

**Notes on the Greek New Testament**  
**Week 174 – James 3:1-4:12**

**Day 866: James 3:1-6**

**Verses 1-12**

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

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

**Verse 1**

Μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα.

πολὺς, πολλή, πολὺ gen πολλοῦ, ης, οὐ  
much, many

διδάσκαλος, οὐ m teacher

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

εἰδότες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl οἶδα  
know, understand

μείζων, οὐ greater; adv. μείζον all the more

κρίμα, τὸς n judgement

λημψόμεθα Verb, fut midd dep indic, 1 pl  
λαμβάνω

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

Martin writes, "The context makes it clear that in this epistle teachers had aspired to an office that they were using to lead others astray. Hence the reminder of a stricter accountability, since a false teacher is held responsible for influencing others. So teachers must weigh their words carefully (Matt 12:36–37...)..."

The problem of 'unfit' teachers appears to have been acute in the early church (1 John 3:7; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 4:3; Jude...)"

**Verse 2**

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

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

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

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

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

ἀνὴρ, ἀνδρος m man  
δυνατος, η, ον possible, strong, able  
χαλιναγωγέω control, hold in check

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

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

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

**Verse 3**

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

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

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

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

μεταγω guide, direct, control

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

**Verse 4**

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

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

πλοῖον, ου n boat, ship  
τηλικουτος, αυτη, ουτο so great, so large  
ἀνεμος, ου m wind  
σκληρος, α, ον hard; strong (wind)  
ἐλαυνω drive  
ἐλαχιστος, η, ον (superl of μικρος) least, smallest, insignificant  
πηδαλιον, ου n rudder  
ὅπου adv. where  
ὁρμη, ης f impulse, mind, will

εὐθύνω **make straight**; ὁ εὐθύνων  
**helmsman or pilot (of a ship)**  
 βουλομαι **want, desire, intend**

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

### Verse 5

οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ μεγάλα ἀύχει. Ἴδου ἠλίκων πῦρ ἠλίκτην ὕλην ἀνάπτει·

οὕτως see 2:26

γλῶσσα, ης f **tongue**

μέλος, οὐς n **member, bodily part**

μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα **large, great**

αὕχεω **boast, make wild claims**

Cf. Ps 73:9.

ἠλικος, η, ον **how great, how large, how small**

πῦρ, ος n **fire**

ὕλη, ης f **forest; amount of wood**

ἀναπτω **kindle, set ablaze**

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

### Verse 6

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

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

ἀδικια, ας f **wrongdoing, evil, sin**

ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας 'a world of evil.'

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

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

σπιλω **spot, stain, pollute**

ὅλος, η, ον see v.2

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

φλογίζω **set on fire**

τροχος, ου m **wheel, cycle**

γενεσις, εως f **birth, lineage**

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

γεεννα, ης f hell

"The power of Satan himself, the chief denizen of hell, gives the tongue its great destructive potential." Moo. Motyer contrasts tongue of fallen man, animated by Satan, with the "Day of Pentecost when fire came down from heaven ... to mobilise the tongue for God." He also points out that this description applies not just to angry or immoral speech, it was true also of Peter's words when he spoke out of best motives and from the best of his knowledge and understanding (see Matt 16:21-23).

Martin comments, "Such a verdict would characterize a church beset by teachers who create strife and speak evil and falsehood (4:11). Here was also a reason to resist the devil (4:7). In short, v 6 pronounces the tongue as evil – quite capable of doing deadly (i.e., Satanic) harm to the body of believers – because it emanates from the evil one; and there may be a link with the Gospel tradition about leading others astray (Mark 9:42–50) as well as living in harmony. But in enunciating this truth, James has joined together several phrases in v 6 in such a way that its exegesis is appreciated more for the impression it conveys than for its clarity of presentation."

### Day 867: James 3:7-12

#### Verse 7

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

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

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

δαμαζω subdue, tame; control  
δεδάμασται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s  
δαμαζω subdue, tame; control  
ἀνθρωπινος, η, ον human, characteristic of mankind

'by the native power of mankind'

#### Verse 8

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

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

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

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

κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm  
μεστος, η, ον full  
ιοσ, ου m poison, venom, rust  
θανατηφορος, ον deadly, causing death

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

#### Verse 9

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

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

εὐλογεω speak well of, bless

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

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

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

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

### Verse 10

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

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

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

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

### Verse 11

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

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

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

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

### Verse 12

μη δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, συκη ἐλαίας ποιῆσαι ἢ ἄμπελος σύκα; οὔτε ἄλυκὸν γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ.

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

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

Before οὔτε ἄλυκὸν many texts (including κ C<sup>2</sup> K L P it<sup>ff</sup> vg syr cop<sup>bo</sup>) have the adverb οὕτως or οὕτως οὐδενία πηγὴν ἄλυκὸν καὶ (K L P). The reading οὔτε ἄλυκὸν is supported by A B C\* and found in Nestle26. It is argued for by Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, in defense of the UBS<sup>3</sup> text, which has this preferred shorter reading on textual and contextual grounds. Davids concludes that the TR is an attempt to smooth out difficulties by making v 12b repeat v 11, and it is only the shorter text that "carries the thought on toward 3:13–18"

οὔτε not, nor  
ἄλυκος, η, ον salty

Here meaning 'salt spring.'

ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n water

## Day 868: James 3:13-18

### Verse 13

Τίς σοφὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμων ἐν ὑμῖν; δειξάτω ἐκ τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἐν πρα τητι σοφίας.

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

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

σοφος, η, ον wise, experienced  
ἐπιστημων, ον gen ονος understanding  
δειξάτω Verb, aor act imperat, 3 s δεικνυμι  
show

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

καλος, η, ον **good, right, fine, beautiful**  
 ἀναστροφῆ, ης f **manner of life, conduct**  
 πραΰτητος, ητος (and πραοτητος) f  
**gentleness, humility**

σοφία, ας f **wisdom, insight, intelligence**

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

#### Verse 14

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

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

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

ἐριθεια, ας f **selfishness, selfish ambition**

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

καρδια, ας f **heart**  
 κατακαυχασμαι **boast against, be proud**

Cf. Jer 9:23-24.

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

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

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

#### Verse 15

οὐκ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ σοφία ἄνωθεν κατερχομένη, ἀλλὰ ἐπίγειος, ψυχικῆ, δαιμονιωδης·

ἄνωθεν **from above**

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

κατερχομαι **come down**  
 ἐπίγειος, ον **earthly, of the earth**

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

ψυχικος, η, ον **unspiritual, physical**

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

δαιμονιωδης, ες **demonic**

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

#### Verse 16

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

ὅπου **where, whereas, while**

ζηλος, ου m, and ους n **see v.14**

ἐκει **there, in that place**

ἀκαταστασια, ας f **disorder, insurrection**

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

φauλος, η, ον evil, wrong, bad  
πραγμα, τος n matter, thing, event, deed

### Verse 17

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

James deals with the *origin, characteristics* and *results* of this wisdom. There are similarities here with Paul's delineation of the 'fruit of the Spirit' in Gal 5:22-23. Martin comments, "What follows in 3:17 is the picture of how the church's aims should be set, and that includes Christians living a life under the wise rule of God. The result is a body that is united and is walking with one accord by aiming at the ideals of peace (cf. v 18)."

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

ἀγνος, η, ον pure, holy, innocent

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

ἔπειτα then, afterwards  
εἰρηνικος, η, ον peaceful; peace-loving

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

ἐπιεικης, ες gentle, forbearing, considerate  
εὐπειθης, ες open to reason, willing to give in (to someone else)

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

μεστος, η, ον full  
ἐλεος, ους n mercy, compassion

καρπος, ου m fruit, harvest, outcome  
ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting  
ἀδιακριτος, ον without prejudice or favouritism

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

ἀνυποκριτος, ον sincere, genuine

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

### Verse 18

καρπὸς δὲ δικαιοσύνης ἐν εἰρήνῃ σπείρεται τοῖς ποιῶσιν εἰρήνην.

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

δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness  
εἰρηνη, ης f peace  
σπειρω sow  
εἰρηνη, ης f peace

This saying may mean either:

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

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

Those who create such an atmosphere are assured by their Lord of their reward: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God' (Matt 5:9)."

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

**Day 869: James 4:1-5****Verse 1**

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

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

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

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

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

The root of strife is self-gratification.

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

Could refer to parts of the individual human body, or 'parts' of the body of believers – the church. The former is perhaps the more likely. Cf. 1 Peter 2:11. Martin, however, argues that the focus in 4:1-3 is upon external conflicts – conflicts between members of the church. "All our desires and passions are like an armed camp within us, and at a moment's notice they are ready to go out to war against anybody who stands in the way of some particular gratification which we want for ourselves." Motyer.

**Verse 2**

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

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

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

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

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

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

a) 'You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder.'

b) 'And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts.'

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

αἰτεῖσθαι Verb, pres midd infin αἰτεω  
ask; midd ask for oneself, request

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

### Verse 3

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

διότι because, for, therefore

κακῶς badly

ἡδονή, ης f see v.1

δαπανᾶω spend

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

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

### Verse 4

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

μοιχαλίς, ιδος f **adulteress, unfaithful**

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

οἶδα know, understand

φιλία, ας f love, friendship

ἐχθρὰ, ας f enmity, hostility, hatred

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

ὃς ἐάν whoever

βουληθῆ Verb, aor pass dep subj, 3 s

βουλομαι want, desire, wish, intend

φίλος, ου m and φιλη, ης f friend

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι

ἐχθρὸς, α, ον enemy

καθίσταται Verb, pres pass indic, 3 s

καθιστημι and καθιστανω make, appoint

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

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

### Verse 5

ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἢ γραφὴ λέγει, Πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν;

ἢ or

δοκεω think, suppose

κενῶς in vain, to no purpose

γραφη, ης f writing, Scripture

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

φθονος, ου m envy, jealousy

ἐπιποθεω long for, desire

κατοικίζω place, put

There are several ways of understanding this verse:

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

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

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

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

### Day 870: James 4:6-12

#### Verses 6-10

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

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

#### Verse 6

μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν· διὸ λέγει, Ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηράνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

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

μειζων, ον greater

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

διὸ therefore, for this reason  
ὑπερηράνος, ον arrogant, proud  
ἀντιτάσσομαι oppose, resist  
ταπεινός, η, ον humble, lowly

Cf. Prov 3:34.

#### Verse 7

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

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

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

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

ἀντίστητε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl  
ἀνθίστημι resist, oppose, withstand  
διαβόλος, ον m the devil

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

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

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

#### Verse 8

ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν.  
καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοὶ, καὶ  
ἀγνίσσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι.

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

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

καθαρίζω cleanse, make clean, purify  
χειρ, χειρος f hand, power  
ἁμαρτωλος, ον sinful, sinner  
ἀγνίζω purify, cleanse

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

διψυχος, ον of divided loyalty

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

### Verse 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Verse 10

ταπεινωθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου, καὶ ὑψωσει ὑμᾶς.

ταπεινωθητε Verb, aor pass imperat, 2 pl  
ταπεινωω humble  
ἐνώπιον prep with gen before  
ὑψωω exalt, lift up, raise

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

**Verses 11-12 and ff**

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

**Verse 11**

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

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

καταλαλεω speak evil of, slander  
ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὖς reciprocal pronoun one another

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

ἢ or

κρίνω judge, pass judgement on  
νόμος, οὖς m law

ποιητῆς, οὖς m one who does or carries out, doer

κριτῆς, οὖς m judge

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

**Verse 12**

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

εἷς, μίας, ἐν γεν ἑνός, μίας, ἑνός one νομοθετῆς, οὖς m lawgiver

δυναμαι can, be able to

σωζω save, rescue

ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill

πλησίον i) prep with gen near; ii) ὁ π. neighbour, fellow man.

Cf. Rom 14:1-13, esp. vv 3-4 and 10-13. Martin adds, "James is not discounting the need for honest discussion and constructive criticism within the body of believers. It may be that he would applaud a removal from the congregation of those who deliberately lead astray the flock with their destructive tongues. The point is, however, that jealous and contemptible language has no place in the church, as James emphasizes in the closing words of 4:12: σὺ δὲ τίς εἶ, ὁ κρίνων τὸν πλησίον; ... This rhetorical question, somewhat sarcastic in nature ... shames those guilty of judging their neighbor (πλησίον), a term that recalls vividly 2:8 (and in turn Lev 19:16–18), and illustrates the use of the royal law as a standard by which to measure conduct... This may also be an exhortation to consider those who are presently outside the church and who would be adversely influenced by the unseemly conduct of Christians."