interrogate), and

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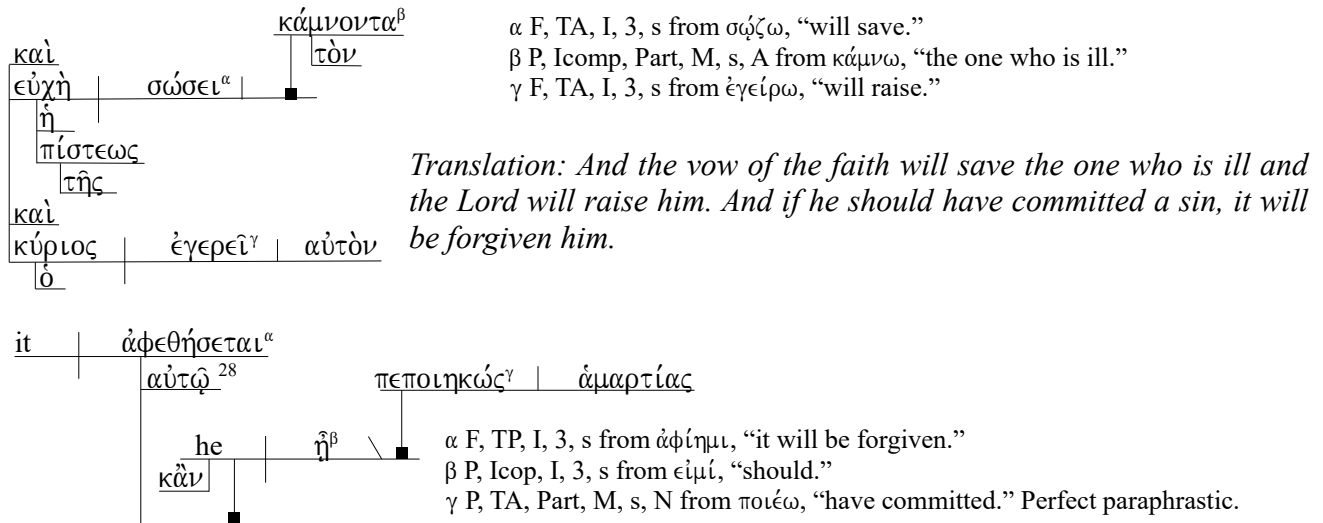
euchomai (to communicate a wish), are all wrongly translated pray. In addition, prayer is regularly confused with asking (*aiteo, aitema*), a unique form of communication with the Father that relates to abiding.

Prayer is not the means for healing the sick, but is basic, for it establishes the correct attitude toward God in order that the healing may occur.²⁷ Another act of communication, the vow, was the transitional means for healing in circumstances such as James addresses (vs. 15). The godly elders must have a worshipful attitude toward God in order for the process of healing to go forward, for they are invoking His very character and power through such a worshipful attitude.

More information on this healing is provided in the next sentence, which confirms the transitional nature of the healing process.

5:15 καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ τῆς πίστεως σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα καὶ ἐγερεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος· καὶ ἁμαρτίας ἢ πεποιηκῶς ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ.

Two sentences. The first is compound declarative. The second is complex conditional, third class. These are the seventh and eighth sentences in the paragraph.



Considerations: The first sentence in this verse continues the discussion of the process of transitional healing. Much confusion has arisen because of the incorrect translation *prayer* for the Greek εὐχὴ. The word prayer *does occur* in the previous verse, to be performed by the elders. But here, we have the noun *vow* rather than prayer, and the two are only marginally related. Both words concern the communication of a believer to God, though in different ways. Prayer is an act of worship, and may or may not include some kind of request. If a request is included in prayer, it is a request of a spiritual, non-physical nature, and it is based on the character and person of God. It may be a request for spiritual enlightenment, for instance (Ephesians 1:16-18ff).

Vow, on the other hand, is a promise to God based on the relationship of the Old Testament individual to God. The words “of the faith” refer to the concept of faith for daily living under the law as it has previously been promoted by James (see below for a fuller discussion). A vow of *the faith* has physical as well as spiritual ramifications, and must be distinguished carefully from prayer. A vow is a *commitment made to God* to accomplish some specific work, and, though vowing predated the law, it

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became intimately bound to the temple (earlier, the tabernacle) sacrificial program under the Mosaic law. Note the following:

1. When a person, either a man or woman, vowed, the person was under a legally binding obligation to the Lord, and could not break the vow (Numbers 30:2).
2. A vow could contain a conditional element. Note Jacob's vow in Genesis 28:20-22, "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Yahweh will be my God, ²² then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And from all that you shall give me, I will surely give the tenth to you." This vow pre-dated the law, but still carried the binding character of later vows.
3. Under the law, vows were to be paid. That is to say, that a vow was required to be fulfilled. However, if a person made a rash vow and could not perform it, one could pay money to the priest in the temple to redeem (deliver the person from) the vow (Leviticus 27:1-34).
4. Through a vow, a person could dedicate a person to the Lord, such as Hannah did in 1 Samuel 1:11.
5. Under the law, at the end of a vow period in order for the vow to be complete, the one who vowed was to make a sacrifice in the temple. This may have entailed purchasing something to sacrifice, and explains what Paul did in Acts 21:21-26. Paul paid for the vows of four men, by which he demonstrated that he was not opposed to the Mosaic/temple program for the Jews.
6. The vow in James 5:15, made either by the sick individual who promised something to God if he were to be healed, or the elders on behalf of the sick individual, was transitional. Such vows are invalid today, since the Mosaic law is not in force, and since the transition came to an end. Nor can an individual make a sacrifice to complete the vow period today, though it was still possible at the time James wrote.

James specifically calls this "the vow of the faith." *The faith* refers to the belief that those transitional Hebrews had to live according to the teachings of Christ and His Messianic program. The one who makes the vow is one who believes that the Lord is capable of performing what He decides. They are Christians, not to be counted among the unbelieving Hebrews. In this case, these Christian Jews, who held Jesus to be the Lord, were believing the messianic truth which He proclaimed, a faith not held by the majority of Hebrews at that time. They had been informed that Jesus healed believing Israelites during His sojourn on earth and could also heal them. This is the faith spoken of by James here.

The words *will save* here refer to physical salvation, that is, healing from sickness. The Lord will heal the transitional believer from sickness. It is this future indicative "will heal" that has caused confusion among many, for they read it "will always save" rather than the static "will save."²⁹ James is not guaranteeing healing from sickness, but only the potential.

Furthermore, it is not the prayers of the elders, or even the vow of the individual, but the Lord, who is the immediate cause of the raising up of the sick individual. So we see that a vow of faith could be the *intermediate* means by which the Lord acts in raising up the individual, but James leaves the raising up to the Lord. The idea that a vow is the direct means of healing is hubris, as it makes the vow a command to God to heal! God retained then, and retains now the act of healing according to His own will.

The second sentence in this verse provides insight into an often overlooked doctrine, one often vilified because of its misunderstanding by the Jews of Jesus day (John 9:2), that illness could be the

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result of an act or acts of sin. The disciples assumed that a man had sinned because he had a debilitating illness. While sin may cause such illness, it may not be the cause, as Jesus shows in John 9.

However, Mark 2:3-11 contains a possible inkling of this doctrine. Jesus first forgives and then heals a man carried to Him on his bed. His forgiveness is challenged by the scribes who hear His statements, and Jesus makes it clear that He has the authority to forgive sins by raising the man up. We may infer from this incident that the man had committed a sin or sins which resulted in his palsy, though that is not the primary force of the incident.

Jesus explicitly states that sin can produce illness in John 5:14. To a man whom He had previously healed He states, “Sin no longer, so that something worse might not happen to you.” The cause and effect statement is clear, and the doctrine certain. At the time of Christ’s earthly ministry, it was correctly believed that sin *could* produce physical illness.

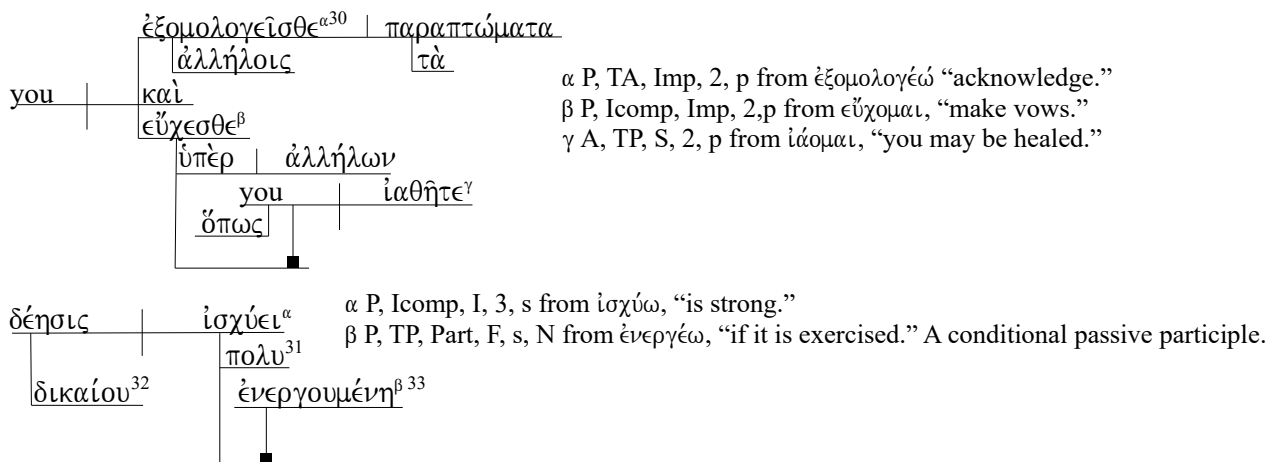
These two passages, taken together, provide the basis for understanding that in Jesus’ day forgiveness of sin could accompany healing, and that sometimes illness was the result of sin.

Such is the background for James’ statement. But we repeat, this is a transitional doctrine, based on the Messianic ministry of Jesus during His sojourn on earth. There is no indication for today that healing is accompanied by the forgiveness of sin, nor that one can make a vow as the intermediate means of such healing. Yes, there was later healing spoken of by Paul, and related to certain spiritual gifts, but that is not what James is teaching. James is teaching a transitional doctrine based on the Old Testament practice of praying, vowing (and, in the next verse, supplicating) under the Mosaic program. The phrase, “vow of the faith” relates this to the *faith content* of the believing Christian Israelite during the earliest part of the transition.

James’ consideration of healing continues in the next few sentences.

5:16 ἐξομολογείσθε ἀλλήλοις τὰ παραπτώματα, καὶ εὐχέσθε ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων ὅπως ἰαθῆτε. πολὺ ἰσχύει δέησις δικαίου ἐνεργουμένη.

Two sentences. The first is a complex imperative, the second is a simple declarative. These are the ninth and tenth sentences in the paragraph.



Translation: Acknowledge your trespasses to one another, and make vows on behalf of one another so that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous person is very strong, if it is exercised.

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Considerations: The first sentence in this verse is fairly simple, if one examines the structure of the sentence and the meaning of the words carefully. Structurally, the sentence has a compound predicate. The subject *you* (plural) is followed by two predicates.

The verb of the first predicate, *acknowledge*, is of the same root as the verb generally translated *confess*, and means to agree with other believers concerning your trespasses (not sins, as it is usually translated). Trespasses here are but errors, either in judgment or in action. Sometimes the word is translated faults. James is not implying the malicious intent of sinning. Nor does he mean that the trespass was specifically “against another believer.” It is more general than that. The statement could be translated, “Acknowledge your errors to one another.”³⁴ It is an acknowledgment of human frailty. Simply admitting one’s mistakes opens the way to congenial relationships with others, and lays the groundwork for others expressing sympathy when things go wrong, including physical illness.

The verb of the second predicate, *make vows*, casts us as modern readers back into the Jewish framework. We are still in the context of healing from sickness, but in this case, the vowing is on behalf of another so the person can be healed, which may have been a reference to what the prayerful elders should do. “On behalf of one another” contains the same reciprocal pronoun as with the first verb, *acknowledge*, but here it is in a prepositional phrase rather than in an oblique case. *Vow on behalf of one another* indicates reciprocal vowing. One vows to perform an act beneficial to someone else, who in turn is to vow on behalf of the other.

The second sentence expands on the first. James brings up the concept of supplication. Now, supplication is not prayer, though the two are often associated in the New Testament. Prayer is primarily worship, while supplication is primarily asking for help from God when there is an unknown factor involved. In the case of this context, the unknown factor is how to heal the sick, which only God knows. Paul often uses prayer and supplication in association with one another, while maintaining their distinctions. Note 1 Timothy 2:1; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; 1 Timothy 5:5. The writer to the Hebrews also links prayer and supplication (5:7).

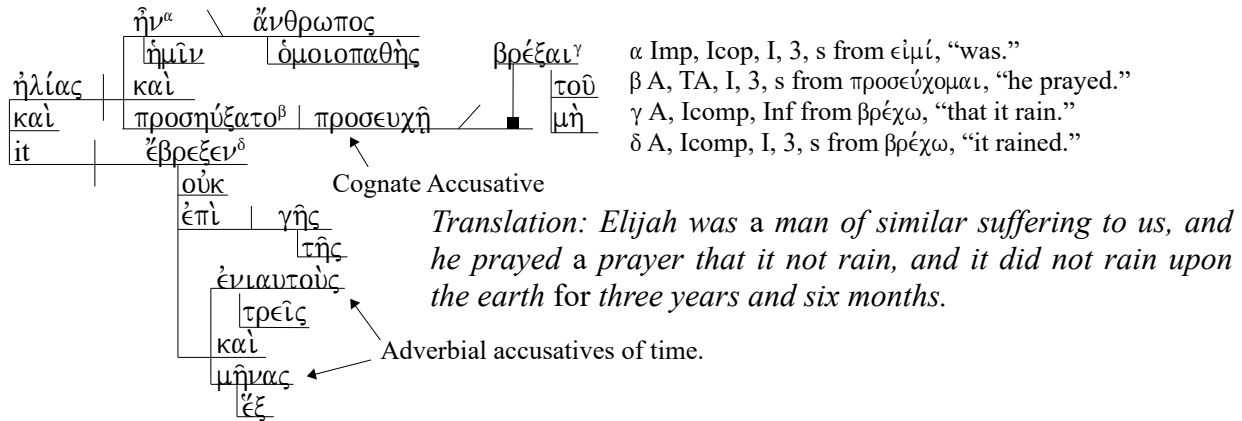
The efficacy of the supplication is tied to the idea that the person who is supplicating is a righteous person. This is a reference to personal righteous living, a very Jewish concept when dealing with Mosaic matters. Righteousness under the Law of Moses consisted of keeping the laws as required by God. We may infer that it is sincere keeping of the law to please God, rather than just mechanical acquiescence.

The statement that the supplication is strong *if it is exercised* by the righteous person is straightforward. Supplication must occur before it can be strong. It must be expressed, exercised by the righteous person to be effective.

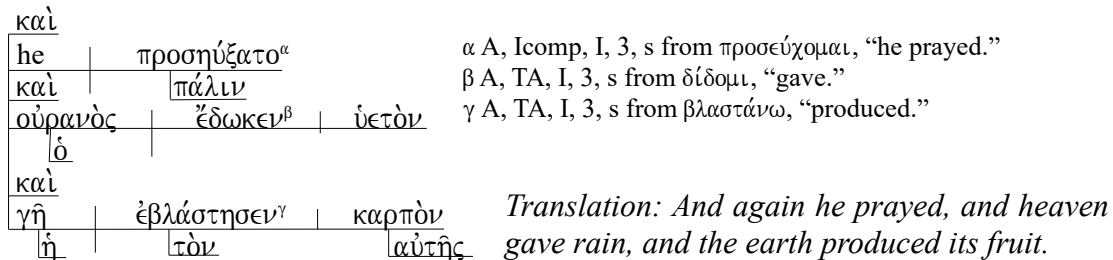
5:17 ἡλίαις ἄνθρωπος ἦν ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν καὶ προσευχῇ προσηύξατο τοῦ μὴ βρέξαι καὶ οὐκ ἔβρεξεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐνιαυτοῦς τρεῖς καὶ μῆνας ἕξ.

A compound declarative sentence. This is the eleventh sentence in the paragraph.

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5:18 καὶ πάλιν προσήγατο καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς ὑετὸν ἔδωκεν καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐβλάστησεν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς.
A triple compound declarative sentence. This is the twelfth and final sentence in the paragraph.



Considerations: We will consider verses 17 and 18 together. The efficacy of Old Testament prayer (worship) is illustrated by an incident in the life of Elijah.³⁵ James’ audience would have been well aware of this incident, which is recorded in 1 Kings. Now, the interesting thing about this episode as recorded in 1 Kings is that the passages do not state that Elijah prayed, either against rain, nor three and a half years later, for rain. Yet James says emphatically that Elijah prayed. Some have suggested that James received further revelation which explains how he knew that Elijah prayed. Such an idea is not necessary if one reads the incident in 1 Kings carefully.

Elijah first predicts the withholding of rain in 1 Kings 17:1:³⁶

“And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, *As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand,*³⁷ there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”

Elijah stated that he stands in the presence of Yahweh. This is the essence of worship, and is the basis upon which James says of Elijah, “...he prayed a prayer...” The conclusion of the incident three and a half years later is found in 1 Kings 18:41 and following. Verses 18:41-43 state.

So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and bowed himself on the earth, and put his face between his knees. ⁴³ And he said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.”

This act of bowing himself down and placing his head between his knees was an act of worship, and such acts of prostration are to be associated with going into the presence of the Lord for worshipful

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prayer. Evidently Elijah remained in this prayerful posture during the entire seven times his servant went to look for signs of rain.

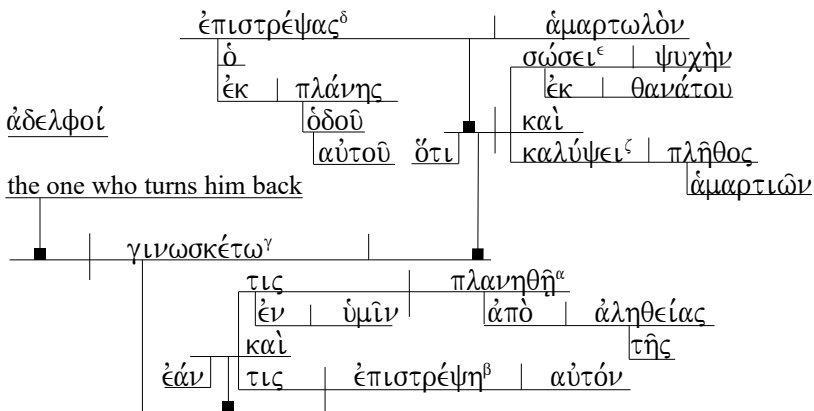
James understood what prayer is. It is not primarily talking to God, and asking for things. It was and is an act of worship while being in the presence of the Lord which is often accompanied by communication to God. From this incident, we may infer that Elijah regularly worshiped the Lord in this manner, and hence was in regular communication with God. Therefore, James says Elijah, “prayed a prayer.” This Hebraism is emphatic in nature. It is sometimes referred to as “fervent prayer” as though maintaining oneself in prayer would somehow change God’s mind. In fact, such is not so, as prayer is not primarily asking for specific results that are unknown. As a prophet of God, Elijah was operating under the instructions of the Lord, and his prayer and worship was based on known facts. The results of this act of worship was that it finally rained after three and a half years, and Elijah knew that it would, as he had already predicted the time period. He could only have predicted the time interval if God had revealed it to him.

Let us be clear here. James uses this illustration for answered prayer based on known facts. When God reveals what will happen, it is appropriate to worship Him in regards to the event. It was not the prayer that produced the specific results, but God, the one who is being worshiped in prayer, who produced the results.

As an illustration of transitional prayer the illustration of Elijah is perfect. Here was a man who suffered in a similar way to the Hebrews of James’ time, a man who invoked the power of God through worshipful prayer based on known facts. The believer now, as then, should realize that God’s character and nature is in view through worshipful prayer, and should continue to maintain a prayerful attitude concerning areas of living that have been revealed in Scripture.³⁸ While today, according to Paul’s illustrations, prayer is for spiritual benefit exclusively, benefit that one knows from Scripture that God desires for believers to have, it is just as important to realize that prayer is primarily for bringing the believer into God’s presence. The simple act of prayer is to be accompanied by the continual attitude of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

5:19-20 ἀδελφοί εἰάν τις ἐν ὑμῖν πλανηθῆ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἐπιστρέψῃ τις αὐτόν ²⁰ γινωσκέτω ὅτι ὁ ἐπιστρέψας ἀμαρτωλὸν ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ σώσει ψυχὴν ἐκ θανάτου καὶ καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν.

A complex third class conditional sentence in the imperative mood. This sentence is the final paragraph in the epistle.



α A, Icomp, S, 3, s from πλανᾶω, “should wander.” So-called aorist passive, but no passive function.

β A, TA, S, 3, s from ἐπιστρέφω, “should bring back.”

γ P, TA, Imp, 3, s from γίνωσκω, “let him know.”

δ A, TA, Part, M, s, N from ἐπιστρέφω, “the one who returns.”

ε F, TA, I, 3, s from σώζω, “will save.”

ζ F, TA, I, 3, s from καλύπτω, “will cover.”

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Translation: Brothers, if anyone among you should wander from the truth and if anyone should bring him back, ²⁰ let him know that the one who returns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death, and will cover a large number of sins.

Considerations: This final sentence in James views one aspect of right living from a legal point of view. Under the law, daily acts were viewed as either legal, and therefore righteous, or illegal, and therefore sinful. James' assumption in this sentence that the individual knew the truth, and was bound to adhere to it. The assumption is in two parts: 1) it is assumed that the individual who has *not* wandered from the truth can recognize the one who has wandered; hence the encouragement to "bring him back" and "return a sinner from the error of his ways." 2) It is assumed that both parties know what the truth is, the truth expressed in Scripture.

Further evidence that this is a legally based statement also has two parts: 1) the one who returns a sinner will save a soul from death. Under the law, physical death was the ultimate price paid for violation of the law. That death could either be symbolical, as when one sacrificed an animal, or personal, when one was put to death for a particular gross violation of the law. 2) The one who returns the sinner will also cover a large number of sins. The concept of "covering sins" comes from the practice of sacrifice under the law, where sins were considered covered temporarily by the sacrifice. This is the actual meaning of *atonement*,³⁹ an English word that inaccurately translates the Hebrew word *kaphar* (כפר), to cover. The sacrificial system covered sins, it did not remove them.

It appears that during the dispersion of the first century, where temple sacrifice could not be made, turning away from sins was viewed in a similar light. We must keep in mind that the law, during the dispersion, could not be kept in its entirety, specifically the temple aspects. Dispersion Jews no longer could immediately sacrifice, as such sacrifice could only be made at the temple in Jerusalem.⁴⁰

The argument that the one whose sins are covered is the one who is returning the sinner, rather than the sinner himself, is not valid. The illogic of such an assumption is evident, as it would change the direction of thought within the sentence back upon the one who is attempting to turn the sinner, rather than the sinner himself. Nevertheless, some have expressed the view that the one turning the sinner is himself a sinner, and somehow is blind to his own sin, and is acting as a busybody. Such cannot be the case, as then the one attempting to turn the other is acting hypocritically. James would not have condoned such an action.

Endnotes

- 1 οἱ πλούσιοι, the article used to identify a specific group, a class.
- 2 Friberg (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, under the word) says that it means “making a loud and inarticulate cry.”
- 3 The idea that the “church” will undergo rapture is incorrect on two accounts. First, the passage in question (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) indicates that the rapture applies only to a small part of believers, those alive at the time of the resurrection. The rest will be raised from death. Second, the word church is not used by Paul in the passage. People do not get resurrected or undergo the rapture because of their association with the church, the body of Christ, but because they believe that “Jesus died and rose again.” In other words, the passage does not fall under the doctrine of the church, but the doctrine of salvation. Believers rapture and resurrect because they are believers.

So the phrase, “the rapture of the church” is somewhat misleading. It is true that all the believers who became members of the body of Christ, the church, upon faith in the death and resurrection of Christ will be saved physically at that time, either through physical resurrection, or by being snatched away (raptured) if they are still living. But one also becomes regenerate upon faith in Christ during this age, which idea belongs to the doctrine of salvation, not to the doctrine of the church. Indeed, the resurrection (and rapture) of the believers of this age is a salvation doctrine, sometimes called by the designation “future tense salvation.” Being inducted into the body of Christ is *one* result of belief during the current age, but it is logically dependent on salvation, and certainly not identical to it. The ultimate cause of the resurrection and rapture of believers is salvation, not association with the church. Indeed, the doctrine of future things for believers of this age should be considered a parallel doctrine to being inducted into the body of Christ, the church. Both doctrines are the direct result of being saved during the current age.
- 4 Dr. McGee expresses this position in *Through the Bible Commentary* under the verse.
- 5 ὑμῖν is a dative of disadvantage, “against you.”
- 6 Inferential οὖν.
- 7 The verb phrase μὴ στενάζετε (do not complain) is in the present tense, and could well be translated “stop complaining.” James appears to be prohibiting an ongoing problem.
- 8 We have translated the perfect tense verb ἔστηκεν as a present, “stands.” Technically, it could be translated “has stood,” but the English perfect is different in force than the Greek perfect. The Greek verb could be paraphrased, “has stood with the result is now standing.” This is the idea which would have come directly into the mind of the Greek speaking reader. It is actually, then, a dire warning concerning pending judgment.
- 9 A double accusative used predicatively. Moulton in his *Idiom Book* on pg. 35 this verse as an example under the heading, *The Accusative Used Predicatively*. It is the accusative used as a predicate, but without the use of ὡς, which needs to be supplied in the translation.
- 10 τέλος means “end,” but carries the idea of various kinds of ends depending on its context. The nature of this end is identified in the double accusative clause following, “*that He is very compassionate and full of pity.*” James is speaking of the results of the persecutions by the wealthy that the believers were undergoing, so I translated τέλος as *the thing resulting*. The word κυρίου I have taken as ablative “from the Lord,” rather than genitive “of the Lord.”

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- 11 The Greeks understood that the various internal organs, σπλάγχνον, are affected by stressful conditions. The prefixed word *many* (πολύς) is an intensifier, hence the translation “very compassionate.” The word πολύσπλαγχνός occurs only here in the New Testament. The noun form σπλάγχνον is used 11 times, and is generally translated *bowels* in the KJV, but is also translated *tender mercy* and *inward affection*. The verb form, σπλαγχνίζομαι, occurs 12 times, and is translated with some form of *compassion* in each case.
- 12 οἰκτίρων is an adjective having no adequate English translation. It occurs only 2 times, here and in Luke 6:36. In both instances the KJV translates it with a form of the word *mercy*, which confuses it with ἐλεός, the normal word translated *mercy*. ἐλεός appears to carry the same idea as its English equivalent, *mercy*. The KJV translates οἰκτίρων “of tender mercy,” seeming to confuse it as the genitive form of the noun οἰκτιρμός, but James used the adjective form, not the genitive of the noun, thereby simply describing God as full of pity.

The noun form, οἰκτιρμός, occurs 5 times in the New Testament, and the KJV always translates it *mercy*. However, BAG translates it first, *pity*, then *mercy*, and finally *compassion*. Again, the problem with the entire word family is that there is no direct English translation. It certainly does not carry the idea of *mercy* as does the ἐλεός family, nor *compassion* as does the σπλάγχνον family. And it is awkward in some places to translate it with the word *pity* (Romans 12:1 is an example, where it is almost always translated *mercies*, [Darby translates it *compassions*, showing that he understood the translation problem]).

But *mercy* does not seem inherent in the words of this family. The LXX uses the verb form, οἰκτεῖρω, to mean to have pity (Trench). This word family comes closer to the idea of *compassion* (the σπλάγχνον family) than to the idea of *mercy*. See Romans 9:15 where οἰκτεῖρω is translated *will have compassion* in many versions. The word *mercy* in that verse is the verb form of ἐλεός, ἐλέω, to which οἰκτεῖρω is compared and contrasted.

This long-winded explanation is to justify my translating the word οἰκτίρων “full of pity” here. I’ve regularly translated the word, and its other family words, by *pity* whenever I can. I will not translate it *mercy*, as that is worse than *compassion*. Other related ideas I have considered are *leniency* (which implies a judicial judgment), *tenderness* (a maudlin word at best), and *kindness*, each of which has specific problems from a translation perspective. The last of these, *kindness*, is very close to the idea of *pity*, without the negative association of need, for *pity* suggests that its object is in a needy situation, as in the verse before us. And also, there is a better word equivalent for *kindness* in Greek, χρηστότης.

Oh, the trials and tribulations of the translator!

- 13 The multiple compound expression, “μήτε τὸν οὐρανὸν μήτε τὴν γῆν μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ὄρκου” consists of three adverbial accusatives of reference. It could be paraphrased “*neither with reference to heaven nor with reference to earth, nor with reference to any other oath.*”
- 14 The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are identical. It has become popular, even among those who should know better, to distinguish between them in some manner. In fact, the “of heaven” phrase is a figure of speech meaning “of God,” as God inhabits heaven. This figure is called metonymy, which identifies the location (heaven) for the one who inhabits the location (God).
- 15 Leviticus 19:12; see also Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21.

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- 16 A student once asked, “What about hair dye?” Of course, the reference is to the natural color of one’s hair, over which no one but God has control.
- 17 Jesus does not use the word *hypocrite* until 6:2, but then uses the word a total of 15 times throughout Matthew. The noun *hypocrisy* only occurs one time in Matthew’s gospel (23:28). It is clear that He considers the Pharisees and their regular practice as hypocritical.
- 18 There appears to be great temptation to interpret this passage with reference to its applicability. Some, such as J. Ronald Blue, seem to approach it with the mindset that it cannot mean physical healing because, while desiring to apply the passage to today, they want to do so from a perspective that the passage must be referring to spiritual or moral healing.
- 19 This is the view of J. Ronald Blue, who states in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*,

The heart of the problem lies in just what James meant when he referred to the ‘sick.’ Actually there is no reason to consider ‘sick’ as referring exclusively to physical illness. The word *asthenei* literally means ‘to be weak.’ Though it is used in the Gospels for physical maladies, it is generally used in Acts and the Epistles to refer to a weak faith or a weak conscience (cf. Act 20:35; Rom 6:19; Rom 14:1; 1Co 8:9-12). That it should be considered ‘weak’ in this verse is clear in that another Greek word (*kamnonta*) in Jas 5:15, translated sick person, literally means ‘to be weary.’ The only other use in the New Testament (Heb 12:3) of that word clearly emphasizes this same meaning.

Blue continues, “James was not referring to the bed-fast, the diseased, or the ill. Instead he wrote to those who had grown weary, who had become weak both morally and spiritually in the midst of suffering.”

Blue goes to great lengths attempting to support his viewpoint, contrasting his “spiritual view” with the most radical of the “physical healing” crowd. He does not discuss the cultural and theological context in his presentation (a common failing among commentators), and rejects any reference to physical healing.

While Blue admits that the word *astheneo* (ἀσθενέω) is used “for physical maladies,” he summarily rejects that view based on the Greek word *kamno* (κάμνω) used in vs. 15, which means, according to Blue, to be weary. He is correct in that statement, but his implication that it can only mean weary in a non-physical sense based on its only other New Testament use in Hebrews 12:3, is specious. Many lexicons make its meaning in James 5:15 “to be sick” See Abbott-Smith under the word, for instance. Indeed, DBAG provides examples of the use of *kamno* outside the New Testament where the word clearly refers to physical illness and even death. See DBAG, 2000 printing, pgs 505-506. Other factors in the James 5:14ff passage favor physical healing as the meaning of *kamno* here.

J. Vernon McGee, for instance, holds that James is referring to physical healing, and yet misunderstands and misapplies the passage. While I hold Dr. McGee in high esteem, and agree that James is referring to physical healing here, I do not believe this passage is directly applicable to today because of its clearly transitional nature, nor does it lay down general principles for health.

Some, however, do seem to get it right. See the comments by B. W. Johnson under this verse in *The People’s New Testament*, published in 1891. He says,

“In the early church, when miraculous gifts were imparted by the laying on of apostolic hands...one of these was the gift of healing. In most early churches founded by the apostles

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some one of the elders would have this gift. There is no more reason for the descent of this gift to our times than of any other miraculous power. This passage, then, describes what was peculiar to the early church.”

- 20 This is not to say that God cannot heal today. He can, and perhaps does, but does so without fanfare. Anyone who claims to be a spiritual healer today is not to be believed. He puts on a show for the gullible, something which neither the Lord nor His apostles did. Nor was it necessary in the early transition for others who had such healing gifts to do so, for they existed to authenticate God’s revelation.

Throughout the centuries there have been con-artists who have sold snake-oil to the gullible. The religious snake-oil salesman is the worst of the lot, for vile individuals base their false claims on misinterpretation of Scripture, of which they know little. They steal from poor people who are suffering, the sick and maimed, and from those who have not learned to live the faith life of the New Testament Christian. Some shell out large sums of money, money that is used for the luxury of the confidence man, who has no ability to do anything except sell his snake-oil.

- 21 The “elders of the assembly” in the Jewish synagogue setting were not identical to the elders of the local assembly in Pauline terminology. Some believe that the position of elder as Paul used the term was adopted from the Jewish synagogue program. It is possible, but not actually provable, that this was the case. But Paul uses the word *elder* in a more specific and specialized way, providing a series of strict character guidelines for such individuals. Paul’s requirements were not man-made, but a result of the bearing-along ministry of the Holy Spirit. Such cannot be claimed for the position of elders in the assembly of the purely Jewish synagogue, whether during the earlier gospel use, nor during the later, but still early transition. Certainly James knew nothing of such elder requirements.
- 22 See Abbott-Smith under ἐκκλησία, pg. 138. For an extended discussion of this use see *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol 4, “James,” pages 473, 474. Sadly, Oesterley and others see this as a social action responsibility, as the many Israelites often thought it. But a careful study of Scripture contradicts this view, showing the true function of healing in the early transitional program was to establish the personal authority of the one healing.
- 23 R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 150, 151.
- 24 J. Vernon McGee. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1981), under the verse.
- 25 J. Ronald Blue, in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, rejects this view, as it does not fit with his approach that James is not speaking of physical healing.
- 26 *Expositor’s*, page 474.
- 27 Evidently, the elders were to bring the ill believer before the Lord in worship, and leave him in God’s hands. Basic to faith in the Bible is the recognition of who is in charge of the physical well-being of individuals. God and God alone has the ability to apply supernatural healing, but we know that He does not always do so. Remember, prayer is not presented as the means of healing by James. A different Greek word, εὐχή, often mistranslated prayer, is the intermediate means of healing. Its correct translation is vow. See my comments on 5:15.
- 28 αὐτῷ is a dative of advantage.

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29 The future tense in Greek is aoristic, unlike the present and imperfect which are both linear. It refers to the simple act without reference to duration or continuity of action. In other words, in order for James to use the simple future for guaranteed action, he would have had to say so with adverbial modifiers.

30 *Grammatical note:* Both verbs of the first sentence, *acknowledge* (ἐξομολογεῖσθε) and *make vows* (εὐχέσθε), share a commonality of form. Both are in the -ομαι form rather than the -ω form. In the case of the first verb, ἐξομολογεῖσθε, the change from the -ω to the -ομαι form is significant, because the reciprocal pronoun produces it. The form is often used with reflexive or reciprocal pronouns to reinforce the pronoun's function.

The second verb, εὐχέσθε, has a different significance. It is also in the -ομαι form, but probably because it generally cannot be active or passive voice. This form, in both cases, is regularly called “the middle voice,” but in neither case in this sentence is voice of the verb at issue. The verb translated *acknowledge* is transitive active, because it has a direct object. The verb *make vows* is called a “defective” (has no -ω form) because the nature of the verb is regularly complete, and cannot take a direct object or be passive. In other words, it is voiceless. However, it is not “defective,” as this implies an irregularity in the language where no irregularity exists.

Most grammarians call this a deponent verb, which they define as “passive in form, but active in meaning.” But it is not passive in form, though the passive often takes the same form. The -ομαι form has multiple uses. It can be transitive active, it can be transitive passive, it can be intransitive complete, and therefore voiceless, or it can be intransitive copulative and be followed by a predicate adjective or a predicate nominative, or it can carry a reflexive force. But it is counterproductive to call it a passive form, for often the -ομαι form is not, and cannot be passive voice. Only the context and the use of a verb in any particular instance will determine whether the verb carries a voice, or not.

31 An adverbial accusative of πολὺς, *much, very*.

32 δικαίου = substantive adjective, “of a righteous person,” genitive of possession.

33 ἐνεργουμένη is a conditional participle. Since it is conditional, it is adverbial, and sets the condition for being healed. However, the participle refers back to the subject of the sentence, supplication (δέησις, a nominative feminine noun), which is indicated by its feminine nominative form. Hence, I have translated it, “if it is exercised.”

34 Dr. McGee is correct when he states, “We are to confess our sins to God but our faults one to another.” (*Through the Bible*, under the verse.)

35 The story of Elijah, who is first mentioned in 1 Kings 17:1, exists primarily in 1 and 2 Kings, although 2 Chronicles 21:12 and Malachi 4:5 both mention him.

36 The story of Elijah occurs in 1 & II Kings, starting with 1 Kings 17:1, where we learn that Elijah was from Tishbeh, a village in the Gilead section of Naphtali. He prophesied during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah was a prophet in the northern confederacy, which consisted of the ten tribes called Israel, as opposed to Judah and Benjamin in the south, called simply Judah.

37 The Hebrew phrase עָמַדְתִּי לְפָנָיו (*amadti liphnaiv*), literally says “before His face I stand.” This was a figurative way, an anthropomorphism since God has no actual face, of stating that one stood in another's presence. For the Hebrew scholar, you will remember that the word face, פָּנָה, is regularly

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presented in the dual form, probably because the face has two halves which are virtually mirror images. The form in Isaiah 17:1 is a dual (or plural) construct with the third person masculine singular pronoun (possessive function meaning *his*) attached.

- 38 Unfortunately few believers understand what true prayer is. Besides being confused with other types of communication with God, one often “prays” based on his own experience with others, rather than his experience in the word of God. If you are like me, you learned to pray by listening to others pray rather than from Scripture. It was not until many years later that I realized that neither they nor I were actually praying, because we were ignorant of not only the biblical teaching about prayer, but also about the character and nature of God Himself. For prayer is based on who God is, not on what a person who prays desires. Indeed, prayer is not primarily asking God for something, but is giving God something. It is giving back to Him all that is due Him. It is realizing who and what God is, and acknowledging that to Him. This does not mean that one must pray “aloud” to God, but the simple recognition and acknowledgment concerning His nature is sufficient.

The following considerations were provided in a class on Christian living at a seminary conference attended by the author:

Consider this: God is holy. Do you understand what that means? Do you think about God’s holiness on a regular basis. It’s very difficult to do so, if you don’t know what *holy* means.

Consider this: God is righteous. We ask the same questions as above. Some cannot acknowledge God’s righteousness because they confuse it with His holiness.

Consider this: God is almighty. This does not mean the same thing as the truth that God is all powerful. How can you acknowledge these two qualities of God if you do not understand them?

Consider this: One cannot communicate something to God that He does not already know! Therefore, prayer is not about trying to get God to do something that we want done. He already knows that. It is communicating to God that one understands who God is and accepts what He will do.

The above considerations are only part of what many believers do not know about God. The imprecision of biblical thinking has limited the capability of worshipping God, and therefore of communicating truths to God about Himself. The believer acknowledges who God is because true worship must recognize these truths. The more we know about God, the more we will truly worship Him.

But, you say, we can know so little about God. How can we pray accurately? The answer is, we cannot. Scripture tells us that we do not know how to pray as we ought (Romans 8:26-27). This brings us to the basic truth about prayer and worship. Our attitudes are more important than our words, than what we know, than what we are able to express.

When we study Paul’s prayers, for instance, we recognize that when he expresses a desire for the believers for whom he prays, he does so only in those areas that he knows God wants for the believer because it has been revealed. Paul’s prayers for others are spiritually rather than materially related. And so should our prayers be. We should give up our material based “prayers” and go into God’s presence desiring nothing from Him except that which He has already provided for us, that which we can find and understand through a careful consideration of Scripture.

- 39 Unfortunately the word *atonement* has regularly been applied to the death and resurrection of Christ. The word is never used in the New Testament, except the KJV translators mistranslated the

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word reconciliation (καταλλαγή) as atonement. The Lord Jesus Christ did not make an atonement for sins, because His death and resurrection did not cover sins. It took them away, both from the initial salvation perspective and the Christian life perspective.

- 40 Concerning καλύψει (will cover) Oesterley says that it is, “one of the strongest of the many marks of Jewish authorship which the epistle contains; according to Jewish doctrine good works balance evil ones; the good work of converting a sinner is reckoned here as one of the most efficacious in obliterating evil deeds....” He may be overstating the case a bit with the word obliterating, as the word itself indicates a covering of consequences, rather than a removal of them.

Let us keep in mind that James knew that the death and resurrection of Christ was sufficient to forgive the sins of an individual at salvation, not simply cover them. James recognized that the covering (atonement) of sins in the Old Testament had nothing to do with initial justification, but with the means of dealing with daily sins. Unfortunately, this distinction is not regularly taught concerning the sacrificial system. Rather, the normal teaching is that the sacrificial system pictures Christ on the cross for the purpose of providing salvation to the lost. Nothing could be further from the truth. What the sacrificial system did by its need to continually sacrifice, day after day, week after week, year after year, was to prove the lack of efficacy of the system. “It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4).

Appendices

Chapter One

1 James, *a* slave of God and of *the* Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes, the ones in the dispersion: Greetings.

2 Consider *it* every joy, my brothers, when you encounter various temptations, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith brings about endurance. ⁴ But let endurance have *a* finished work, in order that you may be mature and whole, lacking in nothing.

5 Now if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from God who gives to all generously and does not reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is similar to *a* wave of *the* sea being driven by wind and blown about. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ *The* double-minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

9 Now, let the lowly brother boast in his high station; ¹⁰ but *let* the rich man *boast* in his humble state, because like a flower of a small plant, he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its extreme heat and dries out the small plant, and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its face perishes. Thus also the rich man will become withered in his journeys.

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation, because having become approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to the ones who love Him. ¹³ Let no one being tempted say, I am being tempted from God, for God is not temptable by evil, and He Himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted by his own lust, being lured away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, the lust, having conceived, gives birth to sin, and the sin, having become full grown, gives birth to death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gifting and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the lights, with whom variation or shadow of turning

does not exist. ¹⁸ Having determined, He begat us by *the* word of truth, so that we might be some firstfruits of His creatures.

19 So then, my beloved brothers, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow unto wrath. ²⁰ For *a* man's wrath does not work God's righteousness.

21 Therefore, having put away all filth and abundance of malice, receive in meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But become ones doing *the* word and not only hearing, deluding yourselves, ²³ because if someone is hearing *the* word and not doing *it*, this one is like *a* man examining the face of his birth in *a* mirror. ²⁴ For he examined himself and departed, and immediately forgot what sort of *man* he was. ²⁵ But the one who looks carefully into the complete law of liberty, and stays with *it*, because not having become a forgetful hearer, but *having become* a doer of work, this one will be blessed in his doing.

26 If anyone among you seems to be religious while not bridling his tongue but deceiving his heart, the religion of this one is useless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep oneself spotless from the world.

Chapter Two

1 My brothers, do not have the faith of our Lord of glory, Jesus Christ, with favoritism. ² For if a man should enter into your synagogue with a gold ring in splendid clothing, and also a poor man in dirty clothing should enter, ³ and you look upon the one who wears the splendid clothing and you say to him, You sit here in a good place, and to the poor man you say, You stand there, or sit here under my footstool, ⁴ even so, did you not differentiate among yourselves and have become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose the poor men of the world to be rich in

faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to the ones who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into courts? ⁷ Do they not slander the good name *by* which you are called? ⁸ If, on the one hand, you keep the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor like yourself¹, you do well. ⁹ On the other hand, if you show partiality, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever would keep the whole law, but should stumble in one thing, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For the one who said, You shall not commit adultery,² also said, You shall not murder.³ So, if you will not commit adultery, but you will murder, you have become *a* transgressor of *the* law. ¹² Speak so and do so, as though being about to be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For the judgment is without mercy for the one who does not perform mercy. Mercy boasts over judgment.

14 What is the benefit, my brothers, if someone should say that he has faith, but does not have works? His faith is not able to save him, *is it?* ¹⁵ But if *a* brother or *a* sister should be naked and should be lacking daily food, ¹⁶ and anyone of you should say to them, Go in peace, warm yourselves and fill yourselves, but does not give to them the things necessary for the body, what *is* the benefit? ¹⁷ So also the faith by itself is dead if it does not have works.

18 But someone will say, You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you by my works my faith. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well. The demons also believe, and they shiver in fear.

20 But do you desire to know, O empty man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered up Issac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that his faith was working together with his

works and by the works the faith was completed? ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which said, And Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness,⁴ and he was called *a* friend of God. ²⁴ You see, then, that *a* man is justified by works and not only by faith. ²⁵ And likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute justified when she received the messengers as guests, and sent *them* out *a* different way? ²⁶ For just like the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Chapter Three

1 Do not be many teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive greater judgment. ² For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in word, this man is mature, able to also bridle his whole body. ³ Look! We place bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, and we direct their whole body. ⁴ Behold! The ships, though being so large and driven by strong winds, are also directed by *a* very small rudder wherever the impulse of the one who steers decides. ⁵ Thus also the tongue is *a* small member, and it makes great boasts.

See how big *a* forest *a* small fire sets ablaze. ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. Thus the tongue is set in place among our members, the one which stains the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of existence, and being set on fire by Gehenna. ⁷ For every kind of beasts and of birds, of reptiles and of marine animals, is being tamed and has been tamed by humanity. ⁸ But no one is able to tame the tongue of men. It is unrestrainedly wicked, full of death-bringing poison. ⁹ We bless our God and Father with it, and with it we curse men who exist in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come a blessing and a cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers. ¹¹ The spring does not gush forth the sweet and the bitter out of the same hole, does it? ¹² My brothers, a fig tree is not able to produce

1 Leviticus 19:18.

2 Exodus 20:14. SA Deuteronomy 5:18.

3 Exodus 20:13. SA Deuteronomy 5:17.

4 Genesis 15:6.

olives, nor a grapevine figs, is it? Thus one spring *is not able* to produce salty and sweet water.

13 Who is wise and well informed among you? Let him display his works by his good behavior in meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter zeal and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie contrary to the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the truth which comes down from above, but is earthly, soulish, demoniacal. ¹⁶ For where zeal and selfish ambition *are*, there *are* instability and every kind of contemptible activity. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is indeed first pure, then peaceful, gentle, compliant, filled with mercy and good fruit, impartial and not hypocritical. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by the ones who make peace.

Chapter Four

1 From where come wars and fights among you? Are they not from here, from your pleasures which war in your members? ² You lust and you do not have. You murder, and you are zealous but are not able to obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask but you do not receive because you ask wrongly, in order that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred of God? Therefore, whoever decides to be *a* friend of the world is shown *to be an* enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose that vainly the Scripture says, The spirit which dwells in us yearns with envy? ⁶ But He gives greater grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes arrogant *people*, but to humble *people*, He gives grace.⁵

7 Therefore, subject *yourselves* to God, and stand against the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Clean *your* hands, *you* sinners, and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded *people*. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and cry. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into depression. ¹⁰ Be

humbled in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you.

11 Brothers, do not speak against one another. The one who speaks against *a* brother and *is* judging his brother, speaks against *the* law and judges *the* law. And if you judge *the* law, you are not *a* doer of *the* law, but *a* judge. ¹² *There* is one law-giver who is able to save and destroy. But who are you, you who judges the other?

13 Come now, the ones *of you* who say, Today and tomorrow let's go into this city and let's operate there *for* one year and let's do business and make *a* profit, ¹⁴ you who do not know the *events happening* on the next day. For what kind of life *is* yours? For it will be *a* vapor which appears for *a* little time but then also disappears. ¹⁵ Instead you should say, If the Lord wills and we should live, we might also do this or that. ¹⁶ But now, you boast in your vainglory. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, to the one who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Chapter Five

1 Come now, rich *people*; cry, wailing at your hardships which are coming! ² Your wealth has become rotten, and your clothing has become moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have become tarnished, and their poison will be for *a* testimony against you, and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasure for *the* last days. ⁴ Look! The wage of the workers who have reaped your fields which by fraud have been withheld by you cry out, and the shouts of the reapers have entered into the ears of *the* Lord of sabaoth. ⁵ You lived in luxury upon the earth, and you lived in wanton indulgence. You fed your hearts as *you did* in *the* day of slaughter. ⁶ You condemned *and* murdered the righteous *man*. Does he not resist you?

7 Therefore, brothers, be longsuffering until the coming of the Lord. Look! The farmer waits for the valuable fruit of the earth, being longsuffering for it, until it receives *the* early and late rain. ⁸ You also be longsuffering! Strengthen your

5 Proverbs 3:34.

hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near. ⁹ Brothers, do not complain against one another, in order that you might not be judged. See, the judge stands before the doors. ¹⁰ My brothers, take the example of the affliction and the patience of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we consider the ones who endure *to be* happy. You have heard of the endurance of Job. So see the thing resulting from the Lord, that He is very compassionate and full of pity.

¹² Now, my brothers, above all, do not swear, neither by heaven nor earth, nor with any other oath. But let your yes be yes and *let* your no *be* no, that you might not fall into hypocrisy.

¹³ Does anyone among you experience misfortune? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing. ¹⁴ Is anyone ill among you? Let him call for the elders of the assembly and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the vow of the faith will save the one who is ill and the Lord will raise him. And if he should have committed *a* sin, it will be forgiven him. ¹⁶ Acknowledge your trespasses to one another, and make vows on behalf of one another so that you may be healed. The supplication of *a* righteous person is very strong, if it is exercised. ¹⁷ Elijah was *a* man *of* similar suffering to us, and he prayed *a* prayer that it not rain and it did not rain upon the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And again he prayed, and heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

¹⁹ Brothers, if anyone among you should wander from the truth and if anyone should bring him back, ²⁰ let him know that the one who returns *a* sinner from the error of his way will save *a* soul from death, and will cover *a* large number of sins.

The Use of the Word Vow in the Greek Scriptures

G. H. Shinn

The Greek word vow, *euche* (εὐχή), occurs in the New Testament only three times. In each of the passages, it is in purely Jewish transitional situations. The main Hebrew verb for vow occurs 31 times and the noun 60 times in the Old Testament.

Vow is the communication of a promise to God committing oneself to accomplish a certain act or set of acts. It could be taken by either a man or woman. The legal requirements for vows are provided in Leviticus 27:1-13, Numbers 30:1-16 and Deuteronomy 23:21-23. See also Ecclesiastes 5:4. Numbers 6:1-21 presents the Nazirite vow which is likely the vow mentioned in Acts 18 and 21. James 5:15 uses the word vow in this Old Testament sense.

1. Acts 18:18 *So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.*

Notes: Nothing is known of this vow other than what is stated here. It was most likely the Nazirite vow, which requires that a man's hair not be cut. When the vow was taken is not stated, but the vow period was over, and Paul got a haircut in the port city of Cenchrea before setting sail for Syria.

That Paul had taken such a vow was not a violation of his grace teaching. Remember, this was during the transition, and there were still legitimate Jewish believers who had not yet heard the message of Christ. Paul always ministered to the Jews in their synagogue, and the taking of a vow is consistent with his approach to ministry. With reference to Jews, he acted like a Jew. With reference to a Gentile, he acted like a Gentile. Paul was indeed, "all things to all men," in the best sense of that phrase (1 Corinthians 9:20-23). Such apostolic ministry is not to be undertaken by believers today, as it was strictly part of the Old Testament legal system.

2. Acts 21:21-26

Background: This passage deals with Paul's return to Jerusalem after his third apostolic journey and the problems that awaited him. In 21:20 we read that a large number of Jews in Jerusalem had believed in Jesus, and that they were all "zealots for the law."

The question arises, "What did these people believe?" The best explanation is that they believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of Israel predicted in the Hebrew Bible. But they had not yet been transitionalized into the grace program that Paul had been presenting to the Gentiles. They had not yet heard of the change of program, or if they had, they were not ready to enter into it. This was not a problem to Paul and others, though it has become one for modern theologians who are too rigid in their understanding of the grace program and of the transition that Jews had to undergo. See the comments on verse 26 below.

21:21

And they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles apostasy from Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

Notes: Some had made false accusations against Paul, claiming that he was teaching Jews who were dispersed among Gentiles that they could abandon the law of Moses. This was patently false. It is a further example of the extremes to which the enemies of God will go to besmirch truth.

21:22

What is it then? By all means, it is necessary for the multitude to come together, for they will hear that you have come.

Notes: The multitude refers to those myriads of Jewish Christians who had heard these false accusations, and at least wondered if they were true. See the note on verse 20 above. The elders provided a way for Paul to dispel these rumors.

21:23

Therefore do this that we say to you: There are four men with us who have taken a vow.

Notes: The "four men with us" probably means that they were Jews from the assembly in Jerusalem. For a discussion of their vow, see the notes on the next sentence.

21:24

Taking these men, be purified with them, and spend freely that they might shave their heads, and that all may know that the things which they were informed about you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.

It was the custom that if a person paid for another's completion of his vows, he remained in a purified state in the temple with them, which the elders encouraged Paul to do. Evidently Paul did so, remaining in the temple for seven days.

This vow seems to have been a Nazirite vow, as, according to the next verse, they were to shave their heads (read "get a haircut"), having come to the end of the time for the vow to be in effect. During the period of the vow they were not allowed to get a haircut (Numbers 16:13-17). Contrary to popular understanding today, it was not the custom for Jews to wear their hair long, and the modern representations of Christ with long hair are without foundation.

The Use of the Word Vow in the Greek Scriptures

The need for Paul to “spend freely” relates to the expenses occurred when the “end of vow” sacrifices were to be made. By paying for them, Paul would have been publicly signaling his agreement with the Mosaic program. See the note on verse 26.

21:25

But as touching the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, giving judgment that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication.

The statement in verse 25 is a rehearsal of the letter written from the assembly at Jerusalem in Acts 15. It is presented here to show that the letter was to apply only to Gentiles and not to Jews. It was, in the mind of the transitional leadership, acceptable for Gentiles not to be required to keep the law, but it was not their intention to discourage Jews from doing so.

21:26

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them went into the temple, announcing the completion of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them.

Should Paul have followed the suggestion of the elders? Some view Paul as having “compromised” (Furneaux, for example), and others claim that Paul was promoting law keeping for believers today. Neither view is correct. What Paul did was perfectly reasonable given the doctrinal situation as it then stood. The fact is that during the transition, Christian (Messianic) Jews could keep the law, as long as they did not impose it upon Gentiles. Nor were the Jews who had recognized the new grace program to require other Jews to abandon the law outright. Paul did neither.

This problem has confounded many, and several explanations have been given as to the significance of Paul’s act. One writer states, “Paul was not denying the finished work of Christ by offering animal sacrifices. The epistles Paul had already written by this time (Gal., 1 and 2 Thes., 1 and 2 Cor., Rom.) make it clear that such a denial was incomprehensible. He must have looked on these sacrifices as memorials. After all, this will be the significance of millennial sacrifices (Ezek. 43:18-46:24; Mal 1:11; Mal 3:3-4)” (Toussaint, BKC). Toussaint’s statement not only misunderstands the significance of the Levitical sacrificial system, as though it somehow pictured the work of Christ on the cross (it did not), but also the very nature of the transition itself.

The Levitical system did not, could not, picture Christ’s redemptive work on the cross. Indeed, it had nothing to do with it. The purpose of the Levitical sacrifices was to make a remembrance of sins. They symbolized only the need for physical death for individual acts of sin, and did not relate to Christ’s redemptive work at all. If anything, they show, in a negative way, the reason for grace living.

The Levitical system was part of the “rule of life” for members of the household of Israel. The law was not given for the purpose of picturing redemption, nor of relating to salvation in the spiritual sense at all. Those who hold such a doctrine come dangerously close to the idea that salvation in the Mosaic system was by keeping the law. In fact, household revelation has nothing to do with positional justification. such justification is, and always has been, by faith in a specific object, not by keeping a set of regulations.

The regulations of the law related the members of the household of Israel to their master, the God of Israel, in an on-going set of daily requirements. Members of that household, unlike the current household, may or may not have been justified believers. But all were required to keep the Mosaic code or suffer the consequences.

During the transition, while there were still Jews who were believers who had not yet transitioned to the full grace program, Paul maintained, legitimately so, a Jewish relationship to Jewish believers. It is unfortunate that some see this act as an unwarranted compromise by Paul when it was nothing of the sort. He did not impose such practices on Gentiles, which had gotten him in trouble with those unbelieving Jews who made false accusations against him. They had accused him of encouraging Jews to not keep the Mosaic law. Not only did he not do so, he himself validated that transitional practice of the Mosaic code by entering into a visible act of support for it, the making and keeping of a vow as taught in the Law.

3. James 5:15 *And the prayer (vow) of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

Notes: The incorrect translation of the Greek word *euche* as *prayer* rather than *vow* in James 5:15 has produced much confusion. The word *vow* in the New Testament applies only to the transition, specifically to Jews of that day. Furthermore, while the elders were to pray (an act of worship) and rub the ill person with oil (a medicinal act of the day), it was the sick person who was to make the vow. It was a promise of God to do a specific work so as to earn specific results. James was teaching a doctrine of works to produce physical results that was taught in the Hebrew Scriptures based on the national law of Israel as found in the Mosaic code. It cannot rightly be applied to believers generally, but only to Israelites during the transition period.

See the notes in my James commentary for an extended discussion of this passage.