

JAMES, RIGHTLY DIVIDED & VERSE-BY-VERSE

SESSION 6 | JAMES 2:6-13

JAMES 2:1-9 | KINGDOM PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH ECONOMIC STATUS

Verses 1-5 – see session 5

VERSE 6 –

James has used the illustration of God's selection of **the poor of this world rich in faith** (v. 5) in reference to Israel. This being the case, he then chastises his audience because they **despised the poor**. He then speaks of the **rich men who oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats**. The word translated **judgment seats** is κριτήρια [kriteria], from which we get *criteria* (a standard for making judgment).

The beginning of the scattering of *believers* in the 12 tribes is seen in Acts 8:1. At that time Saul of Tarsus was one of the group that carried out such persecution (Acts 8:3). Later, Paul the Apostle experienced this kind of persecution (Acts 13:50).

It is sadly ironic that humanity far too often becomes, in some way, an embodiment of that evil which was done unto them.

VERSE 7 –

It is difficult to know the nature of the persecution, whether it was Jew against Jew (as with Saul of Tarsus), or Gentile against Jew (classic antisemitism).

Which **worthy name** is being referenced? That holy, covenant name of God (YHWH), or the name Jesus? It was about A.D. 44 that **the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch** (Acts 11:26). But I am doubtful that the word *Christ*, upon which **Christian** is built, could be considered to be a *name* in the days of the New Testament (though used in this manner in modern terminology). To argue that the **worthy name** is Jesus would be to narrow the focus to believing Jews alone, for most Jews were not called under His name. To argue that this **worthy name** is YHWH is to suggest that James writes to *all sectors of the 12 tribes scattered abroad*, and that the persecution is coming from Gentiles. In the end, it is likely impossible to settle the argument definitively.

VERSE 8 –

In verses 8-9 James presents two scenarios. The first scenario (v. 8) assumes that the nation is fulfilling **the royal law according to the scripture**. James then quotes this **royal law**, found in Leviticus 19:18. Incidentally, this verse contains the covenant name of God, YHWH (compare note, v. 7).

Jesus called this law the second greatest commandment (see Matthew 22:39). Rabbi Akiva of the early Second Century said, "This is a fundamental [all-inclusive] principle of the Torah." - [Torath Kohanim 19:45].¹ In Romans 13:9 Paul says that all of the law is **briefly comprehended** in this law.

While a believer under Paul would **do well to love thy neighbor as thyself**, there is nothing in Pauline literature that would bind the believer (who is not under Law, but grace) to this law, other than a desire to be neighborly.

¹ Quoted from https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920/showrashi/true#lt=both – accessed July 14, 2022.

VERSE 9 –

In verse 1 Paul had used the noun form of **respect of persons**, here the verb form is used, its only use in the New Testament. The one with this action is **convinced of the law as transgressors**. One should note that the word **convinced** used as “fully persuaded” did not come into use until around 1700, prior to which the word meant “convicted.”

Believers under grace do not want to have **respect to persons**. However, there are so many things under which a grace-believer would be **convinced of the law as transgressors** that eliminating this one would not improve our judgment under the Law, if we were indeed judged under the Law (as verse 10 will confirm).

JAMES 2:10-13 | KINGDOM JUDGMENT UNDER LAW

VERSE 10 –

In what way would this verse apply to the believer in the Body of Christ which is free from the law? In no way at all. This verse (like all of James) must be *rightly divided by removing it from application for the believer today*. Wouldn't this truth apply to *every point* of the Law? Thus one may substitute *love thy neighbor* for Sabbath obedience, sacrificial laws, laws concerning feasts, tithing laws, laws of harvest (such as gleaning), etc. The preacher may wax eloquent about the importance of loving neighbors based on this verse, but then find himself in a conundrum when the congregation begins to work diligently to **keep the whole law**, which would be the natural outcome of such teaching. Note Galatians 5:3, where Paul makes the same argument, but his point is that the grace-believer *must not put himself under any of the Law*. James is certainly *not* promoting a freedom of any kind from the Law, yet Paul promotes total freedom from the Law.

And how do those who attempt to apply this to the grace-believer deal with the verse?

The Bible Exposition Commentary (Warren Wiersbe) says, “We only believe as much of the Bible as we practice. If we fail to obey the most important word—“love thy neighbor as thyself”—then we will not do any good with the lesser matters of the Word.”² Such spiritualized application comes from the misguided belief that we must apply every verse.

VERSE 11 –

James gives a simple example to show the unity of the law.

However, so many Protestants and evangelicals *divide the law*. From the days of John Calvin, and enshrined in the Westminster Confession, the Law was divided into moral, civil, and ceremonial. Such division is at odds with the teaching of James, and his half-brother, Jesus (compare Matt. 5:19).

VERSE 12 –

As noted in our commentary on James 1:25, the **law of liberty** cannot be *life under grace*, for such would be oxymoronic. Rather, the **law of liberty** is the **engrafted word** of James 1:21, which is the Hebrew Scriptures (see commentary note on James 1:21).

VERSE 13 –

This verse, like all others in James, creates havoc with Paul's grace message. It stands as yet another example of how James and Paul are incompatible. This incompatibility is resolved not by reducing the meaning of words, but by recognizing the separation of dispensations. In our dispensation, judgment is based on a grace-gift of God, not on works of mercy or obedience.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 352.