

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 10TH - 11TH, 2022 // BOOK OF JAMES

PARTIALITY (JAMES 2:1-7) SEEING PEOPLE HOW GOD SEES THEM

James tells us that we are not to treat people differently based on their wealth, power, or social prominence.

- **We easily fall to favoritism because we selfishly want to gain something from others, but this is not how Christians are to view people.**

WE HAVE LOTS OF "GOLD RINGS" TODAY

In James' time, people could rent gold rings to give the appearance of wealth. They'd do this to impress others and get preferential treatment.

- **This passage is about the state of the heart. Because we place our identity in insecure things, we become insecure and go to ridiculous lengths to mask it.**

ALL ONE FAMILY WITHIN THE CHURCH

VS3 and 4 are specifically talking about the church community. **We are not to reserve special privileges for those that we think will benefit the church more financially.** If we do, we're becoming "judges" of people's value.

- This is why our pastors don't know who gives at our churches.

WAIT, IS GOD SHOWING FAVORITISM?

To say the poor are chosen **"to be rich in faith and heirs to the Kingdom"** isn't favoritism. This statement is directed to **anyone who has faith in God over the things of this world.**

- **The problem with wealth is it can easily detour our dependency on God because we think we have all we need** (Matthew 19:24).

THIS ISN'T AN INDICTMENT ON WEALTHY PEOPLE

V7 implies there were wealthy/powerful people abusing and exploiting the poor, but this isn't a blanket indictment on all wealthy people.

- The point is to **look at all people through the lens of the Spirit, not with prejudice or selfish favoritism.** This applies to affluence, influence, skin color, nationality, or gender.

MERCY (JAMES 2:8-13)

JUST TREAT OTHERS HOW WE WANT TO BE TREATED

In Matthew 22, Jesus told the religious leaders to **"love your neighbor as yourselves."** James says we "are doing well" if we obey this "royal law."

- When we fail to treat others the way we want to be treated, we become "transgressors." This means we break the fundamental law of morality. **This is simple stuff!**

WE EITHER OBEY OR WE DON'T

V10 is provocative. This says that if we keep all the commands of God but break the "royal law," we are guilty of breaking it all.

- 60% of the 10 Commandments relate to how we treat others, and Jesus boiled down the Commandments into two: love God and love others. **To not love others is to not truly love God** (1 John 4).

JUDGMENT WITHOUT JUDGMENTALISM?

We're called to make righteous judgments based off the truths of the Bible (John 7:24), but we're warned not to make critical, self-righteous judgments. This is judgmentalism.

- **When we become critical or judgmental, we forget that we will also be judged by God, Who looks at all sin as evil.**

"MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT"

Though we are to still employ wisdom, mercy should always be what we strive to exercise with other people. **We strive to show mercy because Jesus has shown great mercy to us.**

- This is why we give the benefit of the doubt, feed the poor, visit the prisoner, extend forgiveness to others, etc.

If we show mercy as a church and as individuals, God will continue to show us mercy when we make mistakes, and we will not face His judgment.

- On the other hand, if we are judgmental, God's **"judgment is without mercy to the one who has not shown mercy."**

FAITH & WORKS (JAMES 2:14-26)

"CAN SUCH FAITH SAVE HIM?"

VS14-26 focus on true faith. A verbal testimony alone is not adequate evidence of one being saved. Our verbal profession must be supported by visible evidence (works).

- Talking the talk means nothing if we don't walk the walk. **If we claim Christ but do not demonstrate Him, our claim is false.**

WITHOUT WORKS, PEOPLE ARE NEGLECTED

James uses an example of walking by starving people and saying, "Stay warm and be well fed," but not doing anything to change the situation to show how works are essential.

- Faith without works is dead. We must act on the commands of Christ to be generous and loving people!

THIS APPLIES TO OUR SOULS AS WELL

If hungry people physically starve and die unless we act on our faith, the same is true for the starvation and death of our souls.

- **To know what the "bread of life" (Jesus) is means nothing if we don't ingest it. Many will spiritually starve and eternally perish even though they know truth.**

EVEN DEMONS KNOW THIS!

The demons in Hell have the knowledge of who Jesus is, but **they do not act on that knowledge.** This shatters the bad theological idea that just knowing who Jesus is saves us.

- V20 hits it! **Are we so senseless to not learn that we must have faith AND works?** To not act on faith is rebellion to God!

THIS IS NOT A NEW LESSON

Abraham and Rahab are historical examples who demonstrated their faith through action and it was "credited to [them] as righteousness."

- **Our faith is only complete if we are willing to sacrifice for God like Abraham and help others in need like Rahab.** Again, **action is the evidence of true faith.**

GENESIS 2:7

Just like God breathed life into Adam when he was created, we as Christians are dead without works backing up our faith.

- God demands faith that is evident in **personal holiness** and **practical service** to each other. **Without these two things, it's ridiculous to claim a life in Christ (salvation).**

WE ARE NOT SAVED BY OUR WORKS, BUT...

The American Christian excuse to this passage is that we are **"saved by grace through faith,"** which is correct. But, we are saved **"for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do."**

- **We are not saved by our works, but we are not saved from working either.**

NOT SHOWING PREJUDICE

- **We're to use righteous judgment, but we are not to pre-judge based on appearances or show favoritism to others for selfish gain.**
- When we become critical or judgmental, we forget that we are placing ourselves in a position to be judged by God, who sees our sin and lack of love and grace.

BECOMING MERCIFUL PEOPLE

- The easiest way to not be prejudiced or show favoritism is to simply **treat others the way we want to be treated.**
- Because God has shown great mercy to us, we should show great mercy to others.
- To not love others and show mercy and grace is to not love God.

FAITH AND WORKS (PERSONAL HOLINESS)

- We must not only believe the truth about God and the Word, but **we must also live out that truth in our daily lives.**
- This means we are to **pray, read the Bible, obey the Word, move away from sin, and repent when we fall.** This is us working toward **personal holiness.**

FAITH AND WORKS (SERVING OTHERS)

- Our works must extend beyond ourselves and touch the world around us.
- We are to **treat others with kindness and respect, share the gospel, feed the poor, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, and not enable destructive behavior in the process.** We are called to serve others.

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

- "The Lord said: These people approach me with their speeches to honor me with lip-service, yet their hearts are far from me, and human rules direct their worship of me." –**Isaiah 29:13, CSB**