

## **Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Lecture 20, James 2:1-7**

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This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 20, James 2:1-7.

We want to begin with a survey of chapter 2, which really forms a unity here quite clearly. What we have actually, I think, are two main units within chapter 2. We have in chapter 2, verses 1 through 13, the command to show no partiality as you hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ of glory with substantiations.

He substantiates that exhortation, which, of course, is found in verse 1. First of all, in verses 2 through 7, claiming that partiality is contrary to God's election of the poor. And then also, in verses 8 through 13, that partiality is contrary to God's law. Now, he substantiates really all of that.

That is to say, the exhortation, along with the reasons for the exhortation shows no partiality as you hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say, not to be partial toward the rich and against the poor. He substantiates that in verses 14 through 26 with the general principle that faith apart from works is dead.

Really, another way of putting it is that to show partiality as you hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, is to hold the faith of Jesus Christ without works. And you should not do that, he says, because, verses 14 through 26, faith apart from works is dead. This is faith apart from works.

This is what you ought not to do. You ought not to exercise this kind of faith apart from these works because of the general principle that faith apart from works is dead. Now, the principle is set forth here in verses 14 through 17, and then he goes ahead and gives supporting arguments for it in verses 18 through 26.

Now, of course, beyond the substantiation here, the overarching substantiation that we have, don't do this because of this, you have a recurring contrast. You have really all the things on the left-hand side belonging together and standing together in contrast over against the right-hand side. And speaking generally, the contrast that we have throughout chapter 2 is a contrast between the contradiction of faith and correspondence of faith.

A contradiction of faith involves faith over against works, holding faith with partiality. Well, the contradiction of faith, as I say, it really involves faith over against works, whereas the correspondence of faith is faith active in works. And that is developed, of course, here that through that contradiction of faith, faith over against works

involves holding faith with partiality, keeping part of the law or trying to keep part of the law, speech be warmed and filled without giving, and faith without works, which is dead, barren, profitless, and unable to justify or save, over against the correspondence of faith, faith active in works, which involves holding faith without partiality, keeping the whole law, giving to the poor what they need, over against speech, be warmed and filled without giving, involve not simply speaking but acting, giving to the poor what they need, and over against the faith with works, living fruitful, profitable, living faith, fruitful faith, profitable faith, a faith that is able to justify and to save.

So, in a nutshell, that I think is what we have here in the second chapter of James. Incidentally, the passage that really ties together this concern for not showing partiality towards the wealthy and neglecting the poor, and this classic theological, and this very familiar theological argument with regard to faith without works is dead, is this paragraph verses 14 through 17. For what is a prophet, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them things needed for the body, what does it profit? So, faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

You notice that this argument about faith without works being dead is actually tied in here, is introduced in connection with the issue of relationship with the poor, relationship to the poor, which he has been talking about, of course, in 2:1 through 13. Now, he begins with the command here, and you have only one command, one exhortation, really, in, well, for the most part, in the whole chapter two, my brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. Now, the word partiality here is *prosopolempsia*, which involves respect of persons, partiality, the fault of one when caught on to requite or to give judgment has respect to the outward circumstances of men and not to their intrinsic merits, and so prefers as the more wealthy one who is rich, high-born, or powerful to another who is destitute of such gifts.

That's the definition from Thayer. Now, the word *prosopolempsia* is used four additional times in the New Testament. In Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, and 1 Peter 1:17, you also have the adjective *prosopolempetes* in Acts 10:34, where it always speaks of God not showing partiality.

Every other place where this word partiality, *prosopolempsia*, is used, it's used of God, God is a subject in the negative. God does not show partiality. This is a central affirmation of the early Christian tradition, of early Christian paraneis instruction, that God does not show partiality.

Now, the main point here, one we just mentioned, is that God does not show partiality. To do so is to stand opposed to the work of God. He's actually going to

substantiate this notion that God does not show partiality, and therefore, when we show partiality, we are standing over against the work of God in verses 2 through 13.

Now, there is a statement here in verse 5. Listen, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the promise that He, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him? If you just took that passage out of context, you'd say, well, doesn't God actually show partiality towards the poor? Doesn't God, in fact, show partiality? It may not be partiality toward the rich but toward the poor. It seems to me, though, that what you have in the context indicates that 2:5 cannot be understood as God showing partiality even towards the poor here, that He renounces partiality here. We're going to talk about how verse 5 really functions in this whole thing in just a bit.

The second main point is that partiality, or I should say, not showing partiality, involves the issue of judging on the basis of true character and virtues over against external sorts of elements. This suggests really that the poor are not chosen by God and the rich are rejected by God simply because of their external circumstances. Again, 2:5, where He says, God has chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him.

Again, this suggests that the poor are not chosen by God, and the rich are rejected by God in this sense simply because of their external circumstances. If God acted in such a way, He would be showing partiality. God has chosen the poor because of their intrinsic merit, that is, their general tendency to be more inclined to faith and, thus, to love, thereby becoming heirs of the kingdom.

He has chosen the poor because of that, not simply of their being poor, but rather on the basis of their character. In a sense then, 2:5 suggests that God has not really chosen the poor over the rich. He has chosen poverty over wealth.

So, God does not show partiality to the poor, but He shows partiality to poverty. There is a kind of spiritual redemption of poverty here. Their condition makes them more inclined to faith and to love.

Now, the third point is that the fact that the readers are here exhorted to show no partiality implies that they are not only to show no partiality toward the rich, but they are also not to show partiality toward the poor. Show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. That is, they do not unfairly prefer the poor.

Although, the logic of what James goes ahead to say would suggest that to do so would be somewhat less objectionable than what they were doing, namely showing partiality to the wealthy. Of course, showing partiality towards the poor over against the wealthy is extremely unusual and not to be expected. Incidentally, the law

actually talks about mentioning this business of not showing partiality, especially in the law court.

And so, in Leviticus 19:15, a passage with which I think James must certainly have been familiar, we read this: you shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness, you shall judge your neighbor.

The fourth main point here is that this reference to partiality picks up a major theme in James, namely that outward appearance is not necessarily in accord with ultimate reality.

Note the appearance of trials which on the surface appear to be destructive over against the true reality of trials, which have the potential for life, verses chapter 1, verses 2 through 4. And the fact that the wealthy are compared to a flower that has beauty, but the flower and the beauty of it will pass away, chapter 1, verses 9 through 11. So, the concern here is to discern the true reality behind appearances. Now, the occasion or the context of this command, he says, show no partiality as you hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you do have here the genitive employed, and I might say that for those of you who do not know Greek, when you have a noun followed by of, as you have it here, the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, usually that expresses what in Greek is the genitive construction, and there are various kinds of genitives that are possible in Greek. There is a question here as to what kind of genitive we have and what he means by the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. It could be, in fact, an objective genitive.

As you hold the faith, as you hold faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as you place faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, you trust Him for salvation, that is to say, our faith directed towards Him, that would be the objective genitive. It may, however, be the subjective genitive, that is to say, as you hold the same kind of faith or faithfulness to God as Jesus had. Jesus then would be not the object of faith but the model of our faith or of our faithfulness to God.

Probably, I think here, it is the objective genitive, and I say that because of the way Jesus is described. So, no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, the Lord, the Glorious One, the emphasis is upon Jesus as the worthy object of faith, really this notion of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. We note here, too, as we just said, that Jesus is described as Lord of glory.

That's at least a possible translation. This is a difficult passage to translate. The NRSV translates this as you have faith in our glorious Lord and the like, but He's described as a Lord of glory.

There are three possibilities with regard to what this means. It may point towards Jesus' glory in poverty, His glory in poverty. It was precisely by taking on the role of a poor man that God made Him Lord and glorified Him.

It was precisely as He embraced the powerlessness of the poor, as He submitted to death on the cross, casting aside all of His own resources, that He was made Lord and that God glorified Him. This may, though, on the other hand, point to the eschatological judgment of Christ, that He will come back in glory. In chapter 5, Jesus is described as the one who will return to judge as glorious Lord and, in judgment, will vindicate the cause of the poor and the exploited, chapter 5, verses 7 through 11.

Or a third possibility is that it refers to both, that we really shouldn't have to choose, that it refers to Him as assuming the role as being glorified precisely as a result of assuming the role of the poor and the powerless one, and as coming back as glorious Lord as one who will vindicate the cause of the poor and the exploited. Either way, of course, you understand that the point is the tension, the contradiction between holding faith in Jesus, who is at the same time Lord of glory in both of these senses. Holding the faith of Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality involves then a basic contradiction.

It contradicts, for one thing, the nature of faith, in that it does not result in works of righteousness, 2 Corinthians 14 through 26, including obedience to commands regarding partiality and not showing partiality in the law, like Leviticus 19:5, a passage we already cited, but we could also cite Deuteronomy 1:16 and 17 and Deuteronomy 16:19. It also contradicts not just the nature of faith in that it does not result in works of righteousness, it is a faith that does not work, but it also contradicts the object of faith in that it fails to take into account the Lordship of Christ in His glory, specifically the rule of Christ, the one who entered into His rule through powerlessness, who as Lord will vindicate the poor against their rich oppressors. It does not take into account the example of Christ, note His ministry to the poor and His blessings toward the poor in His ministry, the crowning, really the crowning demonstration or expression of His Messiahship, according to the gospel tradition, is that the poor have the good news preached to them, of course, according from Isaiah there, Isaiah 61. And so, as I say, it stands also in contradiction to His example.

But it also contradicts, thirdly, their experience of faith. While holding their faith in Jesus Christ, they viewed that faith as insignificant to what they did. Their discrimination had nothing to do with faith.

Indeed, their discrimination, as He goes ahead to describe it, involved fawning over the poor in faith, fawning over the poor in faith and repudiating those who are rich in faith. It never occurred to them to apply their faith to this issue of the poor and the

wealthy. George Alan Turner, who taught inductive Bible study here for years at Asbury Seminary, and I took his place actually on the faculty years ago, used to talk about blind spots, blind spots of holiness.

That's to say, the tendency simply to be blind to certain major aspects of life that call us to be faithful to our Lord. This was a major blind spot here on the part of the people that he was addressing, or at least on the part of these people that he is describing in chapter 2. Now, he goes ahead in verses 2 through 13 to give reasons for this exhortation to show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. And here, of course, we want to go ahead and get into the detailed analysis, which is based on the survey.

He begins, of course, in verses 2 through 7 by arguing that partiality is contrary to God's election. God has not chosen the wealthy, but He has chosen the poor. Now, he goes ahead and develops this by way of a scenario, the scenario that he presents in verses 2 through 4. For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, have a seat here, please, while you say to the poor man, stand there or sit at my feet, have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Now, this scenario, I think, is presented as an example, not an actual happening.

We note, for one thing, that he introduces this with a third-class conditional statement, *ean gar*, if a man with gold rings and fine clothing comes in. I don't want to get very heavily into Greek here, but let me mention that when you have a conditional statement like this, which, of course, we've mentioned, whenever you have it, you know you have a conditional statement. When you have a conditional statement, the conditional statement may be a first-class conditional, which is *A*, with the indicative, which really assumes the truthfulness or the reality of the protasis of the if clause.

If this had been a first-class conditional, that would have suggested that this is something that actually had happened. If this happens, if this happened as it actually has, but he uses a third-class conditional, which introduces, really, the notion of tentativeness and of potential, not actuality, but potentiality. So, he's presenting this not as an actual event but as an actual happening.

The grammar indicates that. Also, the fact that the passage is highly stylized and hyperbolic. It presents, really, an extreme case described in extreme ways, and also the observation that this is a general epistle, so that he's really not addressing, as Paul does in the epistles that are directed to specific churches, situations, events that have transpired in a specific church, that this is a general epistle, suggests that he's not really wanting to address particular happenings in particular churches.

All of this leads to the conclusion that this is presented as an example and not as an actual happening. And, of course, he's really not concerned about the event as much as the principle that he is setting forth here. But because he presents this as an example, not as an actual happening, he can, therefore, develop the theological and pastoral significance in ways that would not be possible if he were talking about and condemning an actual happening.

Now, what you have here in this scenario, though, is an emphasis upon appearance. Note the emphasis upon outward appearance. If a man with gold rings and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, he doesn't really describe the persons. He describes their appearance.

In both cases, in terms of what they are wearing. He could have simply said a wealthy person or a person of means and a poor man, but he describes them in terms of their appearance. Now, before we get very far into this, let me say that another issue with regard to this scenario is whether James wants to present this scenario as proceedings of church discipline or as a worship service.

Of course, we've already noted that the commands regarding not showing partiality that you have in the Old Testament law typically have to do with judgment, with matters of judging and judicial proceedings and the like. That might suggest that you have a judicial sort of hearing here over against, that is to say, the community of faith, the church is gathered for disciplinary purposes for a judicial hearing over against worship and the like. But I actually think it probably does refer to a worship service because, one thing, he makes no reference to juridical issues here.

And also, he seems to relate this to chapter 1, verses 26 and 27, which talks about, of course, caring for the poor, especially as a manifestation of religion and of religious duty and religious activity and the like. And although he does talk about using judgment language here, as he says in verse 4, have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? We do have a tendency on the part of James to use judging language more generally of Christian relationships over against narrowly to refer to judicial decisions or judicial actions and the like. Also, the issue here is one of attitude expressed in speech over against judicial decisions.

So, again, I do not think that he's talking really about some sort of judicial assembly where the issue has to do with showing partiality to the wealthy in terms of coming up with a verdict or a decision that favors the wealthy over against the poor, but how, in fact, one treat, one relates to the wealthy and the poor in the service of worship. And, of course, the profound and really to the point of ironic contradiction here of showing partiality to the wealthy in precisely in a service of Christian worship. Now, another, of course, I do think he's talking about quite clear that he's talking about a Christian assembly here.

And for that reason, he does not refer to the person of means as a rich man. Notice in verse 2, if a man with gold rings and fine clothing comes into your assembly and a poor man. So, he doesn't say if a rich man with gold rings and fine clothing comes in and a poor man comes in; he's very careful not to use the term rich here because, again, he seems to be talking about Christians who have meant coming into the Christian assembly.

Now, you really have this person with, indeed, fine clothing. You're talking about an extremely wealthy person here, gold rings, and the word here is lampros, bright or radiant clothing, and the like. And a person comes in, a poor man comes in in shabby clothing, poor man also comes in in shabby clothing.

This indicates, therefore, the nature of the distinction. It is external, superficial, that which is even now in the process of fading away. 1.11, and again, chapter 5, verses 2 through 3. Your gold, we read in chapter 5, verse 3, your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.

You have laid up treasure for the last days. We note then that eschatological judgment is even now beginning to be felt and experienced in and through the natural processes of decay. That's the point of chapter 5, verses 2 and 3. And, of course, it shows just how foolish it is, how unwise it is to focus upon, to orient one's life according to appearance rather than enduring reality.

These Christians are not living in light of true reality, for they confuse appearance with substance, and they confuse the present reality with ultimate eternal reality. In ancient times, and especially in the biblical tradition, that which endures is real. That which is fleeting is less than real.

Now, I would note here how this same principle, that is to say, focusing upon appearances as acting on the basis of external appearances over against one might say intrinsic worth, how the same principle might apply beyond rich-poor distinctions. For example, it may apply to issues of racism, to classism, to cultural or ethnic superiority, or even to prominence given to the physically attractive over against those who are physically less attractive. It is applicable to other kinds of human distinctions on the basis of appearance versus intrinsic merit as well.

Incidentally, just to note how deeply embedded is this inclination to relate to persons on the basis of their outward appearance, even including shabby clothes and so on and so forth. Dr. Robert Traina, who was one of my teachers here at Asbury Seminary years ago, taught the general epistles. He always, when he taught, dressed impeccably.



But when he came to teach on James 2, he came into class and taught in dirty, filthy rags. And it was really quite telling to sense the difference in the attitude of students toward him when he was dressed that way than when he was teaching in his usual appearance. Now, there is not only an emphasis upon appearance here, but there is also an emphasis upon response.

Notice that response begins with internal attitude, *epiblepo*, to look with favor upon, to regard, and you pay attention to, you look with favor upon, you regard the one who wears fine clothing, then moves to external actions, and then say. And the external action here is really, it takes a form of speech. This, by the way, involves the misuse of the tongue.

We, again, are tying in this business of the misuse of the tongue. This is a sin of the tongue. Note, for one thing, with regard to speech here, that he says that in this scenario, you speak to the wealthy person first.

Note the priority of speech. And you say, and you say to the person who wears the fine clothing, have a seat here, please. Well, then, you speak to the poor man only after you have addressed the wealthy one.

Speak to the wealthy person first, but also note especially the tone of the speech. By the way, this points to this whole business of tone or atmosphere in interpretation that we talked about in an earlier segment here, the tone or feel of the passage. Have a seat here, please.

Well, you say to the poor man, stand there or sit at my feet. The tone really reflects the deep relational character of the scene. According to James, he'll draw this out, of course, later in Chapter 3, the tongue actually expresses the deepest character of the person.

The whole person is giving assent to and submitting to this class distinction. You have rudeness or insensitivity to the feelings of the poor while fawning over the wealthy here in terms of the speech. There is profound personal commitment implicit within this action.

It really involves the elements of honor, sitting, and dishonor, of shame. Sitting at feet, of course, is a sign of shame, of dishonor. Remember Psalm 110.1, the most often quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament: the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand.

Notice here, have a seat here, please. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies a stool. For thy feet, have a seat here, please.

Then to the poor man, sit at my feet. It involves really the notion of showing honor, which reflects the system of values, that which is worthy, and also the element of glory, that is, committing oneself to that which is transcendently marvelous, beautiful, and powerful. Their view of reality, of that which is great, is skewed.

I would also note the function of nearness and distance language here. Sit here, have a seat here, please. Stand there.

Distance, then, is used in order to, really, spatial distance is used as a kind of sigla, as a kind of indication of relational distance, wanting to have a relationship with the wealthy, wanting to have no relationship with, distancing oneself relationally from the poor. And then also, of course, so as I say, you have this kind of, this also involves then a skewed view of association, intimacy, fellowship, association with the wealthy, separation from the poor. Now, I would note here that the invited positions reflect their understanding of the position.

This is spatial not only in terms of near and far but also of low and high. Sit here, please. Have a seat here, please.

Or stand there, sit at my feet. Both standing in the presence of someone else and sitting at the feet of someone else was the posture of a slave. The invited positions reflect their understanding of the position.

The rich are exalted, and the poor are humbled. Both standing and sitting at the feet, as I say, were the position of slaves in relation to their masters. Here you have relatively poor Christians who want to act as a masters in relation to the poor, the poor Christian who comes into the assembly.

In fact, the poor are humbled not only in relation to the wealthy, but in relation to the readers or to these persons who are described here who were themselves, for the most part, not wealthy. As he will go ahead to say already in the immediate context here in 2.6, but you have dishonored the poor man, is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? You are not rich yourselves. But you want to assume the role of the wealthy in relation to those who are to be exalted as relatively wealthy in relation to those who are relatively poorer than you are, a skewed view of status.

Now, this moves really to a deeper understanding of motivation. By making such distinctions, the readers would actually be assuming the position of the wealthy vis-a-vis the poor. They want to exalt themselves over the poorer ones.

Deep within, they long for the status of the rich so that they can exalt themselves over their lessers. That's why he goes ahead and draws the conclusion, the immediate conclusion here, have you not made distinctions among yourselves? The

Greek word here is diakrinomai, a word that can mean and is used to mean elsewhere in the book of James, doubt and judge. Diakrinomai can mean make distinctions, but it really means either to doubt or to judge.

The same Greek word was used for doubt in 1.6, but let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. And it may, in fact, point to an actual lack of faith.

As he suggests here in 2.1, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of glory. Showing partiality in this way involves diakrinomai, that is to say, not faith but doubt. And again, also in verses 14 through 26, where he talks about faith.

The word diakrinomai, in the sense of judge, is related to krino, to judge. And so, again, this business has to do with making judgments. And it's picked up again later on when he talks about being a judge, and not a judge of the law, and not a doer of the law, in chapter 4, verses 11 and 12, indicating that there is one Lord and one judge, and that to act as a judge is to actually to usurp the role of the one judge, and is actually, therefore, an act of blasphemy.

Now, when he says, have you not made distinctions, he says, have you not made distinctions among yourselves? This is a possible translation of the Greek here, possibly suggesting that those who come into the assembly are members of the church or possibly Christian visitors to the local congregation, but it could also be translated: have you not made distinctions, or have you not engaged in doubt or in judgment in yourselves, among yourselves, but also it could be within yourselves, creating distinctions where no distinctions ought to exist in terms of the community, and introducing a divided soul, a divided heart, a divided mind, being double-minded, making distinctions within yourselves. The Arma conclusion, though, is, and this is, of course, described here in verse 4, have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Here, he moves back really to the internal or the attitudinal. James declares that you think you are judging them. Have you not made distinctions among yourselves? Have you not made judgments among yourselves? You think that you are judging them, but you are actually judging yourselves.

Have you not become judges with evil thoughts? That is to say, you believe that you are judging them. Have you not become judges, but you yourself are vulnerable to judgment with evil thoughts? The fact that you make judgments from evil thoughts means that these judgments are actually judging you. James emphasizes that there is one judge, the Lord.

For 11 and 12, and again, chapter 5, verses 7 through 11, when Christians become judges, they usurp the prerogative that belongs to God alone. Thus, it is a sin against

God and against fellow humans. It invades the prerogatives of God and exalts over the status of humans.

Hence, this thinking is described as evil. Christians, according to James, are not called. They are not intended to be judges. Hence, any sort of this kind of judging is evil.

On the other hand, that there is a process of judgment, or perhaps better, of discernment that must be performed is inherent in human relationships. Hence, the problem here is not simply that they are judges, but they are judges with evil thoughts. But a proper discernment would involve an honoring of the poor and a refusal to fawn over the wealthy.

It is, of course, necessary to make decisions in and about human relationships, but James insists that these kinds of judgments, these kinds of decisions in and about human relationships that are necessary for human life, should be done on the basis of God's point of view. Thus, they do not judge in competition with God as a judge but submit to God's judgment. The kind of judgment James describes involves a condemnation of the poor, and James declares that this kind of judgment can come only from evil thoughts.

That is, it is motivated by evil thinking, consideration, and desires. The word that's translated thoughts here is dialogismon. It's a rich term.

Generally, it refers to thoughts, but specifically, it has to do with purposes or designs and points toward calculation and really submitting to a system of patronage. It really suggests in context that part of the motivation for fawning over the wealthy is in terms of what they can get from the wealthy. That is to say, to experience patronage from the wealthy.

Self-centered over against God-centered. Self-centered over against other centered. Now, he goes ahead and moves from this scenario to the argument that we have in verses five through seven.

All of this, remember, is in making the case that partiality is contrary to God's election of the poor. And therefore, verses five through seven really are central to this whole portion. He says in verse five, Listen, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? That's God's perspective.

That's God's point of view, but note, by way of contrast, that you have dishonored the poor man. You have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the

honorable name which was invoked over you? Here, in verse five, then, he introduces a notion of the election of God.

Divine election. Has not God chosen, has he not elected those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? Note the force of the rhetorical question. When he sets forth this declaration in the form of a rhetorical question, when he says, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith? He suggests that they know or should have known this, that this is already revealed to them.

This really points to their guilt in behavior in this fashion because they're acting contrary to what they knew or should have known. Remember what James will say in 4:17, whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. You knew this or at least you should have known.

And in the Bible, we are responsible for what we know and for what we should have known. Also, of course, this rhetorical question is actually a rhetorical device to persuade. It draws the readers in and virtually forces them to answer the question the way the writer intends.

Rhetorical questions are really intended to be transformative so that we, in a sense, are forced to agree with the truth, to own the truth that is being presented here through the rhetorical question. Now, in what sense has God chosen the poor? Well, I think really in three senses.

First, testamentally. That is to say, on the basis that He has chosen the poor in the Old Testament Scripture. According to the Old Testament, God takes the side of the poor. God is compassionate and merciful.

If He doesn't take their side, no one will. Again, this does not really involve God being partial to the poor as such, but God is partial to poverty, as it were. Ron Sider, I think, has captured the truth of this when he indicates that by God, in a sense, taking the side of the poor, in a sense preferring the poor, He actually introduces equality into the occasion.

That is to say, in the world and in general, the poor are despised, and the poor are diminished. By God, in a measure, taking the side of the poor, He actually brings them up on equal footing, equal level with the wealthy. But this is what you have in the Old Testament.

God takes the poor. He's compassionate and merciful. If He does not take their side, no one else will.

And, of course, also in the Old Testament, this whole business of the relationship of poverty to piety, that the poor have a kind of spiritual leg up because they do not have anything or not much else in which to place their security, their cast back upon faith in God, which is the essence of piety and of righteousness. But also, God has chosen the poor Christologically. Christ's attitude towards the poor, we have, of course, throughout the gospel tradition and the receptivity of the poor to Christ's message.

But also experientially, the readers themselves were almost exclusively from the poor classes, as He, of course, goes ahead to suggest in this passage we just quoted in 2 6b and 7. So, the very fact is that all they have to do is look at themselves and the congregation to see that it is filled with those who are poor and relatively few wealthy are part of their group. God has chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that He has promised to those who love Him. Now, we also note the moral character of God's election.

The poor are described as rich in faith and those who love God. Now, obviously, there's not a one-for-one identification between the poor and being rich in faith and loving God, but it does indicate two things. First, we have a connection here between lack of wealth and piety.

As I say, we've already seen in the Old Testament the connection between wealth and evil. There is, in fact, if there's not an identification between lack of wealth and piety and between wealth and evil, if there's not an identification, there is a connection, a general connection between the two. The latter, that is to say, the connection between wealth and evil, is indicated by the description of the wealthy in verses 6 and 7, and they are described in moral terms.

Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the honorable name which was invoked over you? This kind of behavior, you note, is possible only for the rich and is typically connected with wealth and is typically an expression of wealth, oppression, taking advantage of court proceedings of the law, making the law serve their purposes, and even blaspheming the honorable name which was invoked over you. This stands, of course, over against the notion that God favors the wealthy, that wealth is a sign of His favor, and it stands over against the notion that God rewards the righteous in this life with material or this-worldly benefits. Of course, it is true that God does reward the righteous in this life, but not with material benefits.

They are rich in faith and have a promise. Necessarily, of course, this makes a difference in the quality of life presently experienced, but the writer can do this without downplaying all the physical and social difficulties faced by the poor. The poor, then, are not automatically included in this blessing.

There is no automatic approval on the basis of poverty alone. James is clearly speaking of the poor here, but they are rich in faith. What does it mean when he says they are rich in faith? Well, certainly, he is suggesting here, at least, at the very least, that they have faith and, perhaps, probably, that they have much faith or precious faith.

Again, this ties into what he says with regard to trials, the trial of your faith in chapter one. And they are heirs of the kingdom. Now, by being heirs of the kingdom, he suggests especially that they are heirs of the kingdom which is to come.

The end-time kingdom is in view here. And, of course, there is a causal connection between being rich in faith. Because they are rich in faith, they are heirs of the kingdom.

They are children of God. They are heirs. Heirs, of course, suggest the status of a child, especially of a son.

They are children. They are sons of God. And they assume the role of children in relation to God.

They receive His promise. A father or a parent makes promises to children, and they trust Him. Rich in faith, they trust Him, and they love Him.

Even as children naturally, or typically, receive promises from their father, trust their father, and love their father, so these poor are inclined to trust Him, to love Him, and to receive His promise. Wealth can create a barrier to accepting God and relating to God as the Father. The poor are in a position in which they can depend upon God alone.

And when they see that He fulfills the promises He makes to those who trust Him, their trust in Him and their faith in Him increases. They become rich in faith, and they love Him as a compassionate, merciful, and providing Father. Now, this election of God, this choice of God, stands in contrast to the choice of humans, which is set forth in verse 6. But you have dishonored the poor man, etc.

This really implies that Christian ethics involves the *imitatio deo*, or *imitatio dei*, that is to say, being imitators of God. The implicit assumption here is that the expectation is that we should be, we must be like God. If God has chosen the poor, we also should choose the poor.

But He says you have not done so. You have not pursued the *imitatio dei*, but rather, you have contradicted the image of God. You have dishonored the poor man.

You stand over against God in terms of this whole matter of election. But Christian ethics involves really being imitators of God, honoring those whom God has honored, and withholding honor from those to whom God shows no honor. James may very well have in mind Proverbs 14:21, which reads, the one who dishonors the poor commits sin.

You have dishonored, really, royalty, he suggests. Notice they are heirs of the kingdom. They are princes, and the poor are.

These reign. They are princes insofar as they are heirs of the kingdom, and you have treated these princes like slaves. Now, he goes ahead and actually substantiates here the contradiction, and really substantiates in 6b and following, the implicit suggestion in verse 6a that you ought not to dishonor the poor person in favor of the rich because of the character of the rich.

Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the honorable name that was invoked over you? Is it not they who exploit you or who oppress you? Kata dunas duo. This is really a broad term. There are various ways that exploitation, of course, can take place.

He does clearly make a connection between wealth and exploitation, but this is a clear and unambiguous statement against all forms of exploitation and oppression, which can take all kinds of forms, including very subtle ones. It involves the perversion or abuse of power, and especially of economic power. They use their economic power against you.

They drag you into court. Helko is used here. Here you have injustice or perversion of justice, which is indicated by the term helko, drag you into court.

North's relationship here between money and power involves tricking them into court or dragging them into court by force. This involves real social injustice on the basis of material resources with a view toward material exploitation. And then, climactically, is it not they who blaspheme the honorable name that was invoked over you? You experience persecution at their hands, exploitation at their hands, abuse at their hands, not only because you are relatively poor, but because you are Christians, because of the name that you bear.

These persecutors, these rich persecutors, these rich blasphemers, recognize the connection between the Christian faith and the cause of the poor, even if you Christians fail to see it. James is suggesting that the rich are actually inclined against Christ; they are enemies of Christ because they recognize better than you do that Christ represents honoring the poor and the debunking of the kind of misuse of wealth that they are enjoying. The irony, of course, is biting.



They actually align themselves with those who do such things, Christians who do such things, honoring the wealthy, dishonoring the poor, actually align themselves with persecutors of the church, those who stand against the people of God, and with blasphemers, those who blatantly oppose Christ. This action is a contradiction of their baptism. Is it, not they who blaspheme the honorable name which was invoked over you, almost certainly invoked over you at baptism, baptism in the name of Jesus, in Acts, or baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, according to the Matthean form? It's a contradiction of their baptism and of the essence of their faith.

Of course, the implicit conclusion is that you cannot separate faith and works. These actions show the inherently problematic character of their faith and suggest that there can be no separation between faith and works. Well, this leads really to the next substantiation that you have here, which is that partiality is contrary to God's law, which we have in verses 8 through 13.

Good place to stop to pause here to move into a new video segment. So, we'll pause here for just a moment.

This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 20, James 2:1-7.