

Repeated Words, Themes, and Ideas

1. Brethren, James warns his Christian brethren that discrimination cannot be a part of their Christian faith, 2:1. James reminds his beloved brethren who may want to discriminate against the poor that God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom, 2:5. James essentially asks his Christian brethren, “If someone has faith but their Christian faith lacks good works, can their faith save him?” 2:14. If your Christian brother or sister is naked and hungry and you say, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you don’t give them what they need, it profits them nothing, 2:15-16 (other places this appears: 1:2, 16, 18, 19).
2. Faith, James warns his Christian brethren that they cannot practice their Christian faith with discrimination, 2:1. God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in Christian faith, 2:5. Christian faith that lacks good works is useless; it can’t save the individual [from the deadly consequences of sin] 2:14. Having shown his audience that saying to a naked and hungry brother or sister, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” is useless, James concludes that if their faith lacks good works, it’s dead, 2:15-17. James introduces an imaginary objector who thinks that there is absolutely no connection between faith and good works, i.e., between what they believe and applying what they believe, 2:18. James sees the imaginary objector as a fool because he doesn’t realize the simple fact that faith without works (i.e., faith which is not applied) is dead, 2:20. When Abraham offered his son Isaac on the altar, his faith was working together with his good works and by his good works his faith was perfected, 2:21-22. With Abraham’s work of offering his son Isaac on the altar, we can clearly see that a man is justified by both good works [before mankind] and by faith [before God], 2:21-24. As the human body is a corpse without the spirit, so faith without good works is dead also, 2:26 (other places this appears: 1:2-3, 5-6).
3. Lord / Jesus Christ, Christians should not practice the faith of their glorious Lord Jesus Christ with discrimination, 2:1. Some of the wealthy in James’ audience blaspheme the noble name by which they are called [i.e., the name of Jesus Christ], 2:6-7 (other places this appears: 1:1, 5-7, 12).
4. Sin, James warns his audience not to discriminate against the poor in favor of the rich. If they do, they’ll be judges with evil reasoning. They’ll do well if they keep the royal law, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if they discriminate, they commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law, yet stumble in one of its points, he’s guilty of the whole law. Because the God who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” So if they don’t commit adultery but murder, then they have become transgressors of the law. They must say and do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. Because if they fail to show mercy, then they’ll be judged without mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment, 2:1-13. Faith that lacks good works profits no one; it cannot save: it will not save the naked and hungry brother or sister. Nor will it save the sinner who neglects his needy brethren [from God’s discipline] 2:14-17 (other places this appears: 1:6-8, 11, 13-15, 19, 20, 21, 22-24, 26, 27).
5. God, James urges his audience not to discriminate against the poor because God’s chosen them to be rich in faith and heirs of His Kingdom, 2:5-6. God didn’t just say, “Don’t commit adultery.” He also said, “Don’t murder.” So if you don’t commit adultery but you murder, you’re still a violator of God’s Law, 2:11. The imaginary objector thinks he’s demolished James’ argument that faith without works is dead by pointing out that the demons have faith—they believe that there’s only one God—but in spite of this, they don’t produce good works, all they do is tremble, 2:18-19. The Scripture which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness,” was fulfilled, i.e., became true in the eyes of many when they heard about Abraham’s work of faith—he offered his son Isaac on the altar—which is why they called him the friend of God, 2:20-23 (other places this appears: 1:1, 5, 6-7, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19-20, 27).

6. We are the source of a failed (foolish, faithless, ungodly, selfish) life, if we practice our Christian faith with discrimination, we'll shame the poor, become judges with evil reasoning, dishonor the poor, ingratiate ourselves with those who oppress us, side with those who blaspheme the Lord's name, be deceived and think we're obeying God when we're not, become blind to our sin, and we'll be judged by God without mercy, 2:1-13. If we fail to add good works to our Christian faith, i.e., if we fail to apply what we believe, then we will neglect our needy brethren and our useless faith will not save us [from God's discipline for failing to care for our brethren] 2:14-17. When we fail to apply what we believe, we will be convinced that applying our Christian faith has nothing to do with our Christian faith; we'll believe that our religion is separate from how we live, 2:18-19 (other places this appears: 1:6-8, 11, 13-15, 22-24, 26).
7. God is the source of a victorious (wise, faithful, godly, selfless) life, if we trust God through our poverty, we will have an incredible amount of faith in God's power to deliver us and thereby become heirs of His Kingdom which He promised to those who love Him, 2:5. If we apply our faith during our most difficult trials, we will be justified in the eyes of others by our good works, our faith will be perfected, and we will be known as a friend of God, as happened with Abraham when he offered his son Isaac on the altar, 2:21-23. If we apply what we believe, we will be justified by our good works in the eyes of others and be saved from the deadly consequences of sin, as Rahab was when she protected Israel's spies, 2:25 (other places this appears: 1:2-5, 9, 10 [1:4, 11, 12], 12, 19-20, 21, 25, 27).
8. God's Word, James' audience will do well if they really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," 2:8. If James' audience discriminates, they're committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. Because if they fail to keep one point of the law, they're guilty of the whole thing. For God didn't just say, "Don't commit adultery," He also said, "Don't murder." So if they don't commit adultery, but they murder, they've become a transgressor of the law. They must speak and do as those who'll be judged by the law of liberty, 2:9-12. When Abraham applied his faith by performing his good work of offering his son Isaac on the altar, the Scripture which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," was fulfilled; this is why they called him the friend of God, 2:21-23 (other places this appears: 1:18, 21, 22, 23-25).
9. Trials / Testing / Temptation, discrimination can serve as a test: if we fail the test, then we'll treat people shamefully and with disrespect, become wicked judges who favor the wealthy, seek the favor of those who oppress us, side with those who blaspheme the Lord's name, deceive ourselves into thinking that we're keeping God's law when we're not, and God will judge us without mercy. But if we pass the test, then we'll honor the poor as God does, protect the Lord's name, keep God's law, and receive His mercy when He judges us, 2:1-13. Our needy brethren can serve as a test: if we believe that our Christian faith has nothing to do with how we live, then we won't help our needy brethren and our useless faith won't save them (from their needs) or us (from God's discipline for failing to help our needy brethren) 2:14-17. Abraham faced perhaps the toughest test of his life when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar. When he added good works to his faith, i.e., applied what he believed, his faith was perfected, he was called a friend of God by those who saw his good works, and he was justified before those who saw him apply his faith, 2:21-24. Rahab passed one of the toughest tests of her life when she added good works to her faith, i.e., she protected Israel's spies. By doing so, she was justified by her faith, i.e., by the good works she added to her faith, and she ended up saving her life and the lives of those in her family, 2:25 (other places this appears: 1:2, 2-3, 12, 13-15).

10. *Doer-of-God's-Word vs. Hearer-Only-of-God's-Word*, a *Doer-of-God's-Word* will not discriminate against a poor brother who's poorly dressed even though a wealthy brother walks into the assembly wearing expensive clothes and jewelry. He will not dishonor the poor this way especially since he knows that God's chosen the poor of this world to overflow with faith due to and during their poverty and thereby become heirs of His Kingdom. Instead, a *Doer* will fulfill the royal law, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Thus, a *Doer* will speak and do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. But a *Hearer-Only-of-God's-Word* will discriminate against the poor in favor of the rich; he'll be a wicked judge with evil thoughts about the poor. He will dishonor the poor in favor of the rich even though the rich mistreat him, even though the rich blaspheme the name of Christ. The *Hearer* will think he's kept God's law because he obeys some of its commands not knowing that to break one command is to break the whole law. Thus when the Lord judges him, he'll be judged without mercy, 2:1-13. A *Doer-of-God's-Word* will add to his faith good works, i.e., he'll apply what he believes by helping naked and hungry brethren, thereby saving them and himself from the deadly consequences of sin. A *Doer* will apply his faith by adding to it good works, especially during the most difficult times of his life and thereby have his faith perfected, and thereby be known as a friend of God, and thereby be saved from the deadly consequences of sin as Abraham and Rahab were. But a *Hearer-Only-of-God's-Word* will fail to apply his faith and thereby leave naked and hungry brethren in need. A *Hearer* will believe that his faith is not connected with what he does, i.e., what he believes has nothing to do with how he lives. A *Hearer* will fail to understand that there are two kinds of justifications, one that is by faith before God and another that is by good works before mankind. He will not realize nor understand the axiom: Faith without works is Dead! 2:14-26 (other places this appears: 1:2-5 vs. 1:6-8; 1:9-10, 12 vs. 1:11, 13-15; 1:19, 21-22 vs. 1:20, 22; 1:23-24 vs. 1:25; 1:26 vs. 1:27).
11. Perfect, Abraham's faith was perfected when he added to his faith the good work of offering his son Isaac on the altar, 2:21-22 (other places this appears: 1:2-4, 17, 25).