

## **Jas12 – Is Favoritism *That Big a Deal?* James 2:8-13**

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Is Favoritism *That Big a Deal?*” We’re back on the same subject with round two. James is still addressing the sin of favoritism and we are still dealing with the direct exhortation from James 2:1.

### **James 2:1 (ESV)**

*1 My brothers (believers), **SHOW NO PARTIALITY** (No Favoritism) *as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ . . .**

We got a good start with this command last message, as James continued to connect his encouragement all the way back to James 1:22. All of James is connected to this verse and expands on this verse.

### **James 1:22 (ESV)**

*22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

We can be Christians and be self deceived. Last message James started on us being doers of the Word in regard to how we interact with those around us. And remember the power of James 2:1 from the NLT:

### **JAMES 2:1 (NLT)**

*1 My dear brothers and sisters, **how can you claim to have faith** in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?*

Really, *is favoritism that big a deal* that even our *faith* is brought *into question* over it; if I show favoritism to one and disregard the needs of another? Apparently, it is *that big a deal*.

Let’s pray. *Heavenly Father, please, open your Word, living, powerful and active, sharp, discerning. Lord we give you the right to do the surgery on our hearts. Show us, if we are self deceived, show us how deceived we are, and heal us Lord. Bring healing and transformation through conviction, confession and repentance, bring the power to be transformed into your image today. We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.*

James continues his exhortation this message that if we claim to be “holding the faith” in Jesus Christ, then we must adhere to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in *how* we relate and interact with the people around us.

Here we go, let’s jump in; we will develop the thought as we go.

### **James 2:8 (ESV)**

***8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.***

We’re not sure if James is being sarcastic here or if he’s actually being encouraging. (This is interesting, because people often can’t tell whether I’m being sarcastic or encouraging either!) In any case, James starts here with two great points.

First, he says ***“if you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture”*** Now we have a tendency to fixate on that word “law” and we think only of the Mosaic Law which we only understand well enough to be afraid of. So please, don’t do that.

Yes James is definitely building on the Old Testament law. But here he calls it “The Royal Law.” “Royal” denoting a king’s ownership, which is most likely a reference to Jesus Christ. James is not talking about a law that contradicts the Old Testament law, but instead he is talking about a law that fulfills the Old Testament law. It’s the “law fulfilled in Jesus Christ” and that law says “Love your neighbors as yourself.” The Ten Commandments are broken into two simple divisions, love God and love your neighbor. The first four commands are vertical – love God. The remaining six commands are horizontal – love your neighbor.

Today, James is talking about the second half of the Ten Commandments, love your neighbor. In Leviticus 19:18 the law says:

### **Leviticus 19:18 (ESV)**

***18 . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself . . .***

Then in Matthew 22, Jesus sums up all of the law in two great commandments. The first is – ***You shall love the Lord your God with all your HEART, SOUL and MIND.*** And then in Matthew 22:39 Jesus says:

### **Matthew 22:39 (ESV)**

***39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.***

And then, (still building) Jesus raises the bar on the Old Testament law in Luke Chapter 10 where he explains who your neighbor is. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus clearly defines our neighbor as the person in front of us.

Now, *what about* this “love that other person as yourself?” How are we to define that? The commentator George M. Stulac defines “loving your neighbor as yourself” like this:

**Loving your neighbor means treating the concerns of others as important as your own.**

**Loving your neighbor means treating the needs of others as needs you and they have in common.**

I love those definitions, they are very, very clear.

So, in verse 8 James say if you fulfill the Royal Law of loving your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. Meaning you are doing well in the sense of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life. As Jesus himself said in John 14:15 ***“If you love me, you will keep my commandments”*** and if you are loving your neighbor as yourself, you are keeping the Lord’s commandments and doing well.

But now, let’s get to the other side.

**James 2:9 (ESV)**

***9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.***

Favoritism is so serious to James because it directly violates the law of “loving your neighbor as yourself.” This is partly because showing favoritism to one person always means mistreating another person, as James explained in verses 2 and 3 last message. But also (and maybe even more so) the true sin of showing favoritism was also uncovered last message in James 2:4.

**James 2:4 (NLT)**

***4 doesn’t this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?***

Not only does favoritism always mean mistreating someone else, but it also shows the sin of your evil motives. Meaning you’re trying to get something from that person for yourself. And so, showing favoritism is always a sin against the law of “loving your neighbor as yourself.” James is going to say that we should be very concerned about the condition of our spiritual life at that point. James wants us to know *this is a very big deal*. James wants us to feel the weight of the fact that if we are mistreating the people around us, whether in favoritism or in disregard, then we are guilty of sin.

We are guilty of breaking the Old Testament law.

We are guilty of breaking the Law of Love commanded by Jesus.

We are guilty of breaking the Law of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

He wants us to know this is a big deal!

In fact, a Christian living like this is such a contradiction that it's like saying you're following the Law of Moses because you're not committing adultery even though you are a mass murderer.

**James 2:10-11 (ESV)**

***10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.***

***11 For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.***

A common explanation for the breaking of God's law is like a huge sheet of glass. If you break any part of that sheet of glass you have broken the whole sheet of glass. And James is saying, hey, if you think you're doing good with God and you're showing favoritism to get what you want from people, then you've broken the whole sheet of glass. And maybe we think James is being a bit dramatic, but he is trying to get the point across that how we treat people, whether showing favoritism for our selfish motives or disregarding them because they don't have anything to offer us, either way it is a very serious sin; God sees it as a serious breach of his law. And we're going to see in a minute that God will hold us accountable for it.

Now, in verses 12 and 13 James give us sufficient motivation to recognize this sin; to repent of this sin; and to be transformed more into Christ-likeness in this area. Here's the motivation...

**James 2:12 (ESV)**

***12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.***

This is a motivational verse. James is saying the way we speak and the way we act (especially in regards to our motives) should be driven by the fact that one day we are going to be judged under this Law of Liberty. In the Greek these are present, active imperatives. Meaning, we should *always* be ***Speaking & Acting as those who will be judged under the law of liberty.***

And maybe if you're a Christian today you would say, “Hey, I thought I escaped all that judgment stuff when I received Christ?”

If you have truly put your faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal judgment for your sin (separation from God) has been paid in full by Jesus Christ and you will definitely escape that eternal judgment. However, the Bible is also clear; there is a judgment (an

accounting) of our actions that all Christians will face. If you're interested in this subject, get our message from the Revelation series called "Judgment, Rewards and Loss" (#12).

This judgment seat is clearly spelled out in 1 Cor 3:10-15 and it is also clearly stated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

### **2 Corinthians 5:9-10 (ESV)**

*9 So . . . we make it our aim to please him.*

*10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

Paul also uses this "Judgment Seat" we will each face as "motivation" for us to deal with our sin. There will be an accounting for our actions, a judgment before the Great Throne of Jesus Christ. And if Jesus is truly our Lord, knowing that our actions will be judged by him should motivate us to bring those actions into alignment with his will.

But (this is critically important) James is not talking about following the external law to *earn* something. This Royal Law – this Law of Liberty (that sets you free) – this is the internal law that God has written on our hearts *in Jesus Christ*. He is talking about the law the Prophet Jeremiah was talking about when he spoke for God in Jeremiah 31:33.

### **Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV)**

*33 . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

This is the law of the Life of Jesus Christ within in. It's the law of his Lordship in your life and this is the law that will judge us, not in condemnation for our sin, but in our response to the life of Jesus Christ living in and through us.

Peaking of this Judgment Seat of Christ, the commentator Edmond Hiebert says:

*"Those who fail to allow the indwelling Spirit to work this love-prompted change in their lives will find the reality of the judgment seat a solemn experience indeed"*

Better to hear it now and be able to respond to it now than to hear it then and not be able to respond to it.

And... James isn't quite done making his point to motivate us to repent of this sin in our lives.

### **James 2:13(a) (ESV)**

*13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy . . .*

Here is the NLT:

**James 2:13 (NLT)**

*13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.*

James is using mercy as the flip-side (contrast) to favoritism. Instead of showing favoritism to those we can benefit from, we need to show mercy to those who are in need. And the big point here is one that is hard for many Christians to accept. If you are not showing mercy to those around you, there will be no mercy for you when you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (hard, but that is what it says.) The good news is if you are being merciful to those around you, then God will be merciful when he judges you.

Have you seen that commercial where the guy is asking a table of five year olds which is the better of two things? Like is fast better or is slow better? Is having more better or less better? The question here is, when you stand at the judgment seat, is mercy from God better or no mercy from God better? If you choose mercy from God is better, James is clearly telling us how to obtain that mercy... by not showing favoritism but instead showing mercy to those around us.

So much of the teaching of James parallels the teaching of Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-2:

**Matthew 7:1-2 (ESV)**

*1 Judge not, that you be not judged.*

*2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*

How do we so easily ignore warnings like these? In Luke Chapter 6, Jesus is talking about not only giving financially, but also giving forgiveness and mercy and Jesus says in Luke 6:38:

**LUKE 6:38 (GNB)**

*38 Give to others, and God will give to you . . . The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you."*

And James echoes that exact same truth here: *There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others*

Is that point sticking with you? Because we are in a Christian culture that needs to hear *how we treat those around us directly impacts how God is going to treat us.*

Alright, here's why this is such a big deal and here's what we really need to hear. Showing mercy to others (loving your neighbor as yourself) does not *earn* you mercy and blessing from God. You have nothing in you that can earn anything from God. But here is what James is trying to get across. The display of divine mercy in your life is evidence that the Life of Jesus Christ is transforming you from the inside out. Because only a person who has truly received the mercy and grace of God can ever show God's mercy and grace to others. And so, if you're not showing God's mercy and grace, it may be because you have not truly received God's mercy and grace yourself.

James is trying to get us to honestly ask ourselves, if we're truly being transformed by the Life of Jesus Christ in us, if we are, then his mercy will be coming out to those around us. We will, (at least progressively) not be showing favoritism to some and ignoring others, but will instead be showing God's divine mercy in caring for all those around us. That is why the way we treat others is such a big deal!

The way we treat the people around us is evidence of whether our lives are truly being transformed by Jesus Christ. And James, like no other book, forces us to look into that mirror and begs us to be honest with ourselves.

Finally, James closes today with this powerhouse statement:

**James 2:13(b) (ESV)**

*. . . Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

Not because judgment has been set aside. It's because the mercy of God in Jesus Christ has triumphed over judgment for our sin and the mercy of the life of Christ in us should be triumphing over judgment and favoritism in our lives. If it's not, then what we need is to more fully receive the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ into our lives. To live less and less of our old self-centered life and more and more of our new life...transformed by Jesus Christ in us.

The beginning is confession and repentance and the power of the Holy Spirit, and then it's developing that relationship daily with Jesus, until his life – more and more – begins to take over your old life.

Let's pray. *Lord we pray that you would show us who in our lives we have not given mercy to. Holy Spirit please give us that person's face. Show us. Who have we shown judgment to instead of mercy? Who have we shown favoritism to for some selfish motive?*

*Lord, reveal this to us individually. Remind us that every soul is of equal value to God. Lord please, convict us. We confess Lord, that in ourselves we show favoritism and we disregard those who have nothing for us and we judge instead of show mercy. Lord, we recognize the sin in our heart and right now we repent. .We pray Lord you would begin to transform us. We say "God change us." We lay aside our old life. We pray Jesus that you would live in us more. We pray you would baptize us in your Spirit for power so that we can walk in the Spirit. Fill us with your life. Convict us Holy Spirit when we are showing judgment instead of mercy, when we are showing favoritism instead of authenticity. Lord we say today that we want more of you and less of us. Let us be a living sacrifice. Let us be transformed by the renewing of our mind, each of us, individually, Lord. Transform us. Draw us each into a daily relationship that will transform us .Draw us into that place that daily refreshes and restores us. Holy Spirit continue to pour into us, that we would be continually filled with your power. That we would continue to turn from our sin and continue to allow Jesus to live through us to show mercy and grace to our neighbor. And may we love others as ourselves. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, amen.*