

James 2:5 [**Imperative Mood #15**] Listen, my beloved brethren: did God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (NASB)

NOTE: Here James begins his **Argument:** Presentation of rationales to convince a listener by establishing the truth or falsity of a proposition.

Once we complete our review of *James: Chapter Two*, we will present a summary of the rhetorical structure of the chapter:

James 2 is constituted by two related examples of argumentation: 2:1–13 on the specific topic of partiality and 2:14–26 on the broader, related issue of faith and works. This claim is substantiated by a close scrutiny of the rhetoric of these passages according to the methodology for the rhetorical criticism proposed by George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*.¹

1. Three doctrinal viewpoints are going to be presented by James in verses 5 through 7. In verse 5, he will argue the doctrinal viewpoint. In verse 6, he will argue the common-sense viewpoint. In verse 7, he will argue the logical viewpoint. These are viewpoints that oppose the views of the person in advanced reversionism.
2. What have we learned so far from the first four verses of chapter two? We have three men. One is an usher, or in Jewish terminology, a chazzan [**חָזָן** (**chazzan**)]. “In the Talmudic period, a synagogue official, superintendent, or officer.”²
3. We have been referring to this chazzan as “the usher.” He is a believer but whose spiritual life in the in the tank, so he functions in the advanced stages of reversionism.
4. Coming into the congregation is a rich man, who is a believer, all decked out in his sartorial and jeweled ostentation. He is an official of some sort to whom the chazzan is indebted to in some way. He kowtows to him by leading him to a seat on the front row.
5. Then, there is the beggar man also a believer in Jesus as the Messiah. He is also a friend of the chazzan. He has come to James’s church to acquire some divine guidance from the Word. He is oriented to grace, but in his personal life he is penniless.

¹ Duane F. Watson, *James 2 in Light of Greco-Roman Schemes of Argumentation* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

² Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 2d ed. (1953), s.v. “hazzan.”



6. Circumstances about how Golden Fingers got filthy rich and the beggar became penniless are not indicated. Yet the usher's mentality has shifted away from cordiality toward his old friend the beggar over to feigned partiality for a man to whom he is indebted in some way.
7. The usher shows great partiality to someone he does not personally know while dishonoring a man he knows well.
8. To address this situation, James begins his analysis by presenting a doctrinal viewpoint beginning with Imperative Mood # 15, the aorist active imperative of the verb ἀκούω (*akoúō*).
9. In this context the verb does not mean, "to listen." It's much stronger than that, especially with the imperative mood. It is a command and is best translated "Begin to concentrate!"
10. The best place to start a dissertation, especially when dealing with advanced reversionism, is to go to doctrine first. So, James decides to start off with the phrase, "Did not God choose?"
11. James begins his response with the verb "to choose," the aorist middle indicative of ἐκλέγω (*eklégō*): "to elect."
12. The aorist tense is constative which makes things difficult unless we analyze the aorist tense. The aorist refers to a point in time.
13. However, this tense's action may be adjusted dependent upon when that point in time occurs. The *ingressive* form occurs at the beginning. The *constative* form occurs during the action. The *culminative* form is at the conclusion of the action.
14. But the verb that is used here is *eklégō* which, in this context, does not occur anywhere among the above definitions because the action indicated does not occur in time, but in eternity past.
15. The verb *eklégō* means, "to elect." It refers to those individuals who express personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation during the Church Age which occurs in time.
16. The seeming incongruity emerging from this is that God made a decision pertaining to believers in time but did so before time existed. This conundrum is resolved by the divine attribute of omniscience.
17. This apparent conundrum is resolved by summarizing three biblical doctrines:

The decree of God is His eternal and immutable will regarding the future existence of events which will happen in time and regarding the precise order and manner of their occurrence. (p. 297)



The divine decree is the eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all of the events of the universe, including both angelic and human history. God's decree renders all things certain to occur; He decided they would exist. In doing so he did not interfere with angelic and human free will. In fact, He decreed that we would have free will! (p. 298)

Omniscience: God knows perfectly, eternally, and simultaneously all that is knowable, both the actual and the possible. God is eternal; His knowledge is eternal. (p. 301)

Omniscience knows every thought, decision, and action in human history, how they all relate to each other, and how they relate to all the possible alternatives. (p. 302)

Election. The plan of God for believers only. Election means "chosen, selected." God elected or chose believers in the sense, first that He *knew* [omniscience] ahead of time that, if given free will, they would freely choose to believe in Christ; second, that He *decreed* such an act of faith would actually occur, and third, He *agreed* that their positive volition to the Gospel would occur at a certain point in time (Ephesians 1:3–4).³ (p. 307)

18. It is interesting that in eternity past, God imputed escrow blessing to those who would believe in time before He elected them. This is due to the grammatical term applicable in Ephesians 1:3–4: The action of the aorist active participle [of the verb, **εὐλογέω** (*eulogéō*): "has blessed,"] in verse 3 precedes the action of the main verb [**ἐκλέγω** (*eklégō*): "has elected"] in verse 4:

Ephesians 1:3 Worthy of praise is God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who [as First Party or Grantor] has blessed [**aorist active participle of the verb εὐλογέω** (*eulogéō*): creation of the escrow] us [believers, the Second Party or Grantees] with every spiritual blessing [the contents of the escrow] in heavenly places [the Depository] in Christ [the Third Party, Escrow Officer, or Depositary],

v. 4 since He Himself has elected [**main verb: aorist middle indicative of ἐκλέγω** (*eklégō*)] us in Him before the beginning of the world [creation, Gen 1:1] that we should be holy and blameless in His presence.
(EXT)

³ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God*, 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 297–98, 301–302, 307.



19. **Summary points on the doctrine of election:**

1. Jesus Christ was elected in eternity past (Isaiah 42:1). The salvific plan for the human race must provide divine deliverance for the human race without violating God's integrity.
 2. Such a plan to be efficacious must be based on the divine provision of one human being entering into human history but without the imputation of Adam's original sin and the subsequent ability to conduct His life without committing one personal sin.
 3. Through the virgin birth, the person of Jesus Christ fulfilled these requirements. The absence of a human father in the pregnancy of Mary avoided His body's possession of a genetically formed sin nature and, subsequently, His avoidance of personal sin all the way to the cross. (2 Corinthians 5:21).
 4. The election of the believer in the Church Age is made possible by the election of Jesus Christ in eternity past. The Lord's election is a part of the divine decree.
 5. Likewise, the election of believers was decreed in eternity past by the omniscience of God. This election becomes operational in time when a person responds positively to the gospel message of faith alone in Christ alone. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)
 6. Election is a judicial imputation by God and therefore is permanent, continuing after physical death in the presence of our Lord in interim body (2 Corinthians 5:8), and in the resurrection body at the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51–54).
1. In verse 5, we have established that James begins with imperative mood #15 of the verb **ἀκούω (akoúō)**, translated, "Begin to concentrate." He addresses those who gather in the church as, "my beloved brethren."
 2. The imperative mood of the opening mandate, "Begin to concentrate," is followed not by a bland recognition of the audience, such as our politicians habitually use before regaling us with, "My fellow Americans." This is James asserting the importance of all these believers coming together on the same page where presently they are not.
 3. The phrase, "Begin to concentrate, my fellow believers who are loved by God:" is his **exordium**, the introductory part of an oration. After this he begins his opening **statement**: the presentation of facts or opinions he proclaims he will address in the course of his oration.



4. His *statement* is introduced with this Greek phrase, οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο (*ouch ho Theós exeléxato*): “Did not God choose” This is his rational appeal, or the ἦθος (*éthos*) method of persuasion. It includes the character of the individual speaking or, in this case, of the one referenced.
5. Here we again visit our word for election, the aorist middle indicative of ἐκλέγω (*eklégō*): “to elect.” The negative conjunction, *ouch* with the imperative mood of *eklégō* indicates a rhetorical question.
6. James confirms rhetorically that all who are gathered together are elected to privilege and fellow members of the royal family of God.
7. Next he drives home his point with the phrase, “the poor of this world to be rich in faith?”
8. The phrase “the poor of this world” does not refer to the beggar in the previous verses, but to all the poor throughout the world, the accusative plural of the noun πτωχός (*ptōchós*): those who are in abject poverty plus the locative of sphere of the noun κόσμος (*kósmos*): “of the world.”
9. Regardless of economic standing, whenever any person places his personal faith in Jesus for salvation he is delivered from the lake of fire and imputed eternal life.
10. Such individuals have all the assets imputed to them among the 40 things that any other person receives at salvation. They are not poor in terms of their souls but in terms of human possessions and sustenance.
11. Poor people, poverty stricken, are loved by God. He saved them when they were poor. They remain poor now that they are saved. You do not have to be rich to be saved. You do not have to be poor to be saved. You just have to believe in Christ to be saved.
12. At this point we stopped to study the Doctrine of Poverty which included 10 points and references to 31 verses on the subject.
13. Those who are poor, but are believers, have the same spiritual privileges and assets as do rich believers. Both are among the elect. Both have the privileges associated with the spiritual life. Divine operating assets may be enjoyed by every member of the royal family of God.
14. These principles take us back to our passage in James 2:5 where we have noted that the verse begins with our fifteenth imperative mood, the aorist active imperative of ἀκούω (*akouō*): “to listen.” “Begin to concentrate” would be much better.
15. It is here that James’s oration advances into his Argument supported by the mode of persuasion called: λόγος (*lógos*): rational appeal based on evidence presented. This appeals to the intellect.



16. James's *lógos* approach is presented in three phases: (1) election which occurs in Phase 1, eternity past, (2) the circumstance of poverty which occurs in the world, i.e., time, Phase 2, and (3) heirs referring to the kingdom in the Millennium, yet future, Phase 3.

James 2:5 [IM #15] Begin to concentrate, fellow members of the royal family of God; did God not elect to privilege [Phase 1: eternity past] the poor of this world [Phase 2, time] {EXT} to be rich in faith {NASB} ...

1. The verse continues with the word “rich,” the adjective **πλούσιος** (*plousios*) referring to the imputation of the forty things at salvation, the spiritual assets associated with life in the divine power system, and the accumulation of Bible doctrine in the advance to spiritual maturity.
2. This advance is indicated by the locative of sphere of the preposition **ἐν** (*en*): “in,” plus the noun **πίστις** (*pístis*): “in the sphere of faith,” better translated “in the systematic accumulation of doctrine inside the divine dynasphere.”
3. The term “dynasphere” is coined from two Greek words, the noun, **δύναμις** (*dúnamis*), “power,” and **σφαῖρα** (*sphaíra*), “sphere”: the “(divine) dynasphere,” or literally, the “(divine) power system.”
5. I have described the believer’s presence in the “divine power system” with the term, “inside the bubble,” in order to emphasize its highly fragile status. Because we are constantly challenged by the external environment of the devil’s world and the internal presence of the sin nature, I describe life inside the bubble with the adjective:

Evanescent: soon passing out of sight, memory, or existence; quickly fading or disappearing: an evanescent bubble. Origin early 18th century: from Latin evanescent-‘disappearing.’⁴

6. The phrase “in faith” refers to these poor people’s doctrinal inventory being in the “sphere of faith” which indicates they are believers who are advanced in their spiritual growth:

2. πίστις: state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, trust, confidence, faith in the active sense= ‘believing’, in reference to deity. d. Expresses in a rhetorical way that πίστις is the beginning and the end.⁵

7. Simultaneously, these believers are the poor regarding physical possessions in this world, but rich in their knowledge of the Word of God in their souls.

⁴ *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), s.v. “evanescent.”

⁵ Walter Bauer, “πίστις,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 818, 819.

