

## Perfect Faith

### James 2

#### Introduction

1. Faith is essential to salvation (cf. Hebrews 11:6).
2. James speaks of a faith that is made perfect (cf. James 2:22).
  - a. **“made perfect”** – verb form of the adjective *teleios* – “complete; (2) wanting nothing necessary to completeness.” (Strong)
  - b. Opposite – a faith that is incomplete.
  - c. God is not pleased with a faith that is incomplete – cf. John 12:42-43 (example; many other specific forms of incomplete faith)
3. What is a faith that is complete?
  - a. Such is that which justifies, i.e. makes man righteous before God. (v. 23)
  - b. What faith does God call His children to have?
  - c. NOTE: While we use the text of James 2 to show the error of salvation by faith only, and the necessity of obeying the gospel to be saved from the start, that is not the context of the passage. James is writing to those who were already baptized, thus members of the body, but who needed admonition concerning faith, and their need to return to what God requires of faith.
- I. The Nature of Transgressing Law – Example of Partiality (vv. 1-13)
  - A. The Practice of a Standard (vv. 1, 8)
    - a. The Faith (v. 1)
      - i. Definite article – standard of faith (cf. Romans 10:17)
      - ii. That which incites/produces faith – thus the action of faith (something you do – cf. John 6:28-29) is the implementation of the standard.
    - b. The Royal Law (v. 8) – specification of a facet of **“the faith.”**
      - i. Royal – *basilikos*; regal (in relation), i.e. (literally) belonging to (or befitting) the sovereign (as land, dress, or a courtier), or (figuratively) preeminent. (Strong)
        1. Figurative sense – preeminent – cf. Matthew 22:36-40
      - ii. (vv. 1, 8-9) – Holding faith w/ partiality VS Really fulfilling royal law.
  - B. The Transgression (vv. 1-11)
    - a. (vv. 8-9) – fulfilling royal law VS transgression by partiality.
    - b. Don't hold faith w/ partiality (v. 1).
      - i. Context – (v. 8) – ROYAL LAW.
      - ii. DON'T HOLD ROYAL LAW W/ PARTIALITY.
    - c. Hypothetical example of such transgression (vv. 2-4) – partiality shown to rich man, poor man not treated with love.
      - i. **“judges with evil thoughts”** – 4:11-12 – one law giver but usurp His seat when you make judgments outside of His law.

- ii. **Judgment** – JESUS SAID TO LOVE NEIGHBOR (WHICH IS EVERYBODY – GOOD SAMARITAN, **CF. LUKE 10:25-37**), BUT JUDGMENT MADE THAT POOR MAN NOT TO RECEIVE SUCH.
- iii. **“evil thoughts”** – not from God, contrary to His will.
- d. Irony of such partiality (**vv. 5-7**):
  - i. **(v. 5)** – poor identified as those most likely to respond to the gospel. (**cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; Matthew 19:23-24**)
  - ii. **(v. 6)** – rich of society (James’) generally those who oppress.
    - 1. Those showing partiality MOST LIKELY POOR THEMSELVES AND RECEIVE SUCH TREATMENT FROM RICH.
  - iii. **(v. 7)** – rich also generally those who are contrary to Christ. (**cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10** – ways of many rich are sinful) (**cf. Acts 19:23-27** – Demetrius, silversmith, trade threatened by gospel)
  - iv. NOTE: not saying they should have mistreated rich instead but showing the irony in their partiality. (THEY SHOULD HAVE TREATED BOTH AS HONORED GUESTS OF THE ASSEMBLY)
- e. The transgression of the royal law (**vv. 8-11**)
  - i. **(vv. 8-9)** – what is claimed VS reality.
    - 1. Fulfill royal law? – **(v. 3a)** – rich treated well.
    - 2. Actually, transgress royal law – **(vv. 9, 3b-4)** – poor treated wrong.
  - ii. **(vv. 10-11)** – explanation of why such is transgression, not fulfillment.
    - 1. **(v. 10)** – the whole law must be kept – **(v. 11)** – example.
    - 2. One cannot decide to only apply the royal law **(v. 8)** where they find it convenient for them. SUCH ENCOMPASSES EVERY PERSON/RELATIONSHIP.
      - a. Such was the point Jesus made in parable of good Samaritan – priest, Levite, not help for whatever reason; Samaritan, helped even though man was likely Jewish.
  - iii. With God’s law we cannot choose to observe some commands but leave others out. Also, we cannot choose to apply some commands in certain areas but refuse to carry them out in others (like case of partiality in contrast to loving neighbor).
    - 1. If God commands, it must be obeyed.
    - 2. It must be obeyed in any circumstance where it applies.
- C. The Exhortation for Whole Observation (**vv. 12-13**)
  - a. **(v. 12)** – you will be judged by the WHOLE law, so act like it – i.e. leave nothing undone.
    - i. Law of liberty – **1:25** – liberates from sin; only for those who do it. (**cf. John 8:31-32**)

- b. (v. 13) – as it pertains to the specific case at hand, partiality – show mercy to the poor instead, or else God will not show mercy to you. (Triumphs over the stigma, stereotype, or outer appearance.)
- II. Perfect Faith (vv. 14-26)
- A. Why the discussion of faith and works now? (v. 14)
    - a. (vv. 1, 8) – such is a claim of faith.
    - b. (v. 9) – such is evidence of lacking works.
    - c. Did the claim to fulfill the royal law make it so? No. Only the manifestation of fulfilling said law by doing it would make it so.
  - B. Faith that is Dead (vv. 14-17, 19-20, 26)
    - a. An empty claim of faith (vv. 14-17):
      - i. Nature of biblical faith – (vv. 15-16) – example shows faith is not just believing “that God is,” BUT DOING WHAT HE REQUIRES.
      - ii. (vv. 15-16a) – a knowledge of a need to be met – (v. 8) – ROYAL LAW.
      - iii. (vv. 16b-17) – such an acknowledgment w/out action, but only words, is not a fulfillment of any command of God – DEAD FAITH.
      - iv. Dead – separation (v. 26) – cf. Ecclesiastes 12:7 – physical death, separation of spirit from body.
    - b. Shown to be more than mere belief “that God is” (vv. 19-20) – demons believe in God.
      - i. Satan himself – shown to talk with God on several occasions (serpent; Job)
      - ii. One can believe in God, and even have a strong acquaintance with the things of God regarding mere intelligence, but such is not the faith that pleases God.
  - C. Faith that is Perfect (vv. 18, 21-25)
    - a. Faith must be shown (v. 18) – only way to do it is with works.
      - i. In what areas?
      - ii. (vv. 10-11) – in every area of the law, or “the faith” (v. 1).
    - b. OT Examples of faith shown (vv. 21-25):
      - i. Abraham (vv. 21-24)
        - 1. (v. 21) – Justified – *dikaioō*; to render (i.e. show or regard as) just or innocent. (Strong)
          - a. Legal term – (v. 12) – regarding “law of liberty”
          - b. Judged – have you done what the law says, thus, are just, or have you transgressed?
          - c. (v. 8) – claim of fulfilling royal law.
          - d. (vv. 9-10) – show partiality, GUILTY OF ALL, NOT JUST.
        - 2. (v. 22) – faith working together with works – for what? TO SHOW FAITH (v. 18) – Genesis 22:12 (now I know you fear God)

3. Faith made perfect (complete) by works – **cf. Hebrews 11:17-19**
    - a. Concluded God would raise him.
    - b. Manifested by obeying God to offer him.
  - ii. Rahab **(v. 25)**
    1. Faith of Rahab – **Joshua 2:9, 11** – Lord has given you the land, He is God in heaven and earth. (**cf. Hebrews 11:31** – contrast w/ **“those who did not believe”**)
    2. **(v. 25)** – works which showed such faith to be true – alive.
      - a. Kindness toward Jehovah’s servants was kindness to Him.
      - b. Delivering the spies aided Israel’s work in the service of God to subdue the promised land.
  - iii. ALL WHO SEEK A JUSTIFIED STATE BEFORE GOD MUST HAVE THIS FAITH – “What they share is the very detail that James is attempting to point out, namely that both the great and the very least of the human family must exhibit their faith through their good works.” (Daniel H. King, Sr., Truth Commentary on James)
    1. Those who obey in one point, but not in all points are not justified, but guilty as transgressors – **(v. 10)**
- III. Applications
- A. Forsaking the Assembly (**cf. Hebrews 10:25**) – come to one of the assemblies but miss the others. (Upcoming Gospel Meeting)
  - B. Abstaining from Fleshly Lusters (**cf. 1 Peter 2:11**) – abstaining from everything the Bible condemns, or just those which are convenient for you (**cf. Galatians 5:19-21**).
  - C. Church Discipline (**cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 2:9**) – obedient in ALL things? Or just the things that are easy to do, and not controversial/unpleasant? (NOTE: also, practicing church discipline with partiality. Family vs others.)

### Conclusion

1. God requires our faith to be “perfect” (complete) in order to be pleasing to Him.
2. If faith comes by hearing God’s word (**cf. Romans 10:17**) then complete faith is the doing of that word.
3. We cannot pick and choose which commands to obey, nor which areas those commands are submitted to in.
4. If we are to have the faith like Abraham, it will be a faith which obeys God in all matters.