

FAITH & FAVORITISM

(James 2:1-13)

A. There is a lot of talk today about racial profiling.

1. In chapter 2 James addressed a similar problem that we might call social profiling.
2. Racial & social profiling often goes hand in hand, but there is no room for either in the church.

In WWI, “rest houses” were set up just behind the front lines for officers & enlisted men. Over the entrances of these houses were posted these words: “Abandon all rank, ye who enter here.” So must it be in the church!

3. The things that classify & separate people in the world must not be used for that purpose in the church of our Lord (Gal 3:28)!

B. Thus far we have learned several lessons from the book of James.

1. A Christian will mature in faith by patiently enduring trials & temptations, by praying to the Father for wisdom, & by doing more hearing than speaking (1:2-20).
2. A Christian with that degree of faith will practice the truth in his everyday life; he will be a doer of the Word (1:21-26).
3. Doing the Word is also the theme of James 2; a mature Christian lives his [by] faith.

[In order to aid in our spiritual development, to challenge us to practice what we preach, to test our faith, James gave his readers & us too, a test.

He had them imagine having two visitors in one of their services, a rich man & a poor man.

How they handled that matter would indicate the depth of their belief in & understanding of God (1 Jn 4:20).

In this section, James examines four basic NT doctrines (& whether or not we believe them) in the light of the way we treat other people.]

I. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD (2:1-4)

A. Jewish people in that day coveted recognition & honor, & vied with one another for praise.

1. One of the Lord's parables deals with this problem (Luke 14:7-14).

2. The Pharisees were denounced over this issue (Matt 23:5-7).

B. We have the same problem with us today in politics, industry & society, but also in the church.

1. Almost every church has its cliques, & often, new Christians find it difficult to work in.

C. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, did not show favoritism to any person on the basis of his or her social standing or outward appearance; even His enemies knew it (Read Matt 22:15-17).

1. You & I, on the other hand, are prone to regard or disregard, respect or disrespect a person on the basis of what we think that person has done or accomplished (whether good or bad).

a. And we make those judgments on the basis of what we see with our eyes: race, color, fashion, communication skills, & occupation.

b. Basically, we are quick to rush to judgments, which are usually partial to our prejudices.

c. If a skilled surgeon & a poor minority brother came in hear tonight, who would get the most attention & expressions of affection?

[To overcome this tendency we have to show favoritism, we must see others as the "Lord of glory" sees them: as a child of God, as a future child of God, or as an opportunity to display the love of God for sinful man (Jn 7:24).

This is the only basis for a good relationship with others – it is certainly NOT what we can get out of the relationship.]

II. GOD IS GRACIOUS (2:5-7)

A. In the illustration that James gave (2:1-4), two very important points were overlooked by the saints.

1. First, they overlooked the fact that God's wants to save the poor man, not despise him.
2. Secondly, they were showing favoritism toward the very people who blasphemed their Lord.
3. How often do Christians show more respect for celebrities whose lives continually blaspheme God, than for a humble Christian who is sincerely devoted to God.

B. James emphasized the fact that God has "chosen" the poor, which implies His grace.

1. Apparently, the poor are more likely to respond to the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24; 1 Cor 1:26-27).

2. God pays no heed to national differences, though some races are, in general, poorer (Acts 10:34).

3. God does not exalt the master above the slave (Eph 6:9); the rich & poor are alike to Him.

1 Sam 2:7-8 (Hannah's prayer) – *The Lord makes poor & makes rich*; He brings low & lifts up. 8 He raises the poor from the dust & lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes & make them inherit the throne of glory.

C. As he did in chapter one, James again elevated the status of the poor.

1. He said the poor of this world can be rich in faith; as sons of God, but "those that love Him" poor or rich will inherit the wealth of the kingdom (1 Tim 6:17-19).

[Understanding the grace of God, in choosing the poor to be saved, forces us to admire their status with God much more than we may want to admire the status of the rich & powerful in the world (or the brotherhood).]

III. GOD'S WORD IS LAW (2:8-11)

A. James went back to the OT to remind us of what ought to be the basis of our actions toward the poor, & that is – NOT PITY – but the law of love (Lev 19:18); loving one's neighbor as himself.

1. Jesus told us that our neighbor is anyone who needs our compassion (Luke 10:25-37).
 - a. Being a neighbor is not a matter of geography, but opportunity.
 - b. The question is not, "Who is my neighbor?" but "To whom can I be a neighbor?"
 - c. To whom can I display the love that God has for me & that I have for Him: the great commandment of the law (Matt 22:36-37)?

B. Why is "love your neighbor" called "the royal law"?

1. It was given by the King (John 13:34; Rom 5:5; 1 Thess 4:9).
2. It rules [fulfills] all the other laws (Rom 13:10).
 - a. There would be no need for 1000's of complex laws [as in the Law of Moses] if each citizen truly loved his neighbors.
3. But mainly, "love your neighbor" is "the royal law" because obeying it makes you like the King.
 - a. Jesus came to save not to destroy (Lk 9:56); Love builds up; hatred tears down (1 Cor 8:1).
4. The next time we are tempted to off handedly criticize someone, ask yourself sincerely, "Would I say this if I truly loved this person?"

[If "the royal law", the Word of God, is the basis of our relationship to others then we cannot show favoritism – there won't be "my kind" & "your kind" of people, only people whom God loves.]

IV. GOD'S WORD WILL JUDGE (2:12-13)

A. James issued two final reminders, the first is to let the Scripture—not our upbringing—be our standard of how we treat others.

1. People excuse their prejudices & favoritism in many ways.
 - a. “When I was a kid, we called those kinds of people blankety blanks.” “Why he’s just acting like an old so & so.” “I was just brought up to think of those people that way.”
2. But God’s word has the power to change how we think, speak & act toward people we formerly disliked or distrusted.
3. We need to remember that the same Word of God that warns us not to be prejudicial & to show favoritism will also judge us in the last day.

B. The second reminder is that only our merciful attitudes & actions toward others will beget the mercy of God toward us.

1. When we are motivated by “the royal law” we will EXUDE mercy toward others (consider context).
2. And it is important to be merciful because so often we stand in need of it ourselves, & also because we will need it from God at the Judgment (Rom 14:10-13; 2 Cor 5:9-10; Col 3:22-25).
 - a. Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”

[So if we truly believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord of glory, & that God is gracious toward the poor, & that His Word is His Law, & that His Law will judge us in the end, THEN our conduct toward others will prove our convictions.]

Did you pass the test James gave us tonight? A genuine faith is mindful not of a person’s station in life but of his or her spiritual needs.]

A. **Why does James** use this title “law of liberty” for the Law of God or the New Testament Law of Christ?

1. When we obey this law, God will set us free from sin & enable us to walk in liberty – free from the destructive consequences of sin (**John 8:31-32; Rom 6:17-18, 22-23; Psa 119:45**).

 - a. The NT is a “law of liberty”, but it is not a license to sin or to do as we please (**Rom 6:1**).

GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:

Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible: Acts 2; 3; 13; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior: Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

Repent of your sins: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins: Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48