



The General Epistle of James

The Call to Practical Religion

James 2:1-26

I. THE CALL TO SOUND JUDGMENT (James 2:1-7)

A. Our Personal Responsibility (James 2:1-4)

1. An understanding of respect (James 2:1)

a. What is respect?

- (1) The word *respect* is made up of the root word *spect* and the prefix *re*.
 - a) The root word *spect* means to look (i.e., spectator, spectacle, inspect, circumspect, etc.).
 - b) The prefix *re* means again.
- (2) The idea of the word *respect* is that an individual looks at two things and chooses to look at one of them a second time demonstrating favouritism.
- (3) This truth is played out in the scriptures, especially notable in Lamentations 4:16. In this verse, the Lord connects the word *respect* to words like *regard* and *favoured*.

b. God's balance in respect

(1) God is no respecter of persons.

- a) When the Lord sent Simon Peter to preach unto the Gentiles, he learned a great lesson about the Lord's nature— "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).
- b) In 2 Chronicles 19:7, the Bible says, "there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons."
- c) Romans 2:11 states the truth in very simple fashion by saying, "For there is no respect of persons with God."

(2) God had respect unto them.

- a) There are times where God respects some at the rejection of others, but it is never baseless respect.
- b) God's respect of Israel (see Exodus 2:25)
 - i) When one considers God's relationship with Israel, it must be understood that God did not choose to allow the Israelites to be saved while thrusting the rest of the world in hell.
 - ii) God chose to give His laws and statutes to Israel, but He also manifested Himself to others which can be clearly seen in the scripture.
 - iii) At the same time, one must not fail to see the special relationship God established with Israel.



- (a) He “looked upon the children of Israel, and...had respect unto them” (Exodus 2:25).
 - (b) In establishing His covenant with Israel, God promised them He would have respect unto them, make them fruitful, multiply them, and establish His covenant with them (Leviticus 26:9).
 - c) God’s respect of the lowly (see Psalm 138:6)
 - i) One cannot go far into his Bible reading without finding an instance where God had respect unto one man while refusing to respect another (Genesis 4:4-5).
 - ii) If one is not careful, he might think the Bible contradicts itself by stating the Lord is not a respecter of persons and then declaring He had respect unto certain individuals.
 - iii) It is of the utmost importance that the Bible student consider that God does respect, but only when there is a cause for respect.
 - iv) According to Psalm 138:6, the LORD hath “respect unto the lowly.” This truth is reiterated in Isaiah 66:2 where the Lord said, “to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”
- 2. The scenarios of respect (James 2:2-3)
 - a. The cases presented (James 2:2)
 - (1) The rich
 - a) He comes unto your assembly.
 - b) He has a gold ring.
 - c) He is dressed in goodly apparel. Note: He “weareth the gay clothing” (see James 2:3). This does not suggest what we commonly hear the word used for today. In fact, it is quite blasphemous for us to call *sodomites* gay.
 - (2) The poor
 - a) He comes unto your assembly.
 - b) He enters in vile raiment.
 - b. The improper responses (James 2:3)
 - (1) The rich
 - a) He is given respect.
 - b) He is invited to sit in a good place, likely referring to a seat of honour or prominence.
 - (2) The poor
 - a) He is told to stand.
 - b) He is told to sit under another man’s footstool.
- 3. The outcome of improper respect (James 2:4)
 - a. The people demonstrate partiality.
 - b. The people become judges of evil thoughts.
 - c. Note: All discrimination is not evil despite what we are commonly taught. However, this discrimination involves an ungodly judgment.



B. God's Perspective of Status (James 2:5-7)

1. The identity of true riches (James 2:5)
 - a. The purpose of the statement (see James 2:1-4)
 - (1) The tendency to respect a man due to his riches (James 2:2-3)
 - (2) The tendency to reject a man due to his poverty (James 2:2-3)
 - b. The appeal of the statement—"Hearken."
 - c. The audience of the statement—"my beloved brethren"
 - d. The awareness of the statement
 - (1) The requirements for God's respect
 - a) God hath chosen the poor of this world *rich in faith*.
 - b) God hath chosen the poor of this world who *love Him*.
 - (2) The rewards of God's respect
 - a) Heirs of the kingdom
 - i) The Lord Jesus Christ became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty, we might be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).
 - ii) The Lord Jesus Christ is truly the heir (Matthew 21:38; Mark 12:7; Luke 20:14; Hebrews 1:2).
 - iii) Those in Christ become heirs with and through Christ (Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29; Galatians 4:7; Titus 3:7).
 - iv) In this life, we may possess nothing, yet, possess all things (2 Corinthians 6:10; Revelation 2:9).
 - b) Recipients of God's promised favour
2. The plight of various statuses (James 2:6-7)
 - a. The statuses addressed (James 2:6)
 - (1) The middle class—"ye"
 - (2) The poor
 - (3) The rich
 - b. The behaviour of the intended audience (James 2:6)
 - (1) Ye have despised the poor.
 - (2) In the context, this relates to their treatment of the poor who entered their assembly (James 2:3).
 - c. The assault on the intended audience (James 2:6)
 - (1) The rich men oppressed them (see James 5:4-6).
 - (2) The rich men drew them before the judgment seats.
 - a) This likely included some of the religious leaders (Acts 4:1-3; Acts 5:17-18, 26-27).
 - b) It is quite possible that these things transpired early enough for these believing Jews to think they were living out the last days right before Christ's return at the second coming (Matthew 10:17, 19, 21; Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:9, 11).
 - d. The assault on the Lord (James 2:7)
 - (1) They blasphemed that worthy name (Matthew 10:22; Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:12, 17; John 15:20-21).
 - (2) By the which the audience was called (i.e., Christ/Christians)



II. THE CONVINCING OF THE LAW (James 2:8-13)

A. The Practice of the Law (James 2:8-9)

1. Obedience to the law (James 2:8)
 - a. The nature of obedience—"If ye fulfil"
 - (1) The word *fulfil* means to fill up or make complete.
 - (2) The idea presented in our passage is complete obedience or adherence to.
 - (3) Herein lies one of the great complexities of the law. Not only did the laws need to be obeyed in their numerical fulness, but each law had to be obeyed with the strictness set forth in the word of God.
 - b. The law stated—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."
 - (1) Given to Israel under the Old Testament law (Leviticus 19:18)
 - (2) More frequently repeated and enlarged by the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry (Matthew 5:43-44; Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:39). In fact, this law became the source of the teaching on the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).
 - (3) To a lesser degree, this seems to be a standard by which a man ought to love his wife (Ephesians 5:25-29).
 - c. The law elevated—"the royal law"
 - (1) The two great laws (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34)
 - a) Their identity
 - i) Love the Lord.
 - ii) Love thy neighbor.
 - b) Their superiority
 - i) They were equal to each other (Matthew 22:38-39).
 - ii) All the law and the prophets hung on them (Matthew 22:40).
 - (2) The royal law
 - a) Fulfillment of this law yielded fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10).
 - b) All the law was fulfilled in this commandment (Galatians 5:14).
 - c) Bearing one another's burdens fulfilled the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).
 - d. The strictness of obedience—"according to the scripture"
 - e. The outcome of obedience—"ye do well"; Note: This statement often follows and relates to obedience or faithfulness (Matthew 25:21, 23; Philippians 4:14; 2 Peter 1:19).
2. Transgression of the law (James 2:9)
 - a. The potential of disobedience—"if ye have respect to persons" (see Leviticus 19:15)
 - b. The nature of disobedience—"ye commit sin" (see 1 John 3:4).
 - c. The result of disobedience—"ye...are convinced of the law as transgressors" (see Romans 3:20).