

MAJOR THEMES IN THE CHAPTER:

- a. Showing Favoritism to Wealthy People in the Church
- b. Faith Without Works is Dead

HOW THIS CHAPTER FITS INTO THE LARGER MESSAGE OF THE BOOK:

James discussed the relationship between rich and poor disciples at least three times in this book. It was a topic that was very important to him. In chapter 1, he spoke of the fleeting nature of wealth. In chapter 5, he warned rich people not to allow their riches to corrupt their hearts to the point of abusing others. Here in chapter 2, James told the Church the way they treated people shouldn't change based on the size of a person's bank account.

APPLICATIONS:

1. Verses 1-13 are primarily focused on the way disciples treat rich and poor people, but verse 1 makes it clear that all forms of partiality are incompatible with faith in Jesus. If you are a Christian, this section is teaching you to treat all people with an equal outpouring of God's love, no matter their background, their physical appearance, their reputation, etc. If you aren't a Christian, this verse should comfort you in knowing you will not be rejected by the Church. You may be considered an outcast by others, but Jesus died to create a place where the outcasts are considered family.

2. If someone asked you to show them your faith, would you have anything to show? Has your belief in Jesus motivated you to action? We express our thanks for Jesus' forgiveness, but do forgive people who offend us? We thank God for introducing us to His Gospel, but do we share the good news with others? We thank God for our blessings, but do we help those in need? We express our faith in God when we worship on Sunday, but are the actions of our weekday lives affected by that expression? "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead."

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

- James 2:17 -

James²

CHAPTER OUTLINE:

+ THE SIN OF TREATING PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY BASED ON THEIR WEALTH (1:1-13):

- Partiality and favoritism are not Christian virtues.
- James didn't want the disciples giving preference to rich people who visited their churches.
- Giving preference to the rich while disregarding the poor was out of line with the example of the Savior.
- God chose "those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith."
- James was perplexed as to why Christians would prefer rich people.
- He asked them, "Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?"
- The disciples needed to apply Jesus' teaching ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself") equally to rich and poor people.
- Partiality is a sin and it is a violation of God's law.
- Rather than judging people based on "evil thoughts," we need to make sure we are living as those who will be "judged under the law of liberty."
- If we are merciless in our judgement of others, God will not extend mercy to us.

+ THE NECESSITY OF FAITH AND WORKS (1:14-26):

- James asked the disciples, what good is it if a person has faith but doesn't have works (actions motivated by their faith)?
- A person who expresses faith, but doesn't act on that faith, is like a man who encounters a needy person and verbally expresses his hope that their needs will be met, but puts forward no effort to meet them.
- "Faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead."
- Simply expressing belief in God is not enough, even the demons believe God exists.
- Abraham was "justified by works" when he obeyed God and moved to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.
- Rahab the prostitute was "justified by works" when she hid the Israelite spies in the Old Testament.
- Real faith motivates us into good works and obedience to God.
- Real faith is more than just an intellectual acknowledgment that Jesus is our Lord.