

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 11TH, 2022 // BOOK OF JAMES

DISCRIMINATION (JAMES 2:1-7)

"THE GLORIOUS LORD JESUS CHRIST"

The Jews called this the *shekinah*. Though this word does not appear in Scripture, the doctrine clearly does. This Hebrew word literally means "He caused to dwell."

- James is acknowledging that **Jesus is the physical manifestation of God's glory**, the same way Paul said, "the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ" (Colossians 2:9).

"DO NOT SHOW FAVORITISM"

God does not show partiality (Deuteronomy 10:17) or favoritism (Acts 10:28, 34-35).

- When we "[hold] to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ," we remember that **God did not show favoritism or discrimination when He sent His Son to die on a cross, and neither should we if our hope is in Him.**

THE CROSS IS THE GREAT EQUALIZER

James wrote this in a very partial time when hatred and prejudice were based on socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality, and religious background.

- Jesus' work on the cross broke down these walls that divide people** (Ephesians 2:14-15), **offering us a new life and a new identity** (Galatians 3:28).

TREATMENT OF THE RICH VS. THE POOR

The partiality shown to both sides indicates that the Church was guilty of caring more about the exterior appearances than the inner condition of the heart.

- We need godly wisdom to be able to see things as He sees them. **God looks past appearances to the heart of a person, and so should we.**

"...BECOME JUDGES WITH EVIL THOUGHTS?"

We see incorrectly when we believe it is the rich who are more blessed by God because **we place too much value in material riches.**

- Further, we become judges with evil thoughts when we favor the rich because **we believe we can get more from someone who is rich.**

"YET YOU HAVE DISHONORED THE POOR."

James rebukes the Church by pointing out **they dishonor the poor** at the sake of those who oppress them and drag them into court.

- Their mistreatment of the poor**, making them stand in the back or sit at their feet as they worshipped, **made them feel as though the Church and the Kingdom were not for them.**

"POOR OF THIS WORLD"

James mimics the teachings of Jesus, who declares, "**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs**" (Matthew 5:3).

- To be poor in spirit is the realization of our spiritual poverty, that **we are bankrupt before God.** We know **we have nothing to offer and become dependent on Christ and His sacrifice.**

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR (JAMES 2:8-13)

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

James is referring to the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:39) as the "**royal law**" because Jesus, the rightful King, was the one to establish it.

- "**Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself**" (Matthew 22:37-39).

FAIR TREATMENT OF OUR NEIGHBORS

In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan when an expert of the Jewish law asked him, "**who is my neighbor?**" upon hearing the Great Commandment.

- We love our neighbor when **we notice people's needs, when we meet people's needs, and we do so in a way that exceeds cultural expectations.**

LET'S NOT ADOPT A SELF-RIGHTEOUS ATTITUDE

Much like the Levite (Luke 10:32) in the parable, people adopted this false belief that if they strictly adhered to one portion of the law, it would make up for disobedience elsewhere.

- No act of our own obedience can make up for disobedience. We have all broken God's law and are, therefore, dependent on Christ's obedience.**

NOT BY OUR OWN EFFORTS OR WORKS (EPHESIANS 2:8-9)

James then alludes to Jesus' words in Matthew 5:7 to show that God's mercy triumphs over our guilt and judgment. This warning that those who show no mercy will not receive God's mercy at the final judgment does not mean that we only receive mercy from God when we show mercy to others.

- God is not repaying us for our mercy towards others, but **we receive grace through faith.**

FAITH IN ACTION (JAMES 2:14-26)

LIP SERVICE VERSUS ACTUAL SERVICE

A person's claim to have faith without any deeds to back up that claim is an empty claim.

- Genuine faith and commitment to Christ will produce good works.
- A verbal claim to following Christ is not adequate evidence of saving faith. Only works of obedience can prove the presence of genuine faith.

SALVATION IS A GIFT OF GRACE

We are saved by grace through faith and not our works (Ephesians 2:4-10). However, **faith and works go together in tandem, and you cannot have one without the other.**

- Faith without works is not genuine and produces nothing. Works without faith is being humanitarian, trying to earn salvation by our deeds.**

WE ARE CALLED TO ACT

James equates faith without works to offering someone in need well wishes without practical help. He essentially says, "What good is it?"

- 1 John 3:18 says, "**let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.**" Our desire to help someone in need should move us to do something, like our desire to love God moves us to do something.

INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND LOVING ACTION

Not everyone who acknowledges the existence of God has made a commitment to following Jesus Christ. Even demons believe in the existence of one God, and they shudder with fear at the thought of God (Matthew 8:29).

- What sets a true Believer apart is the action stemming from saving faith. "**If you love me, keep my commandments**" (John 14:15).

ABRAHAM'S DISPLAY OF SAVING FAITH

James uses the example of Abraham, the ancestor of Jews and Gentiles, showing a saving faith through his willingness to offer his son, Isaac, on the altar (Genesis 22:1-18).

- Righteousness was credited to Abraham** (Genesis 15:6) **by God's grace because Abraham displayed a saving faith through total obedience to God.**

RAHAB'S DISPLAY OF SAVING FAITH

In contrast, James uses the example of Rahab, a prostitute who displayed her faith in God by protecting His representatives. She received into her home spies sent by Joshua and helped them escape from Jericho (Joshua 2).

- The Bible is clear that saving faith must show itself by a visible commitment to the Lord and compassion for others.**

FAITH THAT IS ALIVE

- In verse 26, James tells us, "just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."
- Without God breathing His breath into us, we would be lifeless, the same way faith without works does not bring life.
- They will see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven** (Matthew 5:16).

FAITH THAT IS ACTIVE

- Faith without works is dead. Anything that is alive will produce fruit.**
- Faith in Jesus will produce action that reveals His nature and character.**
- Faith that lies still, inactive, provides evidence that is, in fact, dead.**
- We should display works of love that prove that our faith is alive and real.**