

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Chapter 2

Introduction

- 1) Our study of the **epistle of James** continues in seeking “the wisdom which is from above”
- 2) Chapter one emphasized:
 - a) Faith and wisdom to endure trials and temptations to receive the crown of life (vv. 1-15)
 - b) God is the perfect giver of every perfect gift, including bringing us forth by the word of truth; we need to be swift to hear this word which is able to preserve our souls (vv. 16-21)
 - c) Doing, not hearing only, the perfect law of liberty, and having our active religious life characterized by compassion and purity (vv. 22-27)
- 3) Chapter two warns against two pervasive problems of religious life: *partiality* and *dead faith*

I) **The Danger and Sin of Partiality (2:1-13)**

- A) Warning not to “hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ...with **partiality**” (v. 1)
 - 1) *Prosopolempsia* (Gk) – respect of persons, partiality, personal favoritism
 - 2) Not characteristic of God (Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25)
- B) Partiality for visiting rich man with fine clothes over poor man with filthy clothes (vv. 2-3)
 - 1) Condemned as becoming judges with evil thinking (v. 4); dishonored the poor man (v. 6)
 - 2) Improper judging “according to [outward] appearance” (Jn. 7:24; Lev. 19:15)
- C) The proper judgment of the “poor” man and the “rich” man (vv. 5-7)
 - 1) God chose the poor to be “rich in faith” and “heirs of the kingdom” (Lk. 4:18; 1 Cor. 1:26-27)
 - a) Jesus became poor that all might become rich through his poverty (2 Cor. 8:9)
 - 2) The rich oppress, drag into court, and blaspheme noble name by which you were called
- D) Fulfill “royal [kingly] law” – ‘love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 8; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39)
 - 1) Partiality is a sin being a transgression of this law, the will and desire of God (v. 9)
 - 2) Guilt in one point of law makes one guilty of the whole law (vv. 10-11; Gal. 3:10; 5:3)
- E) Speak and do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty – law of Christ (v. 12)
 - 1) Sinners are not justified by perfect law-keeping, but by faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16)
 - 2) The judgment that comes by the law of liberty [the covenant of Christ] includes mercy and forgiveness for the one rich in faith (v. 13; Micah 6:8; Matt. 5:7)

II) **Working Faith vs Dead Faith (2:14-26)**

- A) Continues the theme of the proper **behavior of faith** – endurance (1:3), doers (1:22), non-partiality (2:1) – now again with the importance of the doing-obedience-works of faith
- B) Is there profit or salvation in a faith that does not have works? (v. 14)
 - 1) No profit to those in need (vv. 15-16; cf. Gal. 6:10; 1 Jn. 3:17-18)
 - 2) No salvation for one whose faith is “by itself” (alone) = dead, lifeless [*nekros*] (v. 17)
 - a) Faith can only be exhibited/displayed by works (v. 18; cf. Heb. 11; Lk. 6:46)
 - b) Having faith is good, but if no works, no more saving than “demon faith” (v. 19)
- C) Faith without works is dead [*argos*] = useless, profitless (vv. 20)
 - 1) **Abraham** a) was justified by works when his **faith** was “working together” with his **works**, b) had his faith made complete by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar, and c) had his obedient faith accounted to him for righteousness (vv. 21-23; Gen. 22; Heb. 11:17)
 - 2) Conclusion is that a man is justified by works, and **not** by “faith alone” (v. 24; Gal. 5:6)
 - 3) Rahab also justified by works – received and sent out spies (v. 25; Josh. 2; Heb. 11:31)
- D) Faith without works is dead just as a body without a spirit is dead – spiritually lifeless (v. 26)

Conclusion

May our faith be free of partiality and demonstrated by works of faith. Love all men and obey God!