

BOOK OF JAMES PART 4 – WES MARTIN

JAMES 2: 1-12

I. CHRIST DEFINES OUR VALUE, NOT RICHES

The believer who is poor still has reasons to boast, for he has been placed on high. But those who are rich should boast in how God has brought them low and humbled them, for all their earthly glory will one day fade away like a wildflower in the meadow. James 1:9-10

And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”...But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:15, 20-21

- A. The poor man is to boast in his exaltation as a child of God. His lowly position (poor) in the eyes of the world is not his true identity. From God’s perspective born again believers are rich.

Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God. Luke 12:21

So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Revelation 3:18

- B. James reminds the wealthy [riches, power] that humility is one of their greatest assets they’ve acquired in the grace of God. He references Isaiah 40:6-8 and Psalms 49:16-17 showing the wealthy that riches in this life fade away. He draws the believer into an identity with Jesus, who in this case is seen as the humble man from heaven.

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8 NLT

James, then, exhorts both the poor and the rich Christian to remember that the sole basis for their confidence is their identification with Jesus Christ. Both Christians, in other words, must look at their lives from a heavenly, not an earthly, perspective.¹

- C. All that will endure in a man’s life, the summation of a man’s lifetime is found in his heart connection with God through Jesus Christ.

¹ Moo, Douglas. James. Pg. 69

II. EVERYONE IS WORTH PURSUING (JAMES 2:1-7)

My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others? For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”—well, doesn’t this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives? Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn’t God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren’t they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love Him? But you dishonor the poor! Isn’t it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? Aren’t they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear? James 2:1-7

- A. Partiality: bias or prejudice in favor of a person, group, side, etc., over another. James calls us to receive anyone who comes with an open heart as Jesus would receive them. This goes beyond the dividing lines of rich and poor and ultimately speaks to the heart of God that LOVES and VALUES people.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. John 10:11

“Dear woman, where are your accusers? Is there no one here to condemn you?” Looking around, she replied, “I see no one, Lord.” Jesus said, “Then I certainly don’t condemn you either. Go, and from now on, be free from a life of sin.” Then Jesus said, “I am light to the world and those who embrace me will experience life-giving light, and they will never walk in darkness. John 8:10-12

But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. Matthew 5:44-45

- B. A person’s value is not determined by outer appearance. James is telling us to stay away from the sin of comparison of outward appearances and pursue everyone as having profound value before God.
- C. It is important to note that James begins this particular discussion in 1:9-10 just after completing his thoughts regarding the doubting, double-minded man (vs. 8). If there were any area that has the ability to split the heart and devotion of a believer it is in this place regarding money. The deceitfulness of riches can confuse us on many fronts.

Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Mark 4:18-19

III. THE ROYAL LAW (2:8-12)

Your calling is to fulfill the royal law of love as given to us in this Scripture: “You must love and value your neighbor as you love and value yourself!” For keeping this law is the noble way to live. James 2:8

- A. Finally, James is clearly defending Jesus’ teaching regarding the principles of the ‘kingdom of heaven’ and dealing with discrimination (partiality). Jesus was clear regarding the treatment of foreigners (Lk. 10: 25-37) and enemies (Mt. 5:44); the heart of the ‘royal law’ forbid the church from discriminating against any who might enter its doors.
- B. Jesus was asked often...what is God’s highest, or most important, commandment for my life?

Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.” Mark 12:29-31