

INTRODUCTION.

IN OUR STUDY OF JAMES, ~ WE ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING ~ ¶¶

▶▶ at his warning against favoritism, ~ 2:1-13.

OUTLINE THIS WAY.

▶▶ James' Command against Favoritism (2:1). ⇔⇔ Last time.

▷▷ My brothers and sisters, ~ as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, ~ never ~ engage ~ in acts of favoritism.

▶▶ Concrete Example of Favoritism (2:2-4). ⇔⇔ Last time as well.

▷▷ Favoring rich over poor.

▷▷ But, ~ as noted, ~ we need to understand, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ James is using a specific example to illustrate a much larger principle.

→→ Namely, ~ all forms of favoritism ~ are wrong and sinful.

↪↪ Not just favoring rich over the poor

▶▶ Presents 3 arguments against favoritism (2:5-13). ¶¶ 1/15

▷▷1st, ~ God's View of the Poor (2:5-6a).

▷▷2nd, ~ Incongruity of Favoring the Rich (2:6b-7).

▷▷And 3rd, ~ favoritism violates God's royal law. (2:8-13).

↳↳Specifically, ~ to love our neighbors as ourselves.

↳↳Briefly put, ~ favoritism is sin.

▶▶Today, ~ turn our attention to the first 2 arguments.

▷▷God's view & Incongruity

VERSE 5a ~ IS JAMES' INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

LISTEN, ~ MY BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

▶▶The imperative ~ Listen ~ is comparable to our ~ "Listen up!"

▷▷James wants us ~ to really focus our minds ~ on these arguments.

THE TONE OF THE IMPERATIVE ~ SOUNDS A BIT STERN, ~ ¶

▶▶but it is softened ~ by the familiar address ~ my beloved brothers and sisters.

▶▶As we've alluded to before, ~ James is a pastor ~ ~ ¶

▷▷who is personally concerned ~ about the lives of his congregation. ¶ 2/15

A PASTOR WHO IS TRULY CONCERNED ~ about the spiritual lives of his congregation ~ ¶¶

▶▶ will obediently preach/teach ~ the whole counsel of God.

A PRIMARY GOAL FOR EVERY PASTOR/ELDER ~ ¶¶

▶▶ is to be able to say at the end of his ministry ~ what Paul said to the Ephesian elders.

▷▷ Acts 20:26

↪↪ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

▶▶ Paul was probably referring ~ here in Acts 20 ~ to the watchman passages in Ezek., ~ ¶¶

▷▷ which apply to all those ~ whom God has called to preach/teach his word.

▷▷ E.g., ~ Ezek. 3:17-21

▶▶ Paul also may have been alluding ~ to what God told Jeremiah.

▷▷ Jer. 26:2

↪↪ Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the Lord all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word.

▷▷ Also applies to all those ~ whom God has called to preach/teach his word. ¶¶ 3/15

NOW, ~ BEFORE WE TURN OUR ATTENTION ~ to James' first two arguments against favoritism, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ here are 4 brief initial points, ~ to help us better understand.

▶▶ 1st, ~ it's important to recognize here ~ that James is speaking ~ in generalizations, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ when he refers to the poor and the rich.

▷▷ As such, ~ this cannot be understood ~ as including every single poor person, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ nor ~ as excluding all rich people.

▷▷ While Jesus' warning about riches being a stumbling-block to discipleship ~ ¶¶

↳↳ must be taken with utter seriousness, ~ neither he nor James ~ ¶¶

→→ excludes rich people from the kingdom.

▷▷ James does not say ~ that only poor people are chosen.

▶▶ 2nd initial point, ~ the word for ~ poor ~ is the Greek term ~ ¶¶

▷▷ for the most severe forms of poverty, ~ implying destitute, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ someone without virtually any resources.

▷▷ Again, ~ the image James raises ~ ¶¶

↳↳ is of the typical homeless person in our day. ¶¶ 4/15

▷▷ Now obviously, ~ there are degrees of being poor.

↳↳ Perhaps all of us here ~ would register nearer the poor end of the poverty-wealth spectrum.

▷▷ Most likely, ~ James is not ~ excluding all except this extreme degree that he describes.

↳↳ No doubt ~ James is using this extreme example ~ to emphasize his point.

→→ No poor person, ~ not even this type ~ is to be discriminated against.

▶▶ 3rd initial point.

▷▷ Call attention to phrase in vs 5b, ~ those who are poor in the world.

↳↳ those who are poor in the eyes of the world.

▷▷ By this expression ~ James refers both ~ to the economically poor ~ and ~ 77

↳↳ to the way the world judges them: ~ as inferior.

▷▷ The values of the kingdom of God ~ and the values of the world ~ are diametrically opposed to one another.

↳↳ Hence James' statement later.

→→ Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

▷▷ The poor ~ are specially chosen by God ~ while the world regards them as worthless.

▷▷ To discriminate ~ against anyone is ~ to adopt the world's values ~ and ~ 77

↳↳ to make themselves an enemy of God.

▶▶ And the 4th initial point before we dig in.

▷▷ James is not condemning one form of discrimination ~ by replacing it with another.

↳↳ I.e., ~ James does not picture God here ~ 77

→→ as one who discriminates in his election in favor of the poor ~ 77

↳↳ and, ~ therefore, ~ implicitly, ~ against the rich.

▷▷ Recall [Lev. 19:15](#).

↳↳ Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich.

NOW LET'S LOOK AT JAMES' 1st ARGUMENT AGAINST FAVORITISM, ~ VERSE 5b.

Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world ~ [or, ~ in the eyes of the world] ~ to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him ~ [i.e., ~ believers]?

FAVORITISM TOWARD THE RICH IS WRONG ~~ BECAUSE ~ 77

▶▶ it contradicts God's own attitude, ~ as revealed in his gracious election of poor people to salvation. 77 6/15

JAMES JOINS OTHER NT WRITERS ~ IN ATTRIBUTING THE CHRISTIAN'S STATUS ~ to God's choice.

▶▶ The verb ~ to choose ~ is often used in the NT, ~ as it is here in James ~ to refer ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to God's initiative ~ in saving his people.

▷▷ E.g., ~ Eph. 1:3-4a.

↳↳³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ^{4a} even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

(5b) GOD'S CHOOSING ~ must not be interpreted ~ as God picking out or selecting ~ ¶¶

▶▶ the good ~ from among the bad, ~ and that he will send the bad to hell.

ALSO, ~ THE DIVINE ELECTION DOES NOT MEAN ~ that all the poor will be saved.

▶▶ But it does assure ~ that their poverty ~ ¶¶

▷▷ does not place them at a spiritual disadvantage ~ in comparison to the rich.

NOR ~ DOES THEIR ELECTION IMPLY ~ ANY MERIT ~ IN THEIR POVERTY.

▶▶ As if their poverty gave them special access to eternal life.

▶▶ Their, ~ or anyone's ~ choice concerning salvation ~ is due solely ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to God's unmerited action in grace. ¶¶ 7/15

▶▶ When people become Christians, ~ it is not due ~ to their own unaided decision ~ to accept the gospel.

▷▷ Rather, ~ it is due to the fact ~ that God has ~ chosen and drawn them to Himself.

JAMES ASSUMES HERE IN VS 5b ~ THAT HIS READERS ~ ARE WELL AWARE ~ ¶¶

▶▶ of the many poor people ~ who have embraced Jesus as their Messiah.

▶▶ Again, ~ the word ~ not ~ introduces a question that expects an affirmative answer.

▶▶ IOW, ~ they were not ignorant of this.

▷▷ And again, ~ as James will say later, ~ it is sin to know the good and yet not do it.

▶▶ When they stop to think about it, ~ they will readily admit ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that contemptuous treatment of the poor ~ stands in sharp contrast ~ ¶¶

↳↳ to God's sovereign choice of the poor for Himself.

THEIR CONVERSION ~ IS POWERFUL EVIDENCE ~ OF GOD'S DEEP REGARD FOR POOR people.

▶▶ In a stark reversal of status, ~ poor people ~ have become rich in faith.

RICH IN FAITH ~ DOES NOT MEAN ~ THAT THEIR FAITH IS THEIR WEALTH.

▶▶ They are wealthy ~ because ~ of their faith. ⇔⇔ Spiritual wealth. ¶¶ 8/15

▶▶ Their wealth, ~ and all believers' wealth, ~ consists of ~ our salvation and all the blessings accompanying it. ⇨⇨ Eph. 1:3-14.

▶▶ James is fully aware ~ of the fundamental importance of faith ~ in the Christian life.

▷▷ This spiritual wealth ~ is not earned by good works ~ but is appropriated by faith.

▶▶ All the material wealth in the world combined, ~ cannot match one iota of our wealth.

▷▷ Spiritual wealth ~ is the only wealth that counts with God.

↳↳ Spiritual wealth ~ is the only wealth ~ that should count with his people as well.

▷▷ And spiritual wealth ~ is the only wealth ~ we can take with us when we die.

▶▶ Note that ~ present wealth.

▷▷ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

▷▷ Smyrna, ~~ I know your poverty (but you are rich).

BELIEVERS WHO ARE POOR, ~ and all believers, ~ are not only spiritually rich in the present.

▶▶ We also have the prospect ~ of future reward.

▷▷ We are heirs of the kingdom.

→→ Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world ~ [or, ~ in the eyes of the world] ~ to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him ~ [i.e., ~ believers]? ↴↴ 9/15

▶▶ James is alluding here ~ to Jesus' promise to his people in his discussion ~ of the final judgement ~ in [Matt. 25:34](#).

▷▷ Then the King will say to those on his right ~ [i.e., ~ his people], ~ 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

▶▶ (5b) Christians, ~ how poor in material possessions we may be, ~ possess spiritual wealth presently ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and ~ anticipate greater blessings in the future.

▷▷ What we suffer now ~ is nothing ~ compared to the glory God will reveal to us later.

IN CONTRAST, ~ SOLOMON AND THE PROPHETS EZEK. AND ZEPH. ~ TELL US THAT ~ ¶¶

▶▶ Neither their silver nor their gold ~ shall be able to deliver the unsaved wealthy ~ ¶¶

▷▷ on the day of the wrath of the Lord.

SO MY ..., ~ WE ARE TO FIX OUR EYES ~ NOT ~ ON WHAT IS SEEN, ~ BUT ON WHAT IS unseen, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ since what is seen is temporary, ~ but what is unseen is eternal.

IT IS FROM THIS SPIRITUAL VANTAGE-POINT, ~ not the material, ~ that Christians should judge others.

▶▶ Whether believers or unbelievers, ~ people should not be evaluated by Christians ~ ¶¶

▷▷ according to the standards of the world. ¶¶ 10/15

IN 2:6a ~ JAMES DELIVERS A STINGING INDICTMENT FOR WHEN BELIEVERS FAVOR the rich over the poor.

▶▶ But you have dishonored the poor man.

▷▷ But you have dishonored the poor.

▶▶ But there's more than just dishonoring the poor going on here.

▷▷ As noted last week, ~ discriminating against the poor ~ is insulting God.

▷▷ Furthermore, ~ it places a believer ~ in opposition to God, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ who shows no partiality.

↳↳ To show partiality ~ makes a believer a friend of the world.

↳↳ And, ~ again, ~ as James will say later, ~ ¶¶

→→ Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

▶▶ Paul presents ~ an equally serious charge against ~ ¶¶

▷▷ those who fail to honor the poor ~ in the context of the Lord's Supper.

↳↳ Don't you have homes in which to eat and drink?

→→ Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing (1 Cor. 11:22)? ¶¶ 11/15

▶▶ In his first epistle, ~ Peter lays down the charge ~ that Christians are to honor everyone.

▶▶ And in Rom., ~ Paul exhorts us to ~ outdo one another ~ in showing honor.

JAMES' FIRST ARGUMENT, ~ THEN, ~ AGAINST FAVORITISM OF THE RICH, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ is that it contradicts ~ God's attitude toward the poor.

His 2nd ARGUMENT AGAINST FAVORITISM, ~ FOUND IN VV. 6b-7, ~ is ~ ¶¶

THE INCONGRUITY ~ OF FAVORING THE RICH.

▶▶ Here James argues from the standpoint of how rich unbelievers were treating Christians.

▶▶ His argument takes the form of 3 penetrating questions, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ each expecting a positive answer. ⇔⇔ Boxes us in

↳↳ 6b, ~ Are not the rich ~ the ones who oppress you? [Yes].

↳↳ 6c, ~ and the ones ~ who drag you into court? [Yes].

↳↳ 7, ~ Are they not the ones ~ who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? [Yes].

▶▶ Simply put, ~ James has three charges against wealthy unbelievers here, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ oppression, ~ legal persecution, ~ and blasphemy. ¶¶ 12/15

PLEASE UNDERSTAND. ~~ JAMES IS NOT SAYING ~ 77

▶▶ "Don't give any favor to the rich ~ because they don't deserve it; ~~ 77

▷▷ they have mistreated you, ~ and you would be foolish to repay such actions with kindness."

▶▶ James is not counseling us ~ not to be kind to rich people.

▶▶ Rather, ~ he is simply arguing ~ that we should not give undue deference to them ~ 77

▷▷ at the expense of others.

▶▶ Perhaps some believers were calculating ~ 77

▷▷ that excessive flattery of rich people who visited the assembly ~ might gain favor for them.

↪↪ If so, ~ James suggests, ~ their calculations are far off.

BRIEFLY LOOK AT JAMES' QUESTIONS.

1st, ~ VS 6b, ~ BELIEVERS, ~ ARE NOT THE RICH THE ONES WHO OPPRESS YOU? ⇔⇔ Yes!

▶▶ Peter's sermon @ Cornelius' house. ⇔⇔ People are oppressed by the devil.

▷▷ To show favoritism toward wealthy unbelievers, ~~ is to join sides ~ with those who perpetuate oppression.

→→ It is, ~ in effect, ~ siding with the devil against God. 77 13/15

SECOND QUESTION, ~ VS 6c.

▶▶ Believers ~ are not the wealthy ~ the ones who drag you into court? ⇨⇨ Yes!

▶▶ Drag ~ is a good translation here. ⇨⇨ Because ~ it conveys the forcible tone.

▷▷ It means ~ to lead someone away by force against their will.

↳↳ It is not a polite settling of disputes that is occurring, ~ but a harsh treatment.

▶▶ We see this illustrated in Act. 16:19. ⇨⇨ Freed demon-possessed slave girl.

▷▷ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

↳↳ They grabbed them by their arms, ~ forcing them to accompany them to the authorities.

▶▶ James does not identify the reason rich unbelievers were dragging Christians into court.

▷▷ Could be similar to Paul and Silas

▶▶ Notice, ~ in response James does not urge revenge by the Christians ~ ¶¶

▷▷ when a rich person appears at their assembly.

▷▷ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

▶▶ But James does expose ~ the senselessness ~ of favoring the rich. ¶¶ 14/15

THIRD QUESTION, ~ VS 7.

▶▶ Believers, ~ are the rich **not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?**

▷▷ Yes!

▶▶ Here James points out the incompatibility ~ of giving special treatment ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to those who are opposed ~ not merely ~ to individual Christians ~ but also ~ to "the honorable name."

↳↳ Refers to the Lord and his reputation.

▶▶ To be called by the name of someone ~ is to belong to that person.

▷▷ Christians belong to the Lord.

↳↳ Yet ~ these rich ~ were blaspheming ~ the very one who owned them.

▶▶ "Why ~ would you fawn over persons blaspheming the Lord?" ~ asks James.

▷▷ Good question. ⇨⇨ **It would be ludicrous to do so.**

WELL, ~ JAMES CONTINUES TO BUILD HIS CASE AGAINST FAVORITISM.

THE AMOUNT OF SPACE JAMES USES FOR THIS, ~ shows how seriously God takes it.

▶▶ And we, ~ i.e., ~ his people, ~ should take it equally as seriously, ~ and never engage in acts of favoritism. **15/15**