

James

1:11. “burning heat.” Greek is *kauson* (#2742 καύσων) **heat, burning (sun)**. This is not the scorching east wind, which is usual meaning of *kauson* in the Septuagint. The sun does not bring the wind from the desert. See BDAG.

“face.” A Semitic idiom showing itself in the NT. Cp. Robertson, *Word Studies*.

“pursuits.” Cp. Robertson, *Word Studies*. From an old word for “journeys,” thus “pursuits” is appropriate here.

2:8. Quoted from Lev. 19:18.

2:10. Occasionally someone will say this verse proves that all sin is equal in the eyes of God. That is clearly not the case. James is speaking in the context of people who would ignore or minimize their sin, and he points out that even one sin makes us as sinful as if we had broken the whole Law. While it is true that committing one sin makes us as sinful as if we had broken the whole Law, because sin is sin, that is not the same as saying that all sins are equally serious. It is clear from both Scripture and logic that some sins are more serious than others.

That not all sins are equal should be clear from the words of Jesus. Speaking to Pilate, he said, “The one [Judas] who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin” (John 19:11). Here the Lord explicitly said that Judas’ sin of handing Jesus over was a “greater sin” than Pilate’s. Further, that there is such a thing as an “unforgivable sin” ought to give us pause to consider that not *all* sins are equal (cp. Mark 3:28-29).

In the Law, the consequence of some sins was the death penalty, while the consequence for other sins was only a beating, and some sins were only punished by fines. The seriousness of the penalty reflected the seriousness of the crime, and it is obvious that God considered some sins more serious than others. This is also true in the New Testament. Everyone sinned, but some sins were so serious that people who committed them were put out of the church (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20). Furthermore, Ephesians 5:5 notes sexual immorality and covetousness as sins that will keep a person from having an inheritance in the future kingdom of God.

Also, Paul told us that if someone sinned against us in a small, or “trivial,” way, we should not go to court (1 Cor. 6:2 NIV, ESV, NET, RSV, NRSV, NJB, etc.). However, if someone sins against us in a way that was not trivial, the implication is that we can go to court, because the civil authorities are for our good, and carry out God’s wrath on evildoers (Rom. 13:4). We all know this from the common experiences of life. If we loan a fellow Christian \$250 because we know them and trust them, but then they refuse to pay us back, we would not sue them. But if someone was a Christian but acted in a dangerous and criminal way by murdering, raping, stealing a car, or committing a crime that was not “trivial,” we would call the police or even sue to regain our property. Both Scripture and logic tell us that some sins are “trivial,” while some are serious. The consequences of trivial sins are minimal, while the consequences of serious sins are serious.

2:11. Quoted from Exod. 20:14, 13.

2:23. Quoted from Gen 15:6 and Isaiah 41:8.

2:26. “spirit.” The Greek word is *pneuma* (#4151 πνεῦμα). Here it refers to the natural life of the body. See note on Luke 23:46.

3:6. “wheel of birth.” “Wheel of birth” is the literal Greek (Cp. Vincent). For “wheel” and not “course” see Lenski. Most commentators like “life” or “existence” better than “birth” (see Lenski) and believe the tongue defiles one’s course of life, which of course it does. However, the verse says “birth,” and for good reason. The verse already says that the tongue “defiles the whole body.” Sadly, and beyond destroying one’s own life, the tongue is multi-generational, and the tongue that is set on fire by Gehenna destroys not only the life of the man with the fiery tongue, but generations after him.

Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22.

3:14. “selfish ambition.” The Greek is *eritheia* (#2052 ἐριθεία). See note on “selfish ambition,” Romans 2:8.

3:16. “selfish ambition.” The Greek is *eritheia* (#2052 ἐριθεία). See note on “selfish ambition,” Romans 2:8.

3:17. “reasonable.” See note on 1 Timothy 3:3.

3:18. “the fruit of righteousness” is a genitive of apposition, “the fruit that is to say, righteousness.

“by those who make peace” seems to be the most natural reading, although the text can also be translated, “for those who make peace.” While it is true that those who sow peace reap it, thus it is sown for them, it seems more the case that those who sow in peace are the ones trying to make peace. This is a case where the Greek can encompass both meanings in one word.

4:1. “wars.” The Greek is *polemos* (#4171 πόλεμος) and it means a war, an armed conflict, a fight, a battle. It was used of a dispute, strife, or quarrel, but in a lesser sense. This is the figure of speech Hyperbole, exaggeration. There were not armed conflicts between believers, but because God wants believers to live in peace, any sharp conflict is exaggerated.

“fighting.” The Greek is *mache* (#3163 μάχη), and it is a battle or a fight, but not as widespread as *polemos* (#4171 πόλεμος), “war.”

“desires for pleasure.” The Greek reads simply *hedone* (#2237 ἡδονή) in the plural, or “pleasures.” This is the figure of speech metonymy, where “pleasures” is put for the desire for pleasures (Cp. Bullinger, Figures).

4:4. “Adulteresses.” This exclamation is typical Jewish thinking. The people of God were married to God and were accused of adultery toward their husband, God, when they sinned against Him (Cp. Jer. 3:6-8; 5:7; Ezek. 16:32; Hos. 1:2).

4:5. Robertson (and others) poses the question does the “spirit” in the verse refer to God’s spirit or man’s “spirit” (i.e., his sin nature, attitudes, etc.). There seems to be more evidence for the fact that the “human spirit” yearns enviously, and especially so in the context, which is about people living by their lust. “The evil spirit is the evil impulse...in us. ...There is a spirit in us which longs to envy and thus inclines us to fight each other...” (David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*). If we understand that the spirit in this verse is the sin nature and fleshly attitudes, then we can understand the very next phrase, “But he gives a greater grace.” We all need the greater grace of God to overcome the evil desires that emanate from our fleshly nature.

“caused to dwell in us.” “Caused” is better than made. We humans were “made” with a “human spirit,” our inner attitudes and disposition of mind, but that original making was changed when Adam sinned and as a result God “caused” (Hebrew idiom of permission) the spirit to envy when it became tinted with sin nature.

4:6. Quoted from Prov. 3:34.

5:3. “treasured up *wrath* for the last days.” Most modern translations miss the figure of speech Ellipsis in this sentence. It is usually translated as if “have heaped” is the verb and “treasure” is its noun object. However, there is only a verb in Greek, which could be translated “heaped up” [as a treasure is heaped up] or perhaps better, “treasured up.” But if the sentence is, “You have treasured up for the last days,” we are left needing to know what has been treasured up. From both the context and the scope of Scripture (Rom. 2:5), we can supply the Ellipsis: “You have treasured up *wrath* for the last days” (the 1899 Douay-Rheims version correctly supplies “wrath”). The way God has artfully written the verse with the figure of speech Ellipsis de-emphasizes the wrath that God will mete out, and emphasizes that the wicked will get what they deserve because they themselves are the ones heaping and treasuring up the wrath.

5:4. “Lord of the Armies.” Greek = *Sabaoth*; Σαβαώθ, indeclinable; transliterated from the Hebrew *sabaoth* (*armies, hosts*); used in a title for God *Lord of hosts, Lord of the armies* (Romans 9:29; James 5:4). There has been debate among commentators about whether this refers to the armies of Israel, the heavenly armies, or both.

5:7. The early rain comes in the autumn, even during the planting season (most grain in Israel is planted during the fall, like our winter wheat, and is mostly dormant over the winter, then ripens in the early spring). The late, or latter, rains, come in the spring and bring the bountiful harvest.

5:13. “suffering hardship.” (Thayer).

5:15. “Vow of faith.” The Greek word for “vow” is *euche*, just as it is in the other two places it occurs, Acts 18:18 and 21:23.

5:16: See Robertson, *Word Pictures*

5:17. “prayer he prayed.” A beautiful polyptoton emphasizing the fervency of the action. See Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*.

