

James

Practical Principles for Life

Zoom Bible Study | Lesson Three

November 21, 2023

Chapter 2

James 2:1 – 7

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³If 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," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: 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? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

Jesus understood favoritism - he experienced it.

Isaiah 53:1-3: Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ²He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.³He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

He was *despised* and *rejected*.

Think of how the religious experts of his day judged Jesus by human standards and rejected him.

- He was from the wrong city
- He had no acceptable education
- He had no titles
- He had no wealth
- He had no connections
- His followers were nondescript nobodys and sinners

Jesus came to break down these walls that divided humanity:

Ephesians 2:14 – 15: For he himself (Jesus) is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace...

Jesus said that riches can be an obstacle to the kingdom of God:

Matthew 19:24: Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Is it wrong to be rich? No, but it is dangerous.

Proverbs 30:8: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.

1 Timothy 6:10: For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Samuel 16:7: But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

- You can be poor in this world and rich in the next.
- You can be rich in this world and poor in the next.
- You can be poor in this world and poor in the next.
- You can be rich in this world and rich in the next.

James says that God has chosen the poor. Why does God choose the poor?

1 Corinthians 1:26 – 29: Brothers and sisters, 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. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.

Riches can easily lead to exploitation:

- Money buys influence
- Money buys court decisions
- Money buys power
- Money buys opportunities

James 2:8 - 13

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Why is "Love your neighbor as yourself" the royal law?

What are some types of people that we today, as Christ-followers, could discriminate against and which ones could we show favoritism to?

James makes it clear that showing favoritism is sin.

Who can keep the whole law? No one. We cannot be justified by the works of the law.

Galatians 2:16: Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

What is the "New Covenant"?

We will still be accountable for how we use the freedom we have in Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Jesus paid the price to redeem us from the law.

Galatians 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."

What is mercy? When we say or sing "Lord, have mercy on us," what are we asking?

Has God shown your mercy? Describe it.

So, here James is saying that anyone who withholds mercy to others, after they've been shown such amazing mercy by Christ, will receive judgment without mercy. .

Jesus made the same point in this parable:

Matthew 18:23 – 35: "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶ "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³² "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

This principle goes back to Solomon's time:

Proverbs 21:13: Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered.

Jesus said:

Matthew 5:7: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Then James says: "Mercy triumphs over judgment."

The good news for every child of God in Christ is that God's mercy toward us will triumph over his judgment of us.

Romans 8:1: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

James 2:14 – 26

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James describes **three kinds of faith**, only one of which is true saving faith.

Dead Faith

(verse 17: In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.)

Matthew 7:21: Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Galatians 6:10: Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1 John 3:17-18: If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Faith in Christ brings life, and where there is life, there must be growth and fruit. Dead faith is counterfeit faith and lulls the person into a false confidence of eternal life.

Demonic Faith

"Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord!" (Deuteronomy 6:4). This was the daily affirmation of faith of the godly Jew. Still is to this day. James addresses this directly.

(Verse 19 - "Even the demons believe that - and shudder." What do demons believe?)

- They believe in the existence of God.
- They believe in the deity of Christ.
 - Mark 3:11-12:** Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹² But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.
- They believe in the existence of a place of punishment.
 - Luke 8:30 – 31:** Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.
- They recognize Jesus Christ as the Judge.
 - Mark 5:6 – 8:** When he (impure spirit) saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷ He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" ⁸ For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"

Demonstratable Faith

(James said: verse 18 - Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.)

Hebrews 11:6: And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

The role that faith plays in the life of a believer:

- The sinner is saved by faith.
Ephesians 2:8 – 9: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.
- The believer must live by faith.
2 Corinthians 5:7: For we live by faith, not by sight.
- Without faith it's impossible to please God.
Hebrews 11:6: And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
- Whatever we do apart from faith is sin.
Romans 14:23: But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin

What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

What are you confident of—what do you hope for—that you do not see?

How do you know if your faith is real and if it is strong? Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I truly understand the Gospel?
2. Did I sincerely repent of my sins and turn from them? Or do I secretly love sin and want to enjoy it? Or do I hate sin and fear God?
3. Have I trusted Christ and Christ alone for my salvation?
4. Has there been a change in my life? Do I maintain good works, or are my works occasional and weak? Am I growing in the things of the Lord?
5. Do I have a desire to share Christ with others?
6. Do I enjoy the fellowship of God's people? Is worship a delight to me?
7. Am I ready for the Lord's return? Or will I be ashamed when he comes for me?