

Don't Show Favoritism

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Date: 07 December 2008

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[0:00] James 1, we'll read from verse 26 through chapter 2 and verse 13. If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself, and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, here's a good seat for you, but say to the poor man, you stand there, or sit on the floor by my feet, have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my dear brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him? But you have insulted the poor.

Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right.

[1:25] But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

For he who said do not commit adultery also said do not commit murder. If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. Well, as we begin a new chapter in the book of James, it's good for us to pause and to remind ourselves of James and the Holy Spirit's overarching purpose in this letter.

It is to move us believers to the passionate pursuit of practical holiness. That's God's great aim in saving us.

God's great plan of salvation does not end with justification. The forgiveness of our sins, the granting of Christ's righteousness to us. No, that's just the beginning of this so great salvation.

[2:44] God's justifying us is followed by his sanctifying us, making us holy in heart and in our lives. God's justifying us.

God's justifying us. This is the present tense aspect of our salvation, and we are to be pursuing it all out. God is, and that's why he brings trials into your life, and that's why he gives you his word, to have that mirror ministry in your life.

I'm afraid many professing Christians see justification as the whole of salvation. Well, I'm forgiven. I'm good to go to heaven, so let's just party and have a good time.

And James says, no. Justification is always followed by sanctification. The active pursuit and growth toward perfect holiness, that's where we're headed.

That's God's plan for the here and now, for the Christian. And it's all part of this one great salvation. So that if you're not pursuing holiness in your life, it's not that you're a carnal Christian.

[3:57] It's not that you're a sick Christian. It's not that you're a Christian who will receive less rewards. James says you're not a Christian at all, that your whole religion is worthless.

And if you think you're a Christian, then you're only deceiving yourself. Rather, religion that God our Father accepts is marked by practical holiness of life, such as a self-controlled tongue, such as an active love toward people in need, such as not being polluted by the worldliness all around us.

That's the only kind of salvation James knows about. Indeed, it's the only kind of salvation that saves us. A salvation from sin.

So this is the theme song James is singing throughout this letter. And as we turn a page this morning and go into chapter 2, he's still singing this theme song, the pursuit of practical holiness in our everyday lives.

Now let me lay out the terrain in chapter 2 with the help of Dr. Henry Crabbendam. James is going to talk about two things preeminently in chapter 2.

[5 : 15] God's law and faith. And in doing so, he sets these two foundational principles for living this Christian life of holiness. Number one, God's law is the detailed description of practical holiness.

It spells it out. What does it look like? How does it act? How does it talk? And as such, it must be, that is, the law of God must be the final touchstone of all of our living.

What does God command? To the law of God we must go. And secondly, faith is the driving force behind practical holiness.

It's the dynamic. It's the power. It's the energy for living this holy life. It's not something static. It's not something merely past tense, a decision made in the past.

Faith is a powerful principle that actually moves us to live differently in this life. It's so powerful that it moves us to do things that otherwise we never would or could do.

[6 : 25] That's the power of faith. It moved Abraham to sacrifice his own son on the altar. It moved Rahab to risk her own life to side with the side of her enemies.

Faith powerfully works, bringing about practical holiness in the life. God's law is like the train tracks. And faith is like the engine. God's law is the detailed description of practical holiness.

Faith is the driving force behind practical holiness. Without God's law, there's no standard of holiness. And without faith, there is no practice of holiness.

So we must embrace both. God's law and faith. That's the only kind of Christianity James knows about.

[7 : 24] And he tells us of it here in chapter 2. We'll want to make much use of God's law and of faith in the Christian life, the pursuit of holiness.

Now there's another theme running through this chapter. And it's the second mark of true religion. Remember we saw in the end of chapter 1, James gives us sort of a table of contents of what's coming.

This true religion has to do with self-controlled tongue, has to do secondly with active love toward people in need. That's going to figure in very strong to the whole of chapter 2.

In fact, it's like the canvas on which James is painting and setting down these principles about God's law and faith. It will be against the backdrop of active love.

Twice in the chapter, he's going to give illustrations and say, suppose, let's suppose for a minute. And both times, he's going to suppose people who are in need of love. Active love.

[8 : 27] Verses 2 and verse 15. And then he'll show us what love will do and will not do in each case. So that's the canvas, the love that we are to show toward people in need that figures throughout this chapter.

And how fitting that is because the sum of God's law is love and true faith always works by love. Now we only have time for verses 1 through 7 this morning.

I want you to notice in the first place then the command. The command. Verse 1. My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

Favoritism is being a respecter of persons. It's giving preferential treatment to some. It's showing special attention to someone for the wrong reasons.

This does not forbid me from having any favorites. It doesn't forbid you from any kind of favoritism or from all kinds of favoritism. I show favoritism toward my wife.

[9 : 40] I give her special preferential treatment over all other women in the world. That's not a sin. That's a virtue. And men, you're supposed to be doing that as well.

You're supposed to be treating your wife differently than all other women. Giving her special attention. That's not forbidden here by James. It's a whole other ballpark that is in.

However, it could become sinful. If in a church squabble, for instance, my wife is involved and I have preferential treatment to her in my role as an elder.

I have just sinned. That crosses the line. 1 Timothy 5.21, the elder is to do all things without partiality. But sin, the sin of favoritism gives preferential treatment for the wrong reasons then. That's the important qualification. The wrong reasons are usually something very superficial and external. We give people preferential treatment because of their looks, because of their race, their wealth, their education, their social status.

[10:54] And these things cause us to treat them differently than others. And there's a flip side to favoritism. And it's called discrimination. Because favoritism toward the one is at the same time discrimination and prejudice against another.

If I'm tipping the scales in someone's advantage as a judge, then I'm tipping the scale to someone else's disadvantage. Now, favoritism is seen everywhere.

It's seen in court when a man is as guilty as sin and everyone sees it and knows it. But the judge lets him off because he's a good old boy. He knows him.

Or he's wealthy. He's influential. And so he turns a blind eye. Or goes easy on him. We see it in the classroom at school.

There's that girl and she always gets high marks on her presentations. And it's not because her presentations are so superior than everyone else. She's just the favorite.

[12:02] The teacher's pet, we call her. And so she receives preferential treatment from the teacher. It's in sports. The coach plays his favorites when he sets out the starting lineup.

And everybody knows that the guy sitting on the bench is twice as good as this guy. But he's a friend of his dad. And they're good old buddies and go way back. And so preferential treatment is shown to the one over another.

Nobody likes a preferential referee either in a sporting event, do we? We know right away what we're talking about when we talk about showing favoritism to one team versus another.

It's in the workplace. Someone gets the preferential treatment of the promotion for the wrong reasons. Because this person is far more qualified than this one.

But this one gets the promotion. And we say some favoritism is being shown here in a wrong way. I just recently learned that there's some 101 Division I football programs in the United States.

[13:10] And I believe, I'll be corrected if I'm wrong, but there's only one head coach of color out of those 101 football programs.

But somewhere in the whole hiring process, somehow there's some favoritism being shown to whites over blacks. This kind of favoritism and the prejudice and discrimination that is the flip side permeates our fallen world.

We work in it. We live in it. We go to school in it. But it's to have no place at all in the heart and lives of Christians. Christians, my brothers, my brothers, don't show favoritism.

Now, James, being the practical preacher, has an illustration for us. And all I want to say before we dip into it is that this is only one illustration of favoritism.

And don't let us lose sight of that. When James says, suppose, and he goes into this illustration, don't think, well, if I'm not guilty of that, then I'm not guilty of favoritism. No, this is just one aspect.

[14:22] There are so many ways that favoritism is shown, and they're all forbidden. Well, here's the illustration he gives. And it must have been needed for James to have selected this one.

It's a church service. And into the church service come two visitors. One is clearly a man of wealth. Everything about his appearance screams money.

The gold ring on his hand. The designer threads he's wearing. I suppose if you looked out in the parking lot, you'd seen a designer or a fine camel out there as well to match it.

Everything about this man, he's oozing money. He's well put together. And the other visitor is as poor as the other one is rich. And everything about his appearance screams poverty.

James says he comes in with shabby clothes. And it makes it clear to everyone that he's on the bottom rung of society. He looks like he works and worships and sleeps and shops all in the same outfit.

[15:33] That's all he has. And so here come the two visitors. And simply on the basis of their outward appearance, we show special attention to the man wearing fine clothing.

And everyone's quick to rush out and meet him and to welcome him, to talk to him. We give him the red carpet treatment. We say, here's a good seat for you.

It's one of the best seats in the house. And remember, very often in those days, the church was meeting in houses, literally. So there wouldn't have been a lot of seats, perhaps.

But we have one for him. We give him VIP status. Very important person status. This man is important. Why? Because he has money.

And so we give him a very important seat. And as we make a fuss over our rich visitor, we communicate very clearly to him, we are very happy to have you here with us today.

[16:37] And we may just justify ourselves that we're just being friendly to visitors. That's all. But it won't hold up to scrutiny because none of this friendliness is extended to our other visitor in shabby clothes.

We look at him and he doesn't seem to be the kind that could help pay off our building debt. He rather looks like he might need some of our compassion funds. Oh, that would just be a liability and drag on the church.

And no one rushes out to welcome him. No one's making talk with him. We say, you stand there. Or sit here on the floor by my feet. Here, here, let me, let me move my feet as I sit here on my chair so that you can have some floor space to squat down at my feet.

We give him VUP status. Very unimportant person. With no real interest or concern in him. And he gets the message loud and clear.

[17:41] Just as the other man realized, we're very happy to have you here. This man gets the message. We are not very happy at all to have you in our midst. And so we cater to the rich.

And we ignore the poor. And we may not think that we've done anything very much wrong. That is until James weighs in on our favoritism.

And he gives us God's opinion on our behavior. Folks, he's going to blow this ship right out of the water. There's going to be no kid glove treatment with what we've done.

He's going to show us how despicable and wicked and unacceptable such behavior is. Some of his biggest guns will be brought out next week in verses 8 to 13.

But for now, notice what God thinks of our showing favoritism. Here's the rebuke. You've seen the command, the illustration, now the rebuke. Showing favoritism is number one, judging with evil thoughts.

[18:45] If you treat the two visitors in this way, verse 4 says, Have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

You didn't know anything about either visitor. So you should have treated them equally. You should have treated them the same. But your partiality on the basis of outward appearance and worldly wealth and status means you're guilty of rank discrimination.

Favoritism. And he says, You have become corrupt judges with evil thoughts, evil reasonings. Now, over and over, judges in Israel are commanded to judge impartially without favoritism. Listen to Leviticus 19:15, which is just one sampling of many.

Do not pervert justice. Do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge fairly.

[19:50] Have you seen the lady justice on top of some of the court houses? She's blindfolded. And that for a reason. Justice and the judge is not to see the outward appearance and judge on the basis of the color of skin or the status in society, the wealth that either party has.

One thing is to control justice and judgment. And that is the merits of the evidence. So she's blindfolded. No favoritism.

That's what it's saying. No partiality. That's the way that all judgment is to be conducted. But James says you're guilty of this very kind of judging that God forbids.

You're showing favoritism. You're discriminating among yourselves. You're judging with evil thoughts. You've set yourself up as judges.

And what's driving your judgment are evil thoughts. Literally vicious thoughts could be translated. Evil thoughts.

[21:03] To think that someone is more important than another just because they make more money is downright evil.

God says. Evil. That's the way the world thinks. That's the way the world exalts the rich and the famous and the beautiful and the powerful and the influential.

Do you see what James is saying? You're judging according to worldly standards. Say that would be polluted by the world, wouldn't it?

That's right, James says. Showing favoritism is worldliness. And that's a part of worthless religion. Showing favoritism is judging with evil thoughts.

It must not be named among you, brethren. Now, the flip side of favoritism to the rich is mistreatment of the poor. When the rich gets the seat, the poor gets the floor.
[22:08] And this is acting contrary to God our Father. That's the second thing that God says about showing favoritism. It's acting contrary to God our Father.

How does he treat the poor? Well, if you've ever read through the whole Bible, you know the answer to that. It's loaded with his concern for poor people.
The poor and needy. How does God treat the poor? Verse 5. Listen, my dear brothers. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom? He promised those who love him. But you have insulted the poor. You see the contrast? God has chosen them, but you have insulted them.

It couldn't be clearer. You've treated shamefully those on whom God places the highest honors. The poor. That's not a slight deviation from God's way.

[23:13] That is a complete contradiction. You're acting completely out of character with God our Father. And remember, all children of God are called to be imitators of their Father in heaven.

Ephesians 5.1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love. But when you show favoritism, you're acting absolutely contrary.

The opposite of your Father in heaven. This is the second time in the book of James that we see that James believes in the doctrine of election. We saw it in verse 18 of chapter 1.

He chose to give us birth through the word of truth. God's the one who chooses who's born again. Now we're told, again, for the second time, that he chose to save the poor.

He chose who is to be saved. But you know what I'm noticing about James? Is that he doesn't hold this doctrine of election as an impractical doctrine unattached to life.

[24:21] He rather makes it a very part of his argument as to why we have no reason to show partiality to anyone.

Sinful partiality is out because of the doctrine of election. And I wonder, do I hold the truths of God with that kind of way that James holds them?

Am I just happy to say, well, I've got all the truths in order. I know God chooses whom he'll save. And be content with that. Or do I hold the truths of God in a way that I see their implications?

If this is true, this can't be true. If God chooses, then I can't show favoritism. That's the way James holds this doctrine. Now, whom has God chosen to save?

Well, look around and see, James would say. And as you look around, you see a whole lot of poor people. Indeed, the majority of the church of Christ was comprised of poor, common folk.

[25:23] It's that way in the churches of Macedonia. They were in extreme poverty, Paul says. It's that way in Corinth. He says in 1 Corinthians 1, Brothers, think of what you were when you were called.

Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose, and that's the same word as we have here in James 2.5.

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast before him.

And God chose the poor of this world, James says. It's a wonderful thing to see God choosing the poor. It shows that he's concerned for the world's rejects.

And folks, that's why we're saved. We were infinitely more despicable to God than that man in shabby clothes could ever be to us.

[26:28] And yet he chose to save us. God has chosen to save poor people. Doesn't mean if you're poor, God's chosen to save you.

No, it's those who love him. I mean, they will love him. Not all poor people die and go to heaven.

No, it's just saying that God has chosen poor people and a whole lot of them.

What are you doing insulting them? You see, if you take as a routine and you routinely despise the poor, I mean, just he walks in. What's he ever done to you?

He's not done anything against. He's just poor. And because of that, you treat him with less love than the rich. If you routinely despise the poor, eventually you will despise one of God's elect who is, in fact, a rich brother in Christ.

So rich that you can't imagine it. Rich in the things that count. You will seat on the floor beside your feet. One whom God has seated in the heavenly realms.

[27:27] It's no small thing to God how you treat his chosen ones. He chooses them and you insult them.

You're acting in a way that is contrary to God. It is not very God-like at all. That is, it is not very godly at all.

What do we call that? We call it ungodliness. Unholiness. Unholiness. These are the poor in the eyes of the world. They're financially poor, but they're chosen by God to be rich.

Rich in faith. Faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see. And these people are rich in faith.

And to be rich in faith is to be rich indeed. It's rich because of what faith brings to you. Faith rests upon Christ. It joins you to Christ. So that all that is Christ then is yours.

[28:30] Oh yes, he's financially poor, but he's rich in Jesus. Because his faith rests in Christ. And it brings to him all the righteousness of Jesus. What's that worth? Put a dollar amount on it in the day of judgment.

In the day you die. To know that you have the righteousness of Jesus. That is to be rich. He chose those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith.

And if they have faith, then they have forgiveness of sins. They have peace with God. They have fellowship with God. They have the kingdom that he's promised those who love him.

The kingdom is the biggest thing happening. And these poor people with faith, they possess it. And James is saying to these first century Christians, Have you forgotten what God's electing grace does to the poor?

It elevates them to amazing riches. Don't ever let appearances fool you. Either the rich or the poor. We saw that in James 1, 9 through 11.

[29:37] You're looking at that rich man and you're thinking, He's got it all together, folks. He's going to die like a wildflower. He may not have Christ. He may not have faith. He may not have anything worth hanging on to.

Why are you so enamored with this rich guy? Don't be thrown off by this poor man either. He may be far richer than you know.

Oh, John MacArthur is a boy. Lived next to a golf course. And he tells how the man who owned the golf course also owned most of the town. And yet for all of his wealth, he dressed like a tramp. And one day he was walking on his own golf course and was picked up by the police and jailed as a drifter, loitering where he shouldn't be.

Evidently one of his own employees who didn't recognize him saw this bum on the golf course and says it doesn't fit with the high society type people we have at our golf club. And in they came and took him away.

[30:41] Don't judge by mere appearances. The visitor in shabby clothes may be one of God's elect and heir of the kingdom rich in faith. 2 Corinthians 5.16 So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. Behold, all things are passed away.

The old has become new. And one of the old things that becomes new is the way that we regard people. We used to regard people, Paul says, from a worldly point of view.

And when I first see you, I evaluate you by what you're wearing and how beautiful you look and how much influence you have in society. And I judge you by that.

And I pigeonhole you. And I have you in my slot here in my mind. That's the way the world evaluates people. And we once regarded people in that way.

[31:48] But from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. We don't view people the way the world does. We think differently about them.

To show favoritism is to be judges with evil thoughts. It is to act contrary to God our Father. And thirdly, it is nonsense in light of the facts.

Favoritism for the rich makes no sense whatsoever. We've considered the poor who are being discriminated against by favoritism to the rich.

And upon closer look at the poor, we found that God has actually chosen some of these poor and made them rich beyond telling. Now let's look more closely at these rich people that we tend to just tip the hat to and kowtow to because they are rich.

Let's look closely at them. Three rhetorical questions shed light on the rich. The first question, verse six. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you?

[32 : 59] Kids exploiting is not a good thing. It's to take advantage of. It's to rip you off.

Is it not the rich who are ripping you off? This was a telltale mark of first century Christianity. The rich and the powerful were using their influence to bully, tyrannize, and take advantage of poor Christians.

And that's often the way it has been down through church history. The wealth has been on the side of the oppressors and persecutors of Christians. Question number two. Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?

The rich? Was that not the case with Paul that we read in Acts 25? Were it not the great leaders and the influential and those who were better off that were dragging this vagabond Christian into court using the courts to their advantage to exploit Christians, to confiscate their property?

And whether the charges are true or not mattered nothing to them. They're out to take advantage of Christians and they'll use the courts to get there.

[34 : 13] That's how Naboth lost his vineyard and his life to Jezebel and Ahab. So it makes no sense at all. Why would Christians pander to the rich who are so often the ones who are out to get them?

Why would you flatter the very ones who are out to fillet you? Are they not the ones who exploit you? Are they not the ones dragging you into court? And the last question is the most stinging of the three.

Verse 7. Are they not the ones who are slandering that noble name of him to whom you belong? Slandering, blaspheming, it could be translated. Blaspheming that worthy name of him by whom you are called.

You see, the Christians were called Christians. They were called by the worthy name of Christ. They were married to him. And in marriage, you take the name of your husband. And Christians being married to Christ have had his name put upon them.

That honorable name of Christ. And these wealthy, rich unbelievers blaspheme that name.

[35 : 22] They speak against that name. And that's the deepest wound of all. So why in the world would you want to pander to the rich just because they are rich?

It makes no sense at all. Because if you routinely show favoritism to the rich, eventually you will be brown-nosing the very ones who are exploiting you and slandering your Savior.

Wake up. Listen. Listen, my dear brothers. You see why James is saying it. It makes no sense. And I say, why should the child of God today be in awe of the rich and the famous and the movie stars? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the worthy name of Christ by which we are called? May the Lord save us from any unhealthy fascination with the rich and famous of this world who blaspheme Christ.

It just doesn't make sense, James says. And lastly, fourthly, at least lastly for this morning, we'll see more reasons next week, but showing favoritism is acting completely out of line with faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

[36 : 45] Now here we go back to the beginning because we read over it and we didn't pause. And I wanted to save it for last because it has the most punch of all. Dear friends, as believers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

These things don't belong together ever. Faith and favoritism. As believers, as one with faith in our glorious Lord Jesus, don't show favoritism.

You see how he brings them together? Your identity as a believer, as one with faith, child of God, is to forever keep you from ever showing favoritism. You see, the engine is faith.

Here's the energy. Here's the power to put this sin to death. Now how does it look? How does it work? Well, as believers, as those with faith, faith looks to the person of Christ.

This belief that we have looks to the person of Christ. And when we look to Christ, what do we see? Notice how James refers to him. Our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

[38 : 06] There was a time when James did not even believe in him. There was a time when he saw no glory in him whatsoever, his older brother. But now with a new heart and new eyes, he calls him Lord.

Sometimes we just read right over that. Lord Jesus Christ. And we think it's all just his name. No, Lord is his title. He's telling he is a Lord. He is a master.

He's a king. He's our ruler. And then he highlights his glory. He doesn't just say, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He says, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, or our Lord Jesus Christ of glory. For the sun is the radiance of God's glory.

John says, we've seen his glory, the glory of the one and only. What James is saying is, when you look at Jesus, you see the glory of God. He is the manifestation of God's glory to earth.

[39:09] He is God in the flesh. So if you'd see the glory of God, look at Jesus, our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. And when we do look at him, we see in him what is stated so many places about God in scripture.

That he shows no favoritism. Deuteronomy 10, 17. For the Lord our God, for the Lord your God, is God of gods and Lord of lords, who shows no partiality.

Acts 10, 34. Peter says at Cornelius' house, I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism. Paul says of Jew and Gentile that God is no respecter of persons.

Ephesians 6, 9. A word to the masters. Be careful how you treat your slaves because you have a master in heaven and there is no favoritism with him.

You may have all of society bowing down before you, big master. You're really something with all your slaves. But remember this, your master in heaven has no favoritism. He's not moved by the fact that you're a master rather than a slave.

[40:21] Now that is our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. No partiality. No favoritism. When he walked among us, even his enemies confessed in Luke chapter 20, you do not show partiality.

That's what his enemies said of him. And what do we see when we follow him through the Gospels? We see him showing kindness to all. There, his kindness is running out to a Jew. Yeah, that lot that rejected him and would nail him to a cross.

And now he's showing kindness to the half-breed Samaritan. And now he's showing kindness to a full-blown dog, a Gentile. No partiality in him.

He preaches the Gospel to rich Zacchaeus, but he's also preaching to the poorest of the poor, the downcast, the outcast of society.

He's healing, he's feeding, he's saving, he's teaching. Oh! He didn't favor the rich above the poor, the influential above the rejects of society, because he does not judge by mere outward appearance.

[41:34] He doesn't curry the favor of those who seem to be important. He doesn't discriminate against the poor. You insult them, he stoops to their poverty to help them.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might be made rich.

That's our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, kind to the poor, so kind to you and your poverty, that he stooped to become poor for you.

Born in a manger, a cattle stall, straw for a bed, so poor he had no place to lay his head.

His parents were so poor they couldn't make the usual offering, had to make the dove offering for the poverty, those poverty stricken. That's our Savior. He becomes poor yet on Calvary when he takes all of our liabilities on himself, all of our debts.

[42:47] You talk about being poor. Your debts. My debts. All of our debts placed on him. He becomes poor for us, and we will insult the poor?

As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. You see the punch of James? This is the apex of his glory. The fact that he becomes poor.

Isn't that what makes him so glorious in our sight? That our glorious Lord would become poor for us? This is what makes him glorious in the eyes of his Father. He sees him stoop and humble himself all the way to the death of the cross.

And so he highly exalts him. He doesn't discriminate against me when my sin was obnoxious to him.

So are you a believer in this glorious Lord Jesus Christ? Don't show favoritism then. We expect favoritism from snobbish country clubbers.

[43:52] We expect discrimination from followers of Hitler. We expect prejudice from followers of the world, but there's no place at all for any of this favoritism in the followers of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

To follow Christ is to reflect who he is, what he stands for, how he acts. So dear believers, dear brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, do not show favoritism.

Now you see James placed belief then right up front. Here's the answer. Faith is the engine. Faith is the power to break the back of all this prejudice and favoritism.

Faith that looks to Christ and sees him in all of his glory, stooping and ministering and saving poor likes like us. Joseph Parker says, He whose eye is filled with Christ never sees what kind of coat a man has on.

When you are so dazzled with the glory of Christ as believers in our glorious Lord, you will not be dazzled by earthly splendor in a man or a woman.

[45 : 11] So if you find any favoritism in your heart this morning, you must look again at our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. Act fresh faith on him. Look to Jesus.

And you will stop showing favoritism to the poor or against the poor or to the rich. It's faith in Christ that moves us.

And that, my friend, is what separates us from the mere moralist who's just preaching this morning against discrimination. Pulpits are full of preachers preaching against discrimination.

Don't show favoritism. That's not James' message, folks. It's, dear brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

It's the difference between a mere moralist and a true Christian. We obey with an eye on our Savior. The one place on earth where we should find no favoritism is in the church.

[46 : 15] From believers, where the cross is the great equalizer, where we're all one in Christ Jesus, that means, Christians, that we above all people should be colorblind, moneyblind, beautyblind, and every other kind of blind that so often sways us in the way that we think about and treat other people.

It's anti-Christ, James is telling us. It's totally unacceptable. It's evil to the core. And it reveals a heart that's out of touch with the gospel, a heart that's out of touch with Christ's heart.

So suppose a man comes into your meeting. Now, James wouldn't have selected this if there wasn't a need for it, if it didn't exist, if there was no problem.

And so the question is not, is there any discrimination and is there any favoritism in my heart? But where is it? Where is it? Have you searched your heart?

Where am I showing favorites? Where am I thinking evil thoughts and discriminating against people?

[47 : 35] Do I show any favoritism in who I offer the gospel to? And who I talk to and who I befriend with kindness? Who I invite to church? Who I welcome at the church?

Who invite into my house for a meal? Who I go out of my way to serve? What is my attitude toward minorities?

Toward the Hispanics? They're all around us now. What about my first impressions of people? Do I judge them by the world's standards?

Attaching importance to them based on how they look and what they have? Or do I see them as Christ sees them? Am I prejudiced against Christians from other denominations?

Just because they're not one of us. More concerned with who said it than what said it, than what is said. What's my attitude toward the poor and the broken of society?

[48 : 38] Am I put off by them? Or am I drawn to them? To help them? Have you considered that sometimes hard times economically come upon a nation in order to test the church and to see whether or not they will show favoritism or whether they will be moved to show active love to the poor and needy?

Could it be that's why hard times have come to our world? That God desires to put on display the wonder of wonders that believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ don't show favoritism and they move toward the poor and needy with what they have.

Doesn't care what color of skin, doesn't care. No, they're like their glorious Lord and it brings Him glory to show that to the world. Have we even thought of that or are we just too busy thinking how the economy has or hasn't affected us?

There are the tracks of God's law. Don't show favoritism. And here's the engine strong enough to drive your life down that track.

Faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. Look to Him. Receive strength from Him. Sinner friend, we gladly commend this Savior to you.

[50 : 10] He shows no favoritism. Whatever prejudice you may have felt from us or others, we confess as our sins. But you'll never find any of it in Him.

What a welcome we received when we came to Jesus. And it simply means this, that whoever you are and whatever you've done, if you come to this Christ, He will welcome you.

He will not turn you away. He'll save you. You come to Him to be saved from your sins, He'll save you. He'll forgive you. And He'll conquer prejudice and discrimination and favoritism in your heart, even as He's doing in ours.

Let's pray. Thank you, our Father, for the ministry of your word to our hearts. We're awakened to see that we do so many things that are so contrary to you, to Christ, even to common sense.

And so we thank you for a time to consider our blessed Lord Jesus and to consider His word and to think, to see just how out of line this favoritism is.

[51 : 18] Search our hearts, even as you've made it ugly in the face of the beauty of Christ, stooping to minister to us. do move upon our hearts in power that we might show forth the same love to all, rich or poor, white or black, high or low on the totem pole, beautiful or ugly, whatever their outward appearance, O Father, give us to see like your Son and so to show forth His beauty and glory.

We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.