

James 2:1-13

"Faith Has No Favorites"

We've been developing what it means to have a right relationship w/the Word of God. Many people seem to have this notion that if they've come to church, or caught a good bible study & taken in lots of information that somehow that translates into super spirituality & tons of godly growth. "Man, that study was chalked full of insight, I've taken tons of notes, I've learned a lot, I'm really growing." To which James responds, "Top 10 answers on the board, survey says!?" "X"

You see it's not receiving *information* that spurs on Christian growth, it's taking it & making it *application*; that's where growth & maturing begins to really take shape. James told us that if we hear it, but don't do it, in reality we're deceiving ourselves. **We think we're getting all spiritual when in reality we're still carnal, driven by the flesh while talking about the things of the Spirit. It's like talking about losing weight or building muscle. We can talk about it, read up on it, devise a game plan to accomplish it...but then if we don't *do it* what did it really profit? How did it really impact us or changes us at all?**

James says that to look into the word of God is like looking into a mirror, it reflects back to us all our faults & frailties. Tells us this is outta whack, that needs attention, but if we don't give those areas of our lives the proper attention & see to it that we allow the Holy Spirit to fix those things. **It's like waking up w/bedhead, looking in the mirror & seeing it, then blowing it off & not fixing it. Why even look in the mirror? Even so, the default posture we take in looking into the word of God is one of active obedience. We look *not only to learn, not only to receive information, but to be proactive in seeing it translated into the appropriate application in our lives.***

Remember Jesus said that to hear His word & not do it would be like building a house on a foundation of sand. The winds will come, the storms of life will blow & your house will crash in on itself & collapse (Jesus said, great will be it's fall). It won't stand through the storms of life. **However (He said) to the one who hears His word & *does it*, he/she will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock. The waves will beat on it, the storms will blow against it, trials & tough times will test it but it will stand because it has a sure foundation, it's anchored to active obedience to the Word of God.**

Here in Ch 2 James makes a transition of sorts but he's still in the theme of being rightly related to the word of God (being a doer of it). How we appropriate it's *principles* will be displayed by how we act towards & treat *people*...

In short, saving faith has no favorites. In Christ we don't practice partiality, we practice *impartiality*; we see people according to their character, not their clothes. We're occupied not w/*what* people *have*, but *who* people *are*; we don't pay attention to the rich and simply ignore the poor. In brief, the person who is rightly related to God's word will show *courtesy to all*, have *compassion for all* & will be *consistent* in that w/all. Notice...

Vs 1

So right away James begins to compare and contrast who Jesus is w/what they're doing. He paints a picture of deep contrast between "J.C., the Lord of *glory*" & "partiality". Now just so that you know, when James called Jesus, "the Lord of glory". **The idea there would take them back to the tabernacle of the OT. It would identify Christ w/the Shekinah glory of God that dwelt in the tabernacle & later in the temple. (In short he's speaking of the "Godhood" of Christ, that Jesus is Deity).**

The book of Hebrews (Ch 1 Vs 3) refers to Jesus as the "brightness" of God's glory, the express image of His Person. Over & over again the bible associates the glory of God w/the Person of J.C.

But here's the idea. James holds up, "The Lord of glory" even J.C. Himself, which speaks of all that is honorable, all that is right & pure & perfect & majestic...then he pollutes that concept through the injection of partiality into the equation. It's like a crystal clear glass of water that looks so inviting, so refreshing...then seeing black ink or something injected into it & watching it cloud, convolute & pollute everything about it that was previously pure. The point being that Christ & partiality are mutually exclusive positions.

What is partiality? You might call it favoritism, you might call it prejudice, you might call it discrimination. Regardless of the name you ascribe to it, we're speaking of showing preference to one person over another be it because of ethnicity, or how someone dresses, or maybe they have tattoos all over their body so they're automatically assumed to be untrustworthy or dangerous. Maybe they have long hair, maybe they have no hair; perhaps they're high-class, or low in the social strata. It doesn't matter what the reason; it points to judging a book by it's cover, giving heed to the outward appearance rather than the inward person of the heart.

Jesus wasn't that way, the Lord of glory wasn't partial. God shows no favoritism. We read in the book of Deut, **"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe."**¹

¹ The New King James Version. 1982 (Dt 10:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Remember what Peter said there in Acts Ch 10 as he was instructed by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to the Gentiles? He said, *"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality."*² When it came to Jesus the people acknowledged the same. Though they were condescending toward Him, their testimony of Him when they tested Him was this, *"Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth:"*³

Jesus was not partial toward man. You might be rich, you might be poor, you might be a religious leader or caught in the act of adultery. You might be a tax collector, a nobleman or a woman who'd been married 5 times & was currently living w/a man who wasn't your husband. Jesus was not biased nor did He treat people any differently. His objective in being here wasn't condemnation, it was salvation. We'd already covered the condemnation part, we needed a Savior. All Jesus was concerned about was getting His hands wrapped around their heart; the circumstances surrounding their lives, or where they were at in the social strata was immaterial & irrelevant. **Because once Christ has your heart all those other things will be handled accordingly. I'm not saying that Jesus was "ok" w/their sin, He wasn't. He didn't condone sin, but He did have compassion on the sinner.**

You see, you might be prone to avoid the person w/tattoos, or the guy w/long hair; we're given to the outward appearance. Isn't that what the bible says? *"For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*⁴ Jesus breaks down the barriers of partiality & places us all on the same field. That's why the bible says, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*⁵

There's no room for a preconceived judgment (or opinion) on someone's character based upon their clothing, or how they look outwardly. You can't profess Christ on the one hand, & be a spiritual snob on the other. Partiality stains the name of Christ, it pollutes the purity that's *in* Christ.

So James isn't saying that we're not to discern right from wrong. We're most definitely to be aware of the fruit in a person's life & not compromise ourselves personally/spiritually. What he's saying is **don't judge the book by its cover, you don't know them or anything about them but based upon what you see you've already played the part of both judge & jury. We call that partiality & the bible calls that sin.**

² The New King James Version. 1982 (Ac 10:34). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. 1982 (Lk 20:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Sa 16:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version. 1982 (Ga 3:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 2-4

So James is getting real w/them here (& w/you & me). If you knew that in 10 min you were going to get a ½ hour w/Bill Gates (he's worth an estimated \$66 billion), would you comb your hair, brush your teeth, think about how you could best use that time? Now lets say in 10 min you're going to meet w/a homeless man. Would you expend that same kind of energy in preparing yourself to meet w/him? That's what James is talking about, & we're all vulnerable to this kind of sin in our lives; treating people differently based upon how we view them outwardly.

The bitter irony is that generally the people that we try to impress the most are the ones who care about us the least...while the ones who would be open to receiving from us are generally the ones for whom we have no time...

We wanna see the captain of the football team saved when we should be aiming for the kid sitting alone in the lunch room. It's not that God doesn't want them both saved, it's that the one in the lunch room is typically more prepared/ready to listen. We want to impress the rich, get them on our team, we think of all the things that could happen w/just a little more support. But as a general rule the rich aren't as interested, they think they have everything they need, the poor recognize their need, they're looking for hope, they're primed & ready for the message of the gospel. Don't waste your time trying to impress people who are already impressed w/themselves...you see we need a new perspective, a godly perspective.

James says, "You have a man coming into your church who's flashing his 'biblical bling', rings all over his fingers, making it obvious that he's all rich & in want for nothing & you're all 'we're so glad you could join us today, sit here in our v.i.p. section, could I get you some coffee or perhaps some fresh fruit?' Then behind him comes a man who's lookin rough, maybe he's clean but you can tell he's hurtin, his clothes look old & out dated, maybe something a shelter gave him, & you're all, 'he can find his way...' or 'hey man, why don't you just sit back here, or down there on the floor.'" James is saying, "Hey man, that's jacked up & it's not becoming of Christ in any way."

John would say it like this, "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"⁶ So the way we behave toward people demonstrates what we believe about God.

We presume the rich are more greatly blessed of God, that's not true.

⁶ The New King James Version, 1982 (1 Jn 4:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What *is true* in that situation is that we place too much value on earthly riches... What we need to understand is that rich or poor we're either in front of someone in whom Christ's lives, or for whom Christ died; that's the basis upon which we relate to people...the basis of love.

Here James says, "You've become judges w/evil thoughts." *The way you're thinking has influenced the way that you're now acting; rather than allowing the word of God to govern/guide your rationale (in not showing partiality), you've heard God's word, but you're not doing God's word (that's evident by our behavior).* So we go back, what's the point of hearing/knowing God's Word, if we're not going to *do* God's Word?

Partiality is carnality, it presumes there's something useful/beneficial about the rich man & nothing really to gain from the poor man. So it shows my self-serving agenda. Now that's not to say we're not to be kind to the rich, it's saying that we *are to be kind* to the poor. We treat everyone the same...just as we ourselves would like to be treated.

Vs 5-7

James is like, "I don't get it you guys, the ones who are hungry for what you have (in the gospel) you're ignoring & the ones whom you're trying to impress are already impressed w/themselves & couldn't care less about you. As a matter of fact they're prone to see you as a problem & persecute you, sue you, take you to court & make your life miserable."

Now I should say that James isn't stating anything in a categorical fashion, as though every poor person is open to the gospel & every rich person doesn't deserve your time or are jerks who don't care about you or the Word of God. He's speaking into a real time situation that he noted as a problem in his day.

Having said that we should also acknowledge that as a general rule it's true that those who have means are a lot less likely to respond to the gospel (they don't see a need in their lives) than those who have no means. Jesus acknowledged (Matt 19:24) that material riches *can be* a great hindrance/obstacle that can get in the way of one entering the Kingdom of God... Leave the book of James, travel quickly to **1 Cor 1** (Vs 26-31)

So, there is a sense in which the poor of this world are those who've been uniquely blessed of God. I'm not saying we rejoice in poverty, I'm saying thank God if through your lack He's caused you to see your need for Him.

How is it that the poor are rich in faith?

Quite frankly because they don't have insurance, can't whip out their credit card, if God doesn't do the work, the work doesn't get done. There's no resource or recourse other than to trust God. **So the opportunities that they have to trust the Lord & watch God move are far more than the man who just calls his lawyer, or pays for the treatment, or settles out of court, or whatever the case may be...**

Now again I want to maintain the balance here, it sounds like we're creating a case to be partial toward the poor, we're not. We're saying treat the man who has nothing to offer w/the same kindness, respect & genuine concern that you would the man who has everything to offer. **At the end of the day, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."** Rich or poor is irrelevant. That's what James is seeking to get us to see.

In Vs 5 he tells us that the kingdom of God has been promised to who? The poor? Not necessarily. The rich? Not especially... Those who love Him... "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."⁷

Vs 8-9

We almost get the idea that James anticipates his readers to say, "What, we're just fulfilling the law, we're told to love our neighbor as ourselves!" But as we already stated the problem isn't being respectful to the rich, it's being disrespectful to the poor. **Showing great respect to the rich, no respect to the poor. James isn't telling us that the problem is in being kind to the rich, it's in being unkind to the poor. Showing partiality, favoritism.**

You see, as Jesus demonstrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) the question isn't "Who's my neighbor?" It's "Who can I be a neighbor to?" **All these people passed by the man who'd fallen among thieves, the rich, the religious, the dignified...but a Samaritan happened by, bandaged his wounds, placed him on his own animal, paid for his stay at the motel & said, "Take care of this man & if he needs anything more put it on my bill."** Jesus said, "Now who do you think was truly the neighbor of that man in need?" The lawyer said, "He who showed mercy on him." Jesus said, "That's right, now go & do likewise." We're to be lavish in mercy, rich in mercy. (James will get to that as we close in a minute).

⁷ The New King James Version, 1982 [1 Co 2:9], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

However, when we show partiality we're not acting in *mercy*, we're acting as *mercenaries*, we're not obeying God's Word, we're rebelling against God's word, we're breaking the law of God & as such we are transgressors, we're sinning against the Lord.

Vs 10-12

Too many of us want a buffet of God's Word, "We'll have some love, some grace & mercy, easy on the righteousness, hold the justice." "I'll take, 'have no other gods before Me', no thanks to, 'you shall not commit adultery'". James puts it plainly, "It doesn't work that way." You either obey God's Word or you don't. You either uphold the law or you don't. Think of it as links in a chain, "Don't commit idolatry" it's a link, "honor your mother & your father" it's a link. "You shall not commit murder" "You shall not commit adultery" "You shall not steal" "You shall not bear false witness" (don't lie). **Now, if you choose not to murder, but you lie, you still broke the chain. Regardless of which link you sever, a broken chain is a broken chain. Now you've either broken the chain or you haven't, where it's broken isn't the focal point, the fact that it's broken period, that's the point. Once you break it, you're violator, a breaker of the law.**

"Well, I'm not a murderer", have you lied? You've broken the chain, you're guilty of breaking God's law. Now, if you're going to say you're a doer of the Word of God & God says that we're not to be partial, He's not partial & if He be in us we're not to be partial, yet we show favoritism, or discrimination in some manner, than we're going against the grain of His character, violating the principles of His word & are sinning against God.

Vs 12 tells us that there needs be some continuity to our life in Christ, our talk & our walk needs to be unified. "So speak & so do..."

Why is it called the law of liberty, because God's word brings us into freedom, not freedom *to* sin, freedom *from* sin. It's when we rebel *against* God's word that we're brought into bondage, sold into slavery under sin.

You guys started looking at Jonah on Wednesday evenings. He had great theology, but didn't act accordingly; it was a problem & God chastened him (to say the least). You see it's our conduct that reveals our convictions... Be kind to one another, tenderhearted...

Vs13

Judgment is w/out mercy to the one who has shown no mercy... Jesus said that like this, "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."⁸ Too often I want mercy for me, but justice for you...

⁸ The New King James Version, 1982 (Mt 7:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Have you discovered how intolerable your sin looks in someone else's life?
 "What do you mean?" If I do it, it's tolerable, if you do it, it's terrible.

David's men are out fighting a war, he's on his terrace sees a woman taking a bath, calls for her lies w/her & sends her home. Word comes to David, "I'm pregnant". He calls her husband home from the battle, asks him how the war is going, tells him to go home & enjoy an evening w/his wife. He doesn't, he goes to David's porch goes to sleep. Next day David is all, "What's wrong w/you man, go be w/your wife." He says, "My brothers are out there fighting a war, I can't go be w/my wife, it wouldn't be right." So David gets him drunk, hopes he'll stumble home, be w/his wife. He stumbles to the porch, passes out.

So David sends him back to general Joab w/a death warrant in his hands that says, "Put Uriah on the frontlines, when the battle begins to rage w/draw from him so that he dies." Time goes by, word comes back to David from Joab, "It's done, Uriah is dead."

David takes Bathsheba as his wife & looks like a hero, took this poor widow to himself & saved the day.

One day Nathan the prophet comes to him & says, "David, there's a man in your kingdom, a very poor man, he only has one little ewe lamb, it's like his pet, he lets it sleep in his house, drink from his dish, he loves this little lamb... Now there's also this rich man, has flocks & herds to spare, & a stranger came along & that rich man took that poor man's one little ewe lamb, killed it & gave it to the stranger for food." David got enraged, "As the Lord lives the man who did this things will die, & restore 4 fold for the lamb, because of what he did & because he *showed no pity*." No mercy... Nathan looked at him & said, "You're the man, David. God gave you everything, wives, flocks, herds to spare, the kingdom of Israel... yet you murdered Uriah & took the love of his life for yourself."

Our sin seems so terrible on others, & so tolerable on us. We want justice for others, but mercy for ourselves. Yet Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*"⁹

Judgment is w/out mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. I'm so glad; that we serve a God who is non partial, full of compassion & rich in mercy. Even so if we be in Christ we should show partiality to no one, & mercy to everyone... Amen? Amen.

⁹ The New King James Version. 1982 [Mt 5:7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Prayer Points:

Father God we are so thankful that You are rich in mercy, full of compassion, faithful & true. Help us Lord to be ever transforming more & more into your image. Not to be leveraging relationships or sizing people up according to their outward appearance, but to see people as You do. As someone whom either You live *in*, or that You died *for*, either way we're to act & react to them in love. We don't want to fall short of Your word, we want to fulfill Your word, being doers of Your word.

You know David didn't see how bad his sin was until it was painted on someone else. But when Nathan told him that he was the man, he immediately repented & said, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan said, "& God has put away your sin, you shall not die." You see if we confess our sin, turn from our sin, God is faithful & just to forgive us our sin & cleanse us of all unrighteousness. So maybe you're realizing how you've sinned against God, now's your moment to turn from it, & cry out to God for mercy that He might put away your sin & make you a new creation in Christ (who has loved you & given Himself for you upon the cross).