

A Study of James 2

I. Outline.

1. Partiality toward the rich is wrong (James 2:1-4).
2. God loves the poor, too (5).
3. Other reasons not to exalt the rich above the poor (6-7).
4. The royal law (8).
5. Offending in one point (9-12).
6. Judgment without mercy (13).
7. Faith and works (14-26).

II. Summary.

There are two main subjects in this chapter: Favoritism and the relationship between faith and works. James stresses in very bold and clear statements that the showing of favoritism is a serious sin and will cause one to be lost. In the second section, James makes clear that a faith that is not active and accompanied by works is a dead faith and that kind of faith WILL NOT save anyone.

III. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here:

<https://maplehillchurchofchrist.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/15bibleperiods.pdf>

IV. Words/Phrases to Study

- James 2:1... **WITH RESPECT OF PERSONS** “Although there is clearly nothing wrong with being rich, there may be plenty wrong with the method of becoming rich; and the riches themselves can become the most terrible curse to befall a man. It is against this arrogance that tempts the rich that God speaks. It is against this method of oppression that makes a man rich that God speaks. It is against over-rating riches and thus underrating all spiritual values that God warns. It is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil, says the Lord; and this constitutes a form of idolatry as adulterous in God’s sight as falling down before the dumb stone idols. Of all this the Christian must be constantly aware, lest his tendency to over-evaluate money and what money can buy completely blind him to the true riches from God. Treasures in heaven do not consist of things that decay, are made with hands and purchased with money” [Donald Fream, *A Chain of Jewels from James & Jude*, Bible Study Textbook Series, p. 68].
- James 2:2... **VILE RAIMENT**—“The Greek here is, filthy, foul; the meaning of the passage is, in sordid, shabby clothes. The reference here seems to be, not to those who commonly attended on public worship, or who were members of the church, but to those who might accidentally drop in to witness the services of Christians. See 1 Corinthians 14:24” [Barnes’ Notes on the Bible]. Cf., Matthew 19:21.
- James 2.4... **ARE YE NOT THEN PARTIAL IN YOURSELVES, AND ARE BECOME JUDGES OF EVIL THOUGHTS?**—“There has been considerable difference of opinion respecting this passage, yet the sense seems not to be difficult. There are two ideas in it: one is, that they showed by this conduct that they took it upon themselves to be judges, to pronounce on the character of men who were strangers, and on their claims to respect, (compare Mt 7:1;) the other is, that in doing this, they were not guided by just rules, but that they did it under the influence of improper "thoughts." They did it not from benevolence; not from a desire to do justice to all according to their moral character; but from that improper feeling which leads us to show honour to men on account of their external appearance, rather than their real worth. The wrong in the case was in their presuming to "judge" these strangers at all, as they practically did by making this distinction, and then by doing it under

the influence of such an unjust rule of judgment. The sense is, that we have no right to form a decisive judgment of men on their first appearance, as we do when we treat one with respect and the other not; and that when we make up our opinion in regard to them, it should be by some other means of judging than the question whether they can wear gold rings, and dress well, or not [*Barnes, Notes*, Kindle Edition, Christian Classics Ethereal Library. (Kindle locations: 139035-139044)].

- James 2:5... **HATH NOT GOD CHOSEN THE POOR**—“Christ did not teach that the poor are saved because of their poverty, nor that the rich are condemned because of their wealth; and yet the singular fact may not be denied that in the journey required of all that they leave everything for the Master, the poor having less distance to go, in greater numbers find the Lord of glory” [James Burton Coffman’s Commentaries]. Cf., 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Psalm 68:10; Psalm 69:33; Psalm 140:12.
- James 2.7... **DO NOT THEY BLASPHEME THAT WORTHY NAME BY THE WHICH YE ARE CALLED?**—“The rich not only typically oppose Christians, they also typically speak against Christ. This was true in James’ world as it is in ours. It is inconsistent to give special honor to those who despise the Lord whom believers love and serve. To blaspheme or slander (Gr. blasphemeo) means to mock deliberately or to speak contemptuously of God” [Thomas L. Constable, *Dr. Constable’s Bible Study Notes*, An e-Sword Module].
- James 2:8... **THE ROYAL LAW**—“There are numerous reasons why it may be so described. (1) It is the law of the kingdom of Christ; and, in summary, involves man’s entire duty to those about him; (2) it is a law which originates with the King of the universe; (3) it stands at the head of all other laws respecting man’s obligation to his fellows; (4) it surpasses in nobility, all other obligations, and leads to the fulfillment of all others (Gal 6:2). Thus, whether James meant that it is a law such as is proper even for kings to follow; or, that it is the king of all other laws, his purpose is quite obvious, the design being to indicate the supreme position which this law should have in the hearts and lives of us all” [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 119].
- James 2:10... **GUILTY OF ALL**—“The meaning is, he stands condemned by all of the law when he violates any portion of it. ... The vital lesson taught here is that all of the law of God is pertinent to us, and that we must not feel at liberty to tamper with any portion thereof” [Guy N. Woods, pp. 122-24].
- James 2:12... **LAW OF LIBERTY**—“... in that it leads to liberty for those formerly enslaved by sin” [Guy N. Woods, p. 127].
- James 2.13... **HE SHALL HAVE JUDGMENT WITHOUT MERCY, THAT HATH SHEWED NO MERCY**—“Here again are the clearest echoes of our Saviour’s words (Matthew 6:1-2, et seq.), and a reference, we can hardly doubt, to His well-known parable (Matthew 18:21-35); and we must remember, further, that “the unforgiving temper, apart from all outward wrong, constitutes the sin of the unmerciful servant;” opportunity only being lacking for its full effect. The pitiless are usually cowards, and may well be moved by fear, if they will not by love: “I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19)” [E.G. PUNCHARD, in *A Bible Commentary for English Readers*, Editor: Charles Ellicott, An e-Sword Module].
- James 2:24... **AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY**—“The allegation that Paul taught justification by faith only and is in conflict with James is utterly false; **there is a vast difference between the doctrine of justification by faith (which Paul and James both taught, Rom 5:1; James 2:20-22) and the doctrine of justification by faith only, which neither of them taught.** We have seen earlier that the faith that saves is one that expresses itself in obedience to the commands of God. Faith, apart from works, is dead, barren, vain (James 2:17, 20, 26). Justification is by faith (Romans 3:28; 5:1). This faith which justifies is either WITH, or WITHOUT, works. If it is WITH works, it is not by faith only; and it blesses only when accompanied by the works which perfect it. If it is WITHOUT works, salvation results from a faith that is dead. But, a faith that is dead is barren

(unproductive of life whatsoever). There is no salvation on the basis of a dead faith. A faith that can save is neither barren nor dead. But, faith, without works, is both barren and dead. It follows, therefore, that salvation is not by faith only” [Guy N. Woods, p. 147, emphasis mine, DRL].

V. Lessons & Applications.

1. James 2.1 **...WITH RESPECT OF PERSONS.** This matter may seem to some to be an insignificant problem, however, there is nothing that the Scriptures deal with that is in that category. Evidently James knew of a need to make a correction among the brethren regarding this matter. It was very serious because James spent thirteen verses in dealing with it. We must appreciate the seriousness of showing respect to all people for their inherent worth and dignity. All are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and have a soul which is valuable to the Lord (Mt 16:26). We may have a natural tendency to value more highly friendships with the rich and powerful, but this is something we must NOT do.
2. James 2.7 **...THAT WORTHY NAME BY WHICH YE ARE CALLED.** Sometimes denominational people, who cannot find their names in the Bible make light of such by saying, “There’s nothing in a name.” Of course, they understand clearly that such is not the case in everyday life, but they somehow want to say it with regard to their religion. James, by inspiration, tells us that the name CHRISTIAN is a WORTHY NAME. We should want to wear it without any hyphenated additions.
3. James 2.10 **...HE IS GUILTY OF ALL.** The very idea that there are some commands of God that can be overlooked and all will be well is refuted here. It is not “cafeteria-style” that we go about obeying the commands of God.
4. James 2.12 **SO SPEAK YE, AND SO DO, AS THEY THAT SHALL BE JUDGED...** Yes, it is the law of liberty, but that law of liberty is to be followed in order to have the freedom from the guilt of sin. There is coming a judgment day and the basis of the judgment will be the word of Christ (John 12:48). Our lives must be lived in a way that recognizes that some day we will stand before the Lord for judgment.
5. James 2.13 **...JUDGMENT WITHOUT MERCY...** If anyone has given the slightest consideration to the power of God that is revealed in the written word, this should be a most FRIGHTENING statement. The very thought of absolutely no mercy from Almighty God should cause each and every one of us to show mercy toward others!!!
6. James 2.17 **...FAITH IF IT HAVE NOT WORKS IS DEAD...** It matters not how many times MEN may say that we are saved by faith ONLY, the Bible still says it is not so. The great faith chapter should demonstrate clearly to all people that the kind of faith that saves is an active and obedient faith. Hebrews 11 and James 2 should have long ago put away the concept of salvation by FAITH ONLY, but sadly, many still persist in this doctrine of men which will cause the loss of many souls!

VI. Questions.

True or False

01. ____ The words FAITH ONLY never appear in the Bible together.
02. ____ We will be judged by the law of liberty.
03. ____ Both Abraham and Rahab were justified by works.
04. ____ Rich men blasphemed the name Christian.
05. ____ Abraham was called the Friend of God.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ Like the body without the spirit, faith without works is: (a) strange; (b) dead; (c) not pleasing.
07. _____ What kind of poor has God chosen according to James: (a) poorest of the poor; (b) all of them; (c) those rich in faith.
08. _____ The kind of faith James talks about is a faith that does: (a) profit; (b) not profit.
09. _____ The person whom the Lord will judge without mercy is that person who: (a) doesn't care; (b) has shown no mercy to others; (c) blasphemes.
10. _____ By faith Abraham's faith was made: (a) perfect; (b) observable; (c) clean.

Fill in the Blanks

11. James says that the name his recipients were wearing was _____.
12. "Ye see then how that by _____ a man is justified, and not by _____."
13. "What doth it _____, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not _____? can faith save him?"
14. We should not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with _____ of _____.
15. ...I will show thee my faith by my _____."

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to James 1 Questions... **01**—False (8); **02**—True (19); **03**—True (17); **04**—False (5-7); **05**—True (13); **06**—a (1); **07**—b (15); **08**—c (10-11); **09**—b (23-24); **10**—c (26); **11**—righteousness, God (20); **12**—servant, Lord (1); **13**—filthiness, superfluity (21); **14**—blessed, endureth, crown, life (12); **15**—doers, hearers, (2).

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle. The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. -DRL

W U L F U L F I L F U G I
 N O T A E D B M D V J O T
 A S A I D R W E L L U O H
 S I G T M E R C Y O D D E
 R I C H G S S J F R G E N
 C O M E H P C U C D E A L
 P B G R P E R S O N S D O
 O R T E W C I T M T U U V
 O E H T O T P I M H B L E
 R T H E R E T F I A E T B
 S H E W K R U I T L C E N
 T R A N S G R E S S O R Y
 B E L I E V E D C O M Y N
 F N Y C J J C A L L E D M

ADULTERY	ALSO	BECOME	BELIEVE	BRETHREN
CALLED	COME	COMMIT	DEAD	FAITH
FULFIL	GOOD	HERE	JUDGES	JUSTIFIED
LORD	LOVE	MERCY	PERSONS	POOR
RESPECT	RICH	SAID	SCRIPTURE	SHEW
THEN	THERE	TRANSGRESSOR	WELL	WORKS

IX. EXTRA CREDIT FOR “SUPER” Bible Students...

Will you please consider answering these three SIMPLE questions based on the Bible text of this chapter? I will try to make use of your answers. Bring them with you next week. Tear out this last sheet from the Study Guide and be prepared to put it in a basket. I think it will be a great help to all of those in the class if you will do so. Thank you in advance for your marvelous cooperation!

W O R D: What word would you like to know more about in this chapter?

W O N D E R: I wonder what this phrase, verse, or series of verses means...

W I S H: I wish myself—or others whom I know or even don’t know—would understand this fact, principle, or concept from this chapter...