

Outline of the Book of James

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A brief note of explanation

When I explored the book of James for this assignment, I found it hard to come up with a traditional outline form. At first glance, James seemed to fit the wisdom genre which would make it nearly impossible to outline.

After a while, I did notice a pattern, though. The book seemed to revolve around two grids. One of these was the rich/poor grid, where James uses rich and poor in the same way that Paul would use unrighteous/righteous¹. The other axis was words/deeds. The contrasts in the book revolve around these basic elements from all directions. Very little of the content did not fit well into this grid.

The following outline is laid out as four columns with these four columns presented vertically for the sake of retaining an outline order and rough outline appearance.

A cleaner representation would be of the following form:

	Words	Deeds
Poor
Rich

Each of the verses can be fit into this grid with descriptive titles. The problem with that sort of presentation is that the verse ordering is not preserved. However, present the overall thought pattern of the author more clearly.

¹ In the book of James, James' vocabulary more closely matches the vocabulary

and "grid" of Jesus, than Paul's vocabulary.

Outline of the Book of James

Don't be (like the rich)		Should be (like the poor)	
Words	Deeds/ Consequences	Words	Deeds
		1:1 Introduction	
			1:2-4 Patience in trials
		1:5-8 Ask, in faith, for wisdom	
		1:9 Rejoice	
	1:10-11 Made low		
			1:12-18 Endures temptation
		1:19 Slow to speak	1:19 Quick to listen, slow to anger
1:20 wrathful & unrighteous 1:21 filthy and naughty			
		1:22-25 Not just hearers	1:22-25 Be doers
		1:26 Bridle the tongue	
			1:27 Visit the fatherless and widows
			2:1 Don't be respecter of persons
2:2-4 Rich are flattered	2:2-4 Rich are treated preferentially		
			2:5 Poor are chosen by God
	2:6 Rich oppress and drag to court		
2:7 Rich blaspheme God			
			2:8-11 Love your neighbor as yourself
		2:12-13 So say this	2:12-13 So do this
		2:14 Don't just say you love your neighbor	

			2:15 Love in deeds
		2:16 Don't merely bless with mouth	2:16 Bless with deeds
		2:17-20 Faith without works is dead	2:17-20 Faith without works is dead
		2:21-24 Abraham not justified by faith alone	2:21-24 Abraham justified by actions
			2:25 Rahab justified by actions
		2:26 Faith without works is dead	2:26 Faith without works is dead
	3:1 Don't be many masters		
			3:2-8 Control over the tongue
3:9-12 curse men		3:9-12 We bless God	
		3:13 knowledge leading to wisdom	3:13 knowledge leading to good actions
3:14-15 envy and strife	3:16 yield confusion and every evil work		
		3:17-18 wisdom from above	3:17-18 fruit of wisdom of God
	4:1-2 Wars and infighting		
4:3 Asking wrongly	4:4 selfish desires		
	4:5 friendship with world, enmity with God		
4:6 God resists the proud		4:6 God gives grace to the humble	
			4:7-10 submission to God
4:11-12 speaking ill of each other			
4:13-15 Making plans without committing them to God			
4:16 boasting			
	4:17 not doing good = sin		
	5:1-3 will receive		

	miseries, corruption, moths, rust		
	5:4 underpays workers		
	5:5 lived in pleasure		
	5:6 condemned the just		
			5:7-8 wait for the coming of the Lord
		5:9 don't grudge	
			5:10-11 take prophets as examples of patience
		5:12 don't swear oaths	
		5:13 afflicted > pray, merry > sing	
		5:14-15 sick > pray	
		5:16 confess faults to one another	
		5:17-18 Example of Elijah	
		5:19-20 aiding the return of backsliders	