

James Chapter 2

The first section of James chapter 2 carries a warning against courting the favor of middle and upper income people or the wealthy, or showing them special favors or courtesies. There is no doubt many congregations are tempted to do this very thing today. After all, there are budgets to be met, programs to be financed and all kinds of good works which require constant scrambling on the part of the church elders and deacons in their efforts to finance such things ... Instead of depending on God.

Therefore, the tendency is to do a little bowing and scraping when some well-to-do person condescends to visit the assembly of the church. It was no different in that generation to which James addressed these remarkable words. James' warning is crystal clear: "Don't do it!"

James 2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, [*the Lord*] of glory, with respect of persons.

... The faith ... the Gospel, New Testament Christianity or the entire Christian profession should not have any respect of persons. God is no respecter of persons, nor should Christians be. God respects character, not dress, or wealth, or earthly rank.

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened [*his*] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Romans 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

Ephesians 6:9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

James 2:2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment.

Literally come into your synagogue. James is speaking of the place of worship, whether it be Jewish or Christian.

James, a Jewish Christian of the strictest sort, uses the Jewish term.

... with a gold ring, in goodly apparel ... An indication of wealth in that age, especially in connection with the fine clothing or goodly apparel.

... also a poor man in vile raiment ...

A poor man is seen by his vile, dirty rags or poor clothing.

James 2:3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool.

Show respect not to the character of the brother but to his clothes, by giving one a welcome and a good seat, while the other is treated contemptuously, allowed to stand or to sit in a very uncomfortable place.

Does not this describe the spirit of many of the churches of our time?

Example of the First Baptizer Church Downtown Dallas Their building costs \$130 million dollars. They teaches you don't need to be baptized to be saved, just believe something and say some sort of sinners prayer and "your good to go". They won't let the poor and homeless in the door. Security will escort them out.

How about the Potter Church ... famous on earth ... and infamous on high.

James 2:4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

... partial in yourselves ... Show partiality from outward appearance of things.

... become judges of evil thoughts ... Have you not become judges of evil thoughts

In other words you have Judged between the two men under the influence of evil thoughts.

James 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.

Ye choose out the rich for favor, but God hath chosen in most part the poor to be rich in faith.

Therefore God has made poor men heirs of the eternal inheritance.

James 2:6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

Those whom God accepts you reject. Do not rich men oppress you?

The oppressors of the poor are usually the rich.

Why should a man honor his executioners and at the same time injure his friends?

... Do not the rich men oppress you ...? There had been countless examples of this right there in Jerusalem, where the Sadducees, the rich party of their day, were notorious oppressors of the poor cf: Matthew 23rd chapter.

... draw you ... "This implies force and is actually mentioned in cases of arrest in Acts 8:1, 9:1 & Acts 16:19, Christians were widely hated, and this would have made it easier for prosecutors to seek them out and harass them.

... Judgment seats ... These were both Jewish and Roman courts. The rich are the money lenders, those who bring suit for debt, and hence draw the poor before the judgment seats. This is also an allusion to the fact that they were the persecutors of early Christians.

James 2:7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called.

... that worthy name ... The name of Christ. There is an allusion either to the fact that they were already called Christians:

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

... that worthy name ... or that they were baptized in His name.

Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

James 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

The law of love for one's neighbor, which is the spiritual fulfillment of the law.

Matthew 22:35-40 Then one of them, [*which was*] a lawyer, asked [*him a question*], tempting him, and saying, 36 Master, which [*is*] the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second [*is*] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

James 1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [*therein*], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [*even*] in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

James 2:9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Such partiality as that was described in verse 3

James 2:3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool.

If you would break this law, and hence would be a sin, and the sinner would be convicted as a transgressor of the law.

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [*point*], he is guilty of all.

If the law is broken by "respect of persons," the whole law is broken. He who willfully breaks one command is a law breaker and is guilty before the law.

James 2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

He that gave one command, gave the other commands. If you break any one of them, you sin against the Divine Lawgiver God Himself.

James 2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

**... So speak ye ... So act as one that will be
... judged by the law of liberty ...**

The Gospel, which is not a law of outward compulsion and rules, but a law of a new, willing spirit and attitude.

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

We must show mercy if we expect mercy. Our own spirit determines our manner of judgment.

Matthew 5:44-46 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

This is not a harsh judgment, for the sterner side of the judgment of God was enunciated by our Lord himself.

Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Nevertheless, it remains true that "mercy glorieth against judgment." The most wonderful truth revealed in all of the word of God is that mercy stands higher than the law as the guiding principle of God's relationship with men. This was symbolized in the Old Testament by the Mercy Seat which was placed above and on top of the Ark of the Covenant.

If we love our neighbor, God will love us

James 2:14 What [*doth it*] profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

... What doth it profit ... Professions are nothing unless their fruit is deeds. Even faith is of no avail unless it demonstrates its life by works.

Doctrines and creeds of men are all worthless because they are not inspired, they are not perfect like the New Testament or complete ... men forget and leave something out ... Example the protestant creed:

Solo Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Solus Christus & Soli Deo Gloria

James 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

**... If a brother or sister ... Now a practical application is made of the royal law.
... Be naked ... or insufficiently clothed.**

James 2:16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be [ye] warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what [*doth it*] profit?

... Depart in peace ... if we express to the needy only kind wishes, that they be warmed by receiving good clothing and fed by food being provided out of the sky. Such good wishes are worthless unless we follow them up by active help to the poor down-trodden sufferer.

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

... Even so faith ... Faith that does not have the power to bring one to obedience and to change his life is as worthless as good wishes which are nothing but words.

**... Being alone ... It cannot stand alone and be of any use.
Only when it shows its power in works is it of the slightest value.**

James 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

... Yea, a man may say ... One may claim works and another claim faith. They must go hand in hand. One cannot show faith without works. The life lived is the proof of the faith held. If a man lives in obedience to Christ that is proof that he has faith in Christ.

James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

... Thou believest that there is one God ... That is very well, but can that alone save you? Even the demons believe that also.

Matthew 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

Evil spirits confessed Christ, but this confession of His name did not save them.

James 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

... But wilt thou know ... Now James will show by proof that the faith that justifies produces works by the case of Abraham, the great father of the faithful.

Faith without works is dead.

It has no power to make alive unless it has power over the life.

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Genesis 22:1 1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (try or test) Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, [*here*] I [*am*]. 2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only [*son*] Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. 3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid [*it*] upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here [*am*] I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where [*is*] the lamb for a burnt offering?² 8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. 9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here [*am*] I. 12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only [*son*] from me. 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind [*him*] a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. 14 And Abraham

called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said [*to*] this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.³ 15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only [*son*]: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which [*is*] upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;⁴ 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

... Was not Abraham our father ... The father of the Jewish race; also the father of all his children by faith.

Galatians 3:7-9 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [*saying*], In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

... Justified by works ... By a faith which showed itself in works.

This is the argument of James, that faith is of no avail unless accompanied by works. Of this all Abraham's life was a demonstration. He was told when in Mesopotamia to go forth into the land God would show him, and "he went forth, not knowing whither;" an act of faith

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

"By faith he sojourned or lived in the land of promise"

Hebrews 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as [*in*] a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker [*is*] God.

Each of these acts of faith secured Divine approval, but the greatest trial was when he offered Isaac.

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten [*son*],

Why did Abraham do that? Because God cannot lie & had promised him twice cf:

Genesis 17:21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. **22** And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Genesis 21:12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten [son], **18** Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called. **19** Accounting that God [was] able to raise [him] up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure

This victory of faith was followed by crowning approval and glorious promises.

James 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

... Seest thou how faith wrought ... Abraham's faith was a working faith.

... By works was faith made perfect ... The element of works is essential to make it complete.

Without works it is an imperfect, "a dead faith." It must have energy to avail. Abraham's faith "wrought."

James 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

... And the scripture was fulfilled ... The scripture is quoted in

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

The case of the offering of Isaac was a complete outward demonstration that Abraham believed God, as the Scripture said. "He was called the friend of God." Honored as no other mortal had been.

Isaiah 41:8 But thou, Israel, [art] my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

II Chronicles 20:7 [Art] not thou our God, [who] didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

The Mohammedans still call Abraham *El Khalil*, "The Friend."

James 2:24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

The KJV is best translation in this verse, having "not by faith only," since James' efforts in the whole paragraph are directed against supposing that salvation is "by faith only." The meaning is allegedly the same. In the Greek, the adverb `only' comes last, emphatically.

Many a sermon will be preached this day on "justification by faith only" most citing:

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Do you the the word only or alone in that verse?

What does the verse in front say of 5:1 say?

Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Romans 3:23 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

... Ye see then ... The case of Abraham proves that the justifying faith is a working faith.

James 2:25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent [*them*] out another way?

... Rahab the harlot ... See notes on

Hebrews 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

This is one of the long roll of examples of faith shown by works given by Paul.

James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

... For as the body without the spirit ... The body is a lifeless, dead thing, without the spirit. So lifeless is faith it shows an energy in works.

Some have thought, among these Luther, that Paul and James were not in agreement on the subject of faith. Those who thus conclude mistake both these inspired men of God. Paul shows that works without faith will not justify, and hence lays the emphasis on *faith*; James shows that faith without works will not justify, and lays the emphasis on *works*. Neither teaches that faith alone, or works alone will justify. Paul, indeed, shows that faith alone is worthless

1 Corinthians 13:2 And though I have [*the gift of*] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

and in Hebrews, chapter 11

Paul emphasizes works as the demonstration of faith. The two writers are in agreement, and all seeming disagreement is due to the fact that they are seeking to correct different errors, and hence look at the matter from different points of view.

Sources: theWord.com for the KJV, B.W. Johnson's Peoples N. T. Commentary, Clarks Commentary & Coffman's commentary.