

Title: DEMONSTRATIVE FAITH, JAMES 2
(Chatham, NJ; 09/06/15, AM) [D – Exegesis with Dual Points]

Theme: James further defines true religion by reminding his audience that God demands just treatment of everyone and that obedient faith is the only true kind.

Purpose: To exhort us to behave impartially and live an action-oriented faith.

Introduction:

1. In 2:1 James centers the authority for his exhortation: the Gospel of the Lord of Glory.
2. In 2:19 he hearkens back to an OT statement of faith, and in doing so he brings the old and new together.
3. Though his exhortations are very direct, several times he addresses them as “my brothers,” 2:1, 14.
4. One issue is at stake: true religion; however, two aspects of true religion are his talking points: impartiality and action-oriented faith.

I. Impartial Behavior: Cause for Criticism

- A. In praise of God's justice
 1. Jehu, king of Israel, carried out the judgment of God against Ahab's family
 2. Saul, the first king, was chastised for not carrying out the command to be God's instrument of justice.
 3. Jesus' sacrifice satisfied God's justice, Romans 3:26.
 4. Jesus became the ransom to buy us back: it was just payment.
- B. Show no partiality, 2:2 (a form of injustice?)
 1. Lev. 19:15 – no partiality to the poor or deference to the great: this command cuts both ways (also Ex. 23:1-3; Deut. 1:17)
 2. These are founded on God because He is impartial, Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34-35
 3. For James' group impartiality is showing up as deference to the rich and condescending attitude toward the poor, 2-4.
 4. They “have become judges with evil thoughts.” (4)
 5. 1 Corinthians 11:21-22 may reflect something similar.
- C. Love your neighbor, 8
 1. The “royal” law
 2. Partiality of this sort violates this
 3. It is as serious as murder and adultery: violate it and you are a lawbreaker, 9-11
 4. Apparently it demonstrates a lack of mercy, 12-13
 5. This crosses many boundaries: national, racial, economic, etc. and can be violated by either side of those boundaries
 6. God is an impartial judge; love your neighbor as yourself.

II. Authentic Faith: Action-Oriented Faith

- A. Partiality violates true religion
 1. James implies that true religion doesn't behave this way
 2. Genuineness is one of his major concerns: made this clear at the end of chap. 1
- B. Now he moves to define authenticity in terms of faith
 1. Words without action are insufficient, 15
 2. 1 John 3:16-18 says exactly the same thing
 3. Not concerned about careless words as in 1:26
 4. Here it is empty words: words without action
 5. Faith without action is “dead” (17) and “useless” (20)

6. Demonic faith is devoid of appropriate obedience, 19

C. A new perspective for you

1. James protects Paul's theology of faith from becoming an empty exercise in mental assent
2. Paul does the same thing in Romans 6:1-2
3. Faith is a good thing, 19
4. Faith must not, however, forget ethical behavior and repentance
5. "Put away filthiness and rampant wickedness" (James 1:21) is exactly the same thing Paul demands when he says "put off the old and put on the new"
6. Without these actions, faith cannot save, 24
7. Abraham was justified when he obeyed God, 21
8. Rahab's faith was justified when she helped the messengers

Conclusion:

1. All this fits with James' assertions that genuine religion demands certain behaviors.
2. Impartiality is only one of the many targets that he could identify.
3. If you love me, you will keep my commandments, John 14:15.
4. Do you love Christ? Demonstrate it by your obedience.
5. Do you love your neighbor? Love him as you love yourself.
6. The time for active response to what you believe is now.
7. These things are the essence of true religion. If your faith is genuine, you'll do them.