

**Notes on the Greek New Testament**  
**Week 173 – James 1:22-2:26**

**Day 861: James 1:22-27****Verse 22-25**

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

**Verse 22**

Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταὶ παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοῦς.

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

μόνον adv only, alone

ἀκροατής, ου m hearer

Cf. Rom 2:13.

παραλογίζομαι deceive, lead astray

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

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

**Verse 23**

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

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

ἔοικεν see v.6

ἄνηρ, ἄνδρος m see v.8

κατανοεω consider, notice, observe

πρόσωπον, ου n face, appearance

γενεσις, εως f birth, lineage

το πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως one's 'natural face' – the face one was born with.

ἑσώπτρον, ου n mirror

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

**Verse 24**

κατενόησεν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀπελήλυθεν καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ἦν.

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

ἀπελήλυθεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s

ἀπερχομαι

ἐπελάθετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἐπιλανθανομαι forget, neglect, overlook

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

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

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

**Verse 25**

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

παρακυπτω look into, stoop, bend over

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

νομος, ου m law

τελειος, α, ον complete, whole, perfect

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

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

ἐλευθερία, ας f freedom, liberty

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

παραμείνας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

παρμενω stay, continue, serve

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

ἐπιλησμονη, ης f forgetfulness

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

μακαριος, α, ον blessed, fortunate, happy

ποιησις, εως f doing, undertaking

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι

### Verses 26-27

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

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

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

### Verse 26

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

δοκεω think, suppose

θρησκος, ον religious

χαλιναγωγεω control, hold in check

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

γλωσσα, ης f tongue

ἀπαταω deceive, lead astray

ματαιος, α, ον worthless, futile, useless

θρησκεία, ας f religion, worship

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

### Verse 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

θλίψις, εως f trouble, suffering

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

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

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

## Day 862: James 2:1-7

### Verse 1

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

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

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

πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

δοξία, ης f glory

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

### Verse 2

ἐὰν γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνήρ χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθήτῃ λαμπρᾷ, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἐσθήτῃ,

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Verse 3**

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

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

ἐπιβλέπω look upon with care, pay attention to

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

φορεῶ wear  
κάθου Verb, pres midd/pass dep imperat, 2 s  
καθῆμαι sit, sit down  
ὧδε adv here, in this place  
καλῶς adv well  
στήθι Verb, 2 aor act imperat, 2 s ἵστημι  
stand, stop  
ἐκεῖ there, in that place, to that place

Some MSS add ὧδε also after the second κάθου.

ἢ ἢ  
ὑποποδιον, ου n footstool

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

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

**Verse 4**

οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν;

διεκρίθητε Verb, aor pass indic, 2 pl  
διακρινῶ judge, make a distinction between

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

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον see 1:22  
κριτης, ου m judge  
διαλογισμος, ου m thought, reasoning  
πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

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

**Verse 5**

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

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

ἐξελέξατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s  
ἐκλεγομαι choose, select

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

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

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

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

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

ἐπηγγείλατο see 1:12  
ἀγαπαω see 1:12

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

### Verse 6

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

ἀτιμαζω treat shamefully, dishonour  
καταδυναστευω oppress

"The strongly marked socioeconomic class distinction presupposed here corresponds closely to what we know of conditions in the first-century Middle East. A small group of wealthy landowners and merchants accumulated more and more power, while large numbers of people were forced from their land and grew even poorer. Most of James's readers probably belonged to this class of poor agricultural labourers. The scenario is one that would be very familiar to readers of the OT. The prophets frequently denounce (even using the same verb James uses here, καταδυναστευω) rich people who 'oppress' the poor (Amos 4:1), including orphans and widows (Ezek 22:7)." Moo.

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

ἔλκω draw, attract, drag  
κριτηριον, ου n court, legal matter  
(requiring judgement)

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

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

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

### Verse 7

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

βλασφημεω speak against, slander,  
blaspheme

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

καλος, η, ον good, fine, precious  
ὄνομα, τος n name  
ἐπικληθὲν Verb, aor pass ptc, n nom/acc s  
ἐπικαλεω call, name

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

### Day 863: James 2:8-13

#### Verse 8

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

μεντοι but, nevertheless, however

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

νομος, ου m law  
τελεω complete, fulfill, carry out  
βασιλικος, η, ον royal, belonging to the king  
γραφη, ης f writing, Scripture

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

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

σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun yourself

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

#### Verse 9

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

προσωπολημπτεω show favouritism, treat one person better than another

ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

ἐργαζομαι work, do, perform

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

ἐλεγχω show (someone his) fault, condemn, convict

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

#### Verse 10

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

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

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, entire

τηρεω keep, observe, maintain

πταιω stumble, go wrong, sin

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

γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γινομαι  
ἐνοχος, ον liable, answerable, guilty

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

#### Verse 11

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

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

εἶπων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s λεγω  
μοιχευω commit adultery  
φονευω murder, put to death

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

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

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

### Verse 12

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

οὕτως and οὕτω adv. thus, in this way  
λαλεω speak, talk  
ἐλευθερια, ας f freedom, liberty  
μελλω (before an infin) be going, be destined

κρίνεσθαι Verb, pres pass infin κρινω

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

Moo comments, "God's gracious acceptance of us does not end our obligation to obey him; it sets it on a new footing. No longer is God's law a threatening, confining burden. For the will of God now confronts us as a *law of liberty* – an obligation we discharge in the joyful knowledge that God has both 'liberated' us from the penalty of sin and given us, in his Spirit, the power to obey his will." And Martin comments, "The Christian is judged by a law that sets one free, that is, by the supreme law, the law of love (2:8)... To love one's neighbor is the highest form of freedom exercised, and ends in fulfillment of the law. What James is telling his readers is that the Jewish law per se is not the seat of authority (*pace* Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 251–52) but rather it is the law, as understood and interpreted in the Christian sense, which is the norm that guides the life of the follower of Jesus the Christ (Matt 7:12, 21, 24–29; 19:17–21; 22:36–40; 28:20). The antitheses of the Sermon in Matthew 5:21–48 make the same point, namely, that the new law of love sets a higher standard than Torah obedience can demand and produce (e.g., Matt 5:20)... The law of freedom can liberate those who fulfill it but it also serves (as will be seen in 2:13) as a solemn threat of eschatological wrath to those who transgress it."

### Verse 13

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

κρισις, εως f judgement, act of judgement

ἀνελεος, ον merciless

ποιήσαντι Verb, aor act ptc, m dat s ποιω  
ἐλεος, ους n mercy, compassion

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

e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

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

κατακαυχασθαι boast against, triumph over

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

#### Day 864: James 2:14-19

#### Verses 14-26

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

#### Verse 14

τί τὸ ὄφελος, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐὰν πιστὶν λέγη τις ἔχειν, ἔργα δὲ μὴ ἔχη; μὴ δύναται ἢ πίστις σῶσαι αὐτόν;

ὄφελος, οὐς n gain, benefit

τί τὸ ὄφελος 'What good is it?'

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

δυναμαι can, be able to  
σωζω save, rescue

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

#### Verse 15

ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ γυμνοὶ ὑπάρχουσιν καὶ λειπόμενοι τῆς ἡμέρας τροφῆς,

ἢ οἱ

ἀδελφῆ, ης f sister, female believer  
γυμνος, η, ον naked, poorly dressed  
ὑπαρχω be (equivalent to εἶμι)

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

λειπω lack, fall short  
ἡμέρας, ον daily

Cf. Matt 6:11.

τροφῆ, ης f food, nourishment

#### Verse 16

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

ὑπάγω go, go one's way, depart

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

θερμαινομαι warm oneself, keep warm  
χορταζω feed, satisfy

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

ἐπιτηδειος, α, ον necessary, suitable

σωμα, τος n body

ὄφελος, οὐς n see v.14

Mere words are no good.

#### Verse 17

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

νεκρος, α, ον dead

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

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

καθ• ἑαυτήν Moo suggests the meaning is 'in itself' i.e. this kind of faith is inwardly dead.

Living faith is evidenced in good works. Cf. Eph 2:8-10.

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

### Verse 18

Ἄλλ• ἔρει τις, Σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις κἀγω ἔργα ἔχω. δεῖξόν μοι τὴν πίστιν σου χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων, κἀγω σοι δεῖξω ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μου τὴν πίστιν.

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

ἔρει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s λεγω

κἀγω a compound word = και ἐγω

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

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

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

δεῖξόν Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s δεικνυμι  
show

χωρὶς prep with gen without, apart from

### Verse 19

οὐ πιστεύεις ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός; καλῶς ποιεῖς; καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσουν.

πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

MSS variants make it unclear whether the verbal profession here is 'there is one God' (εἷς θεος ἐστὶν) or 'God is one' (εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεος). The variants do not affect James' argument.

A second issue is whether the initial clause is a question (as punctuated above) or a statement. It makes no difference to the shape of James' argument.

καλως adv well

δαιμονιον, ου n demon, evil spirit

φρισσω tremble with fear

"It is a good thing to possess an accurate theology, but it is unsatisfactory unless that good theology also possesses us." Mitton.  
"James might be implying, as demons, knowing something of the true God, yet lacking true faith, shudder in fear of judgment, so also ought people whose verbal profession is not followed up with actions." Moo.

### Day 865: James 2:20-26

#### Verse 20

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

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

θελω wish, will

γνῶναι Verb, aor act infin γινωσκω

ὦ Ο!

κενος, η, ον empty, to no purpose

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

ἀργος, η, ον idle; ineffective, useless

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

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

**Verse 21**

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

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

ἐδικαιώθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s

δικαιωω justify, acquit, declare &amp; treat as righteous

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

- i) 'vindicate in the judgment' or 'declare right in accordance with the facts' – so Mic 6:11. In a similar manner, 'righteousness' is used to describe the character of life demanded of one who belongs to the people of God, cf. Matt 5:20; 12:37. Of this sense Moo writes, "So 'justify' in Paul refers to how a person gets into relationship with God, while in James it connotes what that relationship must ultimately look like to receive God's final approval."
- ii) In a few passages the verb has the sense 'demonstrate to be right,' 'vindicate,' cf. Matt 11:19 and par Lk 7:35, also Lk 10:29; 16:15.

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

ἀνεύγκας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

ἀναφέρω offer (of sacrifice)

θυσιαστήριον, ον n altar

**Verse 22**

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

βλεπω see, look, be able to see, beware of

συνεργεω work with, work together with ἔργον, ον n work, deed, task

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

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

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

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

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

**Verse 23**

καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἢ λέγουσα, Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη.

πληρωω fulfill, bring about, accomplish

γραφη, ης f writing, Scripture

ἐλογίσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3s

λογίζομαι reckon, count, credit

δικαιοσύνη, ης f righteousness

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

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

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

φίλος, ου m and φίλη, ης f friend

Cf. 2 Chron 20:7; Is 41:8. Abraham is "the supreme example of what it means to have 'friendship with God' rather than 'friendship with the world'" [Jas 4:4]. Johnson.

Martin comments, "The tribute is not found in the canonical OT, although it is similar to the designation 'the one loved by God' (2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; cf. Isa 51:2 and Dan 3:35 LXX), and common to writings outside the OT."

#### Verse 24

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

ὁραω see, observe, perceive, recognise  
δικαιοῦται Verb, pres pass indic, 3s

δικαιοω  
μόνον adv only, alone

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

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

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

#### Verse 25

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

ὁμοίως likewise, in the same way

Refers back to v.21, as with Abraham.

πορνη, ης f prostitute

ἐδικαιώθη see v.21

ὑποδεξαμένη Verb, aor midd dep ptc, f nom  
s ὑποδεχομαι receive, welcome

ἀγγελος here = messenger

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

ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different

ὁδος, ου f way, path, road, journey

ἐκβαλοῦσα Verb, aor act ptc, f nom s

ἐκβαλλω throw out, cast out; here = send out

#### Verse 26

ὡσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρόν ἐστιν, οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστιν.

ὡσπερ as, even as, just as

σῶμα, τος n body

χωρὶς without, apart from

νεκρός, α, ον dead

οὕτως adv. thus, in this way

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

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

### **Postscript**

Martin concludes this section with a couple of quotes. He writes, "In summary, as the Puritan John Owen phrased the antinomy, faith alone saves – but saving faith is never alone; it 'completes' itself in deeds (v 26). The same reminder comes from Bonhoeffer...: 'We must never forget the indissoluble unity of the two (faith, obedience); we must place the one proposition that only he who believes is obedient alongside the other, that only he who is obedient believes. In the one case faith is the condition of obedience, and in the other obedience is the condition of faith. 'Only those who believe obey' is what we say to that part of a believer's soul which obeys, and 'only those who obey believe' is what we say to that part of the soul of the obedient which believes. If the first half of the proposition stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of cheap grace, which is another word for damnation. If the second half stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of salvation through works, which is another word for damnation.'"