

Tonight, we continue our walk through the book of James...

So far, we have seen how the testing of our faith leads to our growth in Christ... how we are to hear the word and also put it into action...

Something we will say about James weekly is that it helps us understand what happens when *faith and life collide*...

Every week though, it seems that James is going deeper than just surface level... *he is attacking the heart*... the truths James is mentioning are not just to change or challenge our actions or fruit... but also our root.... our heart - that's where the focus is!

Tonight, we check out another aspect of living our faith out – *loving all people regardless of their status!*

I bet some of us heard... if not said something today that was demeaning to someone who is different from us... Whether it was what they look like, what their status is... demeaning their gender, their color, how much money they have... what their parents do...

Many times, we let these aspects play into what we think about people!

James is about to tell us that we are wrong in doing that...

READ: *James 2:1-13*

Main Focus: The follower of Christ is to love others regardless.

The Command...2:1

(1) This passage begins with a command that is really simple – don't show partiality...

As you pursue Christ don't show *favoritism*...

Partiality literally means to be partial towards something... to show favor towards something over something else... in this case it is showing partiality or favoritism with people... loving some and not the other in based on their looks or their status...

James discourages this type of behavior for the believer...

He basically says, as you *hold the faith* (as you pursue Christ) you shouldn't show partiality...

He is saying true Christians don't do this... this is not Christlike...

He then illustrates what not to do...

What not to do... 2:2-7

this is an example of what not to do and why

The story (2-4)

Specifically, this scene plays out in what James calls an *assembly*... a church

James paints this picture of a rich man who comes into a church and everyone seems to treat him with respect and honor specifically because of his status... his money...

The rich man is invited to take a seat of high honor... he is asked to be *seated* in a *good place*...

The grand treatment of the rich man is contrasted with the treatment of the poor man who is treated with no respect, no love... specifically, because of his status – he is asked to *stand* away from the other, or worse to sit at their feet... the place where a servant would sit...

Let's put this in our terms... say you are at lunch... or even more church and someone you don't know come up and they are dressed nicely and seem to have it all together, they probably have a little bit of money... so you invite them to sit with you...

Meanwhile, another person walks in... maybe they look a little rough, and you can tell they don't have a ton of money and instead of inviting them to sit or even just allowing them to sit... befriending them... you tell them they can't sit with you or you make fun of them because of what they look like... even if it's not to their face... we have all done this in some way... been exclusive...

The explanation... the heart 5-7

Listen to what James says about that...*have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

James is saying, in doing this you have become partial, or shown favoritism on the basis of the way they look and the things they have... and this is wrong, evil...

As followers of Christ we don't judge one another... to do so is to show we have evil thoughts in our heads... evil motives in a way we only do these kinds of things for ourselves!

We don't want to be associated with those kinds of people... because who knows what others will think!

But James totally flips it on us... because in God's economy it isn't about status, money, looks... its about faith!

- God chose the poor to be rich in faith (5-7)

God's heart is for the poor! We saw this last week, the call to love the widows and orphans!

James says God has *chosen* the poor to be rich in faith... God is the giver of all, physical things and faith!

You see James is trying to illustrate the fact that we might not like the poor, but God loves them... They are near to God's heart and they should be close to ours...

We see many examples in the Scriptures of those who are poor but have great faith...

Jesus himself was poor

The disciples all poor

Ruth and Naomi poor...

All these and many others would have been *humble*. However, they did great things for the kingdom...

This is James' point – we are not to favor people because of their status...

He says it's foolish to favor the people who *oppress you and drag you into court and speak badly against Jesus*

The crazy thing is, we connect with this...

Think about how often we surround ourselves with people who are *not good* for us... they hurt us or our relationship with Christ... we just want to be with them because they give us a good image, or we think we need them... when really the last thing we need is to be with them...

Here's what James is saying – do not judge others... don't be partial toward people based on physicalities...

What to do... 2:8-13

James then turns the tables from what not to do, to what do to...

Follow the Scriptures and love others

- To fulfill the law, love your neighbor (8)

The royal law, meaning "law belonging to the king," this is a reference to God's law in Lev. 19:18 ("love your neighbor") We hear Jesus say this very thing in Matt. 22:34–40 as the apex of kingdom rules for ethical conduct... the follower of Christ is to be about love... playing favoritism is not a mark of Christian love...

Rather, we are to *love our neighbor* as our self!

God is our example in this... even though in our sin we are dirty rags... he still chose us...

The warnings

- We then get these *two warnings* from James to help us understand it all...

James says, (9) if you do show partiality, you are wrong... you sin against God...

And while this may not seem like a big deal, James tells us, to fail at this is to fail in all the law...

(10-11) If we fail in even one part of the law... we fail in it all...

The law is a standard of God's holiness and righteousness... to fail in any part of it is to fail in all of it... to fall short of God's glory.

- James ends this section with the conclusion in *12-13* that we should speak and act as those who are judged under the law of liberty... meaning, we're to speak and live like Christians... as redeemed people...

The final statement of the passage tonight encourages the Christian to show mercy... one day we shall stand before the Lord and give an account for that which we have or haven't done... as we show mercy to others., God will show mercy to us...

Application...

Show love to all people regardless of status or looks...

- At school inviting them to sit with you
- Encouraging the other players on your ball team
- Helping others in school... tutoring them

Pray for the Lord to give you a loving heart

Be thankful for the mercy shown to us!

Questions...

1. *What stood out from the night?*
2. *What are ways you have shown favoritism, even if it was unintentional?*
3. *What are ways Jesus cared for the poor?*
4. *What are opportunities we can serve the poor as a student ministry?*