

Lesson 3

James Two

This chapter begins with a discourse on showing impartiality toward Christians. Though their outward appearance may not be like ours, we are still to treat them well, for they are brethren (Matt. 7:12). The specific context of James two focused on how the brethren treated the rich and poor who had come into the assembly (v. 2).

James 2:1

“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.”^{1,2,3}

Too many “look down their noses” at others. This is not right. All of humanity is on equal footing – we are God’s creation (Jas. 3:9; Gen. 1:26-28). Similarly, when it comes to being a Christian, we are on equal footing with others, i.e., we are the slaves of God (Rom. 6:16-18, 8:16-17, 12:1-2)! James places all Christians on equal footing by calling them “_____” in James 2:1. See also: Matthew 23:8, 11-12.

James 2:2-4

“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; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say

¹ ESV: “My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”

² NET: “My brothers and sisters, do not show prejudice if you possess faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”

³ NAS: “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.”

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unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?"

Unfortunately, these people were guilty of showing “*respect of persons*” toward others (v. 4). What does that mean? _____

They showed their inconsistency and lack of love by doing what to the poor? To the rich? _____

James 2:5-7

“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? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?”

To show the Christians how badly they were treating the poor, James points to how the rich treated them. The rich treated the Christians in what way? _____
_____ (This is seen in more detail in James 5:4-6). What did James say they did? _____

Think: James condemns the Christians for favoring the rich people, even though the rich treated the Christians _____. Where is the logic in this? Christians are to be examples of love, patience, justice, and righteousness to all (Matt. 7:12, 22:39). How can this be possible when they acted like the wicked?

Notice what the rich had done:

- Oppressed them (v. _____)
- Brought them into court (v. _____)
- Blasphemed Christ (v. _____)

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Since the rich folks had oppressed the Christians, why would these Christians want to act like this toward others? James condemns them for doing that very thing!

James 2:8-9

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

James 2:8 shows Christians how we ought to act! James said that God wished for Christians to *“fulfil the royal law.”* What was this?
_____ How many
times do read this law in the Bible? _____

If the Christians fulfilled the “royal law,” James said they would
_____. What does this mean? _____

Notice also that by fulfilling the “royal law,” Christians treated the rich in what way? _____

They treated the poor in what way? _____

Would this in any way be called “favoritism” or “partiality”? _____

In contrast, if the Christians continued to show partiality (respect) toward others, what would be the result? _____

James 2:10-13

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 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. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

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If a person transgresses one aspect of God's law, he is guilty of all. Why would it be appropriate to make this point right now in the chapter? _____

For further study, compare James 2:10-11 with Romans 13:9. _____

What does the word "transgress" mean? _____

What does it mean to "transgress" God's word? _____

_____ James said to transgress one part of God's law is to be guilty of _____. We cannot say, "I did most ...", etc. and think this means I am not guilty of transgressing. This is what Jesus was teaching the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-22. This man could not merely do "most" of God's commands and go to Heaven, could he? What evidence do we have to think God's attitude toward those who do only part of what He has said is any different today? _____

We are not complete until we do all that God has said (Rev. 22:14). Therefore, in the text of James 2, what did it mean for these people to keep God's commandments on other points, but show partiality toward the poor? What applications can we make to ourselves from this section? _____

James 2:14-17

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 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? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

This section of James 2 is known for reminding Christians from all eras about living faith and dead faith. Can faith without works save a man (v. 14)? _____

As we study this section, remember that when James wrote this, he was writing to Christians! Let us understand that faith and works are necessary not only for salvation initially but also in staying saved!⁴

Here, we see that faith without works is called _____ . If we have faith in God and faith in His Son but do not back this up with obedience to His will, our faith is worthless! This is why worldly people often speak of Christians' hypocrisy when they observe us speaking the correct thing but not doing it?

James 2:18-26

“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. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 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. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

In this last section, we see again that true Bible faith is manifested in _____ (v. 18; Rom. 10:16). It has been said that while many believe *in* God, few *believe* God. Why is this a true statement? _____

⁴ While it is right and good to use these passages in teaching folks that “faith only” is not sufficient for salvation, let us remember that James was writing to Christians who needed this lesson! They needed to be DOING the will of God not merely speaking it!

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To simply believe that God exists is to do what the devils (demons) do. In fact, James wrote that the demons not only believe in God, but also _____! When we read the records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and even in Acts, we find demons not only believing, and trembling, but also confessing Christ as the Son of God. Name some occasions where this happened. _____

Does this mean that demons are saved? _____ Explain your answer. _____

What does “perfect” mean in this context? _____ When was Abraham’s faith made “perfect”? _____ When was Rahab justified by works? _____

These two, a Jew and Gentile, showed their faith to the world when _____

We will meet people who deny works are necessary for salvation. They will say if we work then we have earned God’s favor. Is this true? _____ To help us better understand “works,” please remember what kind of “works” are under consideration in this chapter. Is James talking about the works of men (what men consider “righteous,” Titus 3:5a), or the works of God (things God expects us to do, Eph. 2:10)? _____ How do we know this? _____

Questions

1. Is favoritism a problem Christians face today?
2. What would you suggest as solutions to the problem of favoritism?
3. Compare James 1:9-10 with James 2:1-13. Does God show favoritism? How does He “equalize” things?
4. How would the Christians who “say” the right thing but not do it be any different from the Pharisees in Jesus’ day?
5. How can works make faith “perfect”?