

## Pt 6 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) – No Respector of Persons

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 03-21-2018

### † James 2:1-13

- 1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with respect of persons.
- 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;
- 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:
- 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?
- 5 Harken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?
- 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?
- 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?
- 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:
- 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.
- 10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.
- 11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.
- 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.
- 13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Chapter 2 of James opens up with a new subject matter. I suppose you could call it “Despising the Poor,” or “The Sin of Partiality.” But it is preferring one type of person over another based solely on their appearance.

- 1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with respect of persons.
- Remember that James is writing to saved people. He addresses them as “**brethren**” once again and is saying to them “**those of the faith of Jesus Christ do not differentiate between people.**” That is not the nature or spirit of Christ. Therefore, those that live for Christ are not to be that way either. We are not to show “**respect of persons.**” That means “**favoritism of one person over another.**”

The Jews in the days of James would immediately remember the law concerning this: **Leviticus 19:15** Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: **thou shalt not respect the person of the poor**, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

**Deuteronomy 16:19** Thou shalt not wrest judgment; **thou shalt not respect persons**, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

And they also would remember what King Jehoshaphat instructed the judges:

**2 Chronicles 19:7** Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, **nor respect of persons**, nor taking of gifts.

Then he starts giving real world examples:

- 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

This is a classic common example of two different types of men – a rich man and a poor man. We could be comparing a wealthy bank executive with a poor homeless bum. Both of these men have come into the “**assembly**.” The assembly would be a Jewish Synagogue, or in our case a Church building. It is a place where people of faith congregate together for worship.

Notice the striking difference in what the men are wearing; one has a gold ring and nice fine clothing. Just for this study I looked up the most expensive suits in the world. I discovered that the very most expensive suit in the world right now is:

**The Stuart Hughes Diamond Edition:** A suit Designed by Richard Jewels of Manchester & Stuart Hughes of Liverpool. Made from a rich blend of Cashmere wool, silk & diamonds. The suit took 600-man hours to create, consisting of 480 diamonds strategically positioned around the suit. The cost is a mere \$892,500.

The second most expensive suit in the world is the

**Alexander Amosu Vanquish II Bespoke:** It’s made from two of the most expensive wools in the world: rare vicuna and qivuiq, and was custom-made for an anonymous buyer. It was reported that it was also delivered in an armored van. Each suit has 9 buttons of 18 carat gold and diamonds. This suit will cost you a paltry \$101,860.

Then I researched for the least expensive suit and only had to look as far as my own closet! It is the **Alan Dupetit 2-button poly-fabric** with 100% Rayon lining – total cost \$49.00 plus shipping.

That’s the truth but laying all jokes aside, imagine if you will some dude comes strutting in here decked out with gold rings and wearing one of those \$892,000 suits and some other guy comes in wearing a dirty, wrinkled, stained, smelly outfit. James says that his raiment is “**vile**” meaning **dirty, filthy, defiled**.

Which one are we going to run up to and give a visitor’s pack to? Which one are we going to prefer? Will both of them be treated the same way? Well, that’s the question James is proposing here.

- 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

So, here it is; the good, bad, and ugly. Are we going to run up that man in the nice suit and offer him the best seat in the house? In James’s day that would be the seat closest to the pulpit. Up on the podium where he can be seen by everyone. Despite knowing what kind of man he is, assuming because of his appearance he is worthy of some kind of higher honor.

But that poor guy... he doesn’t have a chance. James asks, *are you going to make him your footstool?* In other words, this guy doesn’t even deserve a seat. “*Here you come down here in the floor so I can prop my feet upon you and use you for a footstool.*”

- 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

When we show preference to someone that we do not know based simply on their appearance then the Bible says we are partial and have become judges of evil thoughts.

So, what does that phrase mean, “judges of evil thoughts?” I think this is where we need to examine the reason behind our behavior. What would make someone treat one man better than another man based solely on his appearance?

1. Is it because we think the nicer dressed man deserves our respect more than the poorly dressed man?
2. Is it because we think we have something to gain from the nicer dressed man? le: money, favor, prestige, etc.
3. Is it because we think the poorer dressed man is low class and beneath our social standing?
4. Is it because we think the poorer man is only trying to get something from us?

What is our motive? I think that’s the real problem here. Our motives are sinful.

**5 Harken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?**

Then James gives us a wake-up call and cautions us to “**harken**.” That word harken has the meaning of “**listen closely and understand**.”

It’s the same as Jesus says to the Churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3: **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**. He says that 7-times in those two chapters.

Then James reminds us what the Scriptures say concerning the poor. He says: “**God (has) chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him**”

We find this same teaching throughout the Bible from Jesus and his Apostles. Here are some examples:

**Jesus - Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Jesus - Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.**

**Jesus - Luke 18:25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.**

**Apostle Paul - 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.**

You see, it is often the poorest of men that are the most faithful. They are not relying upon their riches, they are relying upon the Lord. You can find that illustration in the Bible also.

**Mark 12:41-44 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. 42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: 44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.**

We need to be very careful about judging someone because of their appearance. There is an old saying that says “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” That same saying can be applied to men as well.

**6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?**

Then James says that we have **despised the poor**. We judged them unworthy of our time and attention. The example in James is that we used them for our footstool instead of giving them a seat to even be equal with everyone else.

“**Do not rich men oppress you**” He then mentions how the rich oppress others. This was very true in the day that James wrote this epistle. There were many very poor people and few rich. The rich oppressed the poor by ruling over them and causing them to become indebted to them and therefore they would have to be beneath their rule.

“**and draw you before the judgement seats**” – this most likely is referring to how the rich would persecute believers in that day.

**7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?**

Then he reminds them that they blaspheme Jesus as well. They persecuted and crucified the Savior, just think what they would do to you who are called by his name.

**8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.**

You know, when we think of God and all of his wonderful qualities we usually think of his love, grace, mercy, long-suffering, goodness, holiness, and so on. But how often do we think of God’s **impartiality**? I don’t think I’ve ever seen that listed in any commentaries as one of God’s attributes, but it certainly is and it is one of the greatest. The Bible says in **Romans 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God**.

What if God was a respecter of persons and was partial to who was able to be saved? What if he preferred one person over another and some he would save and some he wouldn’t because, well, he was partial to one over the other. We would have to re-write the Bible and **John 3:16** would sound like this: “**For God so loved certain people he preferred, that he gave his only Begotten Son, that if certain people he preferred believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.**” Wouldn’t that be sad? I mean, that’s not good news because I’m sure I would NOT be one of the “certain people that God preferred.” Thank God he is no respecter of persons!

**Peter** over the Book of Acts was driving this very point home for the Gentiles: **Acts 10:34-35** Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that **God is no respecter of persons**: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

**Paul** also makes mention of the Lord being no respecter of persons in

**Ephesians 6:8-9** Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free. 9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is **there respect of persons with him**.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. 11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

Then James lays a big truth bomb on us... if we break the law in just one point then it's just the same as breaking all the laws. He even compares it with what most consider HUGE sins; adultery and murder. This gives us a insight on just how God sees sin; all sin, not just big or little sins but all sins.

So, while we may think it nothing to have respect of one person over another, the Lord says that it is the same as if we are guilty of breaking all the laws – we are still a transgressor.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

Then we are reminded that our judgment will be according to the “*law of liberty*.” We talked about that last week. That is God’s perfect law. We aren’t judged according to our comparison with our neighbor, or our co-workers, or another family member, or even a stranger; we are judged according to God’s “*law of liberty*.”

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

That’s a pretty strong statement and one which is found all throughout the Bible; for examples:

**Proverbs 21:13** Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

**Matthew 6:14-15** For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**Matthew 7:2** For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

**Romans 2:1-2** Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. 2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

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† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version