

## EXPOSING FAVORITISM

Partiality. By another name, favoritism. James calls it sin, we all hate it, and yet, if we're honest, we all practice it to some degree or another. Join us Wednesday night as we discuss this wicked tendency and how we can overcome it.

### **James 2:1-7**

**1 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, You sit here in a good place, while you say to the poor man, You stand over there, or, Sit down at my feet, 4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?**

Contextually, this passage is about **FAWNING OVER** a **wealthy person** who entered a house church. While the wealthy were favored in every area of life and caused the unfair treatment of the poor, their presence among believers could have lent resources and perceived legitimacy to the Way.

Therefore, making them feel **WELCOME AT THE EXPENSE OF THE POOR** was a regular temptation.

So, even among the children of God, **the poor were treated as inferior.**

**1 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.**

There's the Lord of Glory and there's us.

**The Creator Who loves, and the beloved creation.**

That's the only distinction there should be! He makes no distinctions between us.

**The world makes distinctions, though.**

The world is a veritable chorus of voices shouting in unison, "**You're not enough!**"

"You're **DIFFERENT!**"

"Different is **BAD!**"

"**Buy THIS** so you won't be different!"

"**Act like THIS** so you won't be different!"

"**Believe THIS** way so you won't be different!"

**DON'T BE DIFFERENT!**

The Father, in contrast says, "**I love you all the same** in spite of your differences."

The world will bully you into a mold, but the Lord says, "***You weren't made for a mold; you were made for Me.***"

And if we're not vigilant as the body of Christ, we can wind up enforcing the world's values within the Church because of how the world makes us feel.

YOUNG person, INSECURE person, hear this!

**EVERYONE WANTS TO BE LIKED**, but in this world, **BEING LIKED COMES AT A COST**, and if you're not sure of your value in Christ, you will champion the values of the world He died to save you from.

When we find our **IDENTITY IN HIM** and **NOT IN THINGS** we own or lack, or the things we do don't do, *every fellow believer, regardless of status, looks the same as you, and every lost person, regardless of their background, becomes beloved in your sight because they're beloved and sought after in God's eyes.*

### **Galatians 3:28**

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

We're the same!

There's only God, and the people He died to save, which is everyone.

**God is not a "respector of persons."** Hold your place and turn to Matthew 5.

James 2:1 mirrors **Matthew 5:43-45...**

**43 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**

God's blessings don't stop at the good. Theologians would call this COMMON GRACE. Even though they're lost, God is still good to them.

**Romans 2:4**

**Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?**

**RAIN** is a picture of **BLESSING**, and He sends rain on **BOTH**.

Notice that JESUS SAID,

"**LOVE** your enemies **SO THAT YOU MAY BE SONS** of your Father who is in heaven." Now, THIS ISN'T A WORK NECESSARY TO HAVE A **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**.

It is NOT soteriological. The phrase "be sons of your Father who is in heaven" is about **BEING LIKE** our heavenly Father.

We show the world who our Father is by **LOVING LIKE HE LOVES—IMPARTIALLY**.

That's a **SHOCK TO THE LOST WORLD**. Christians are supposed to be bigots, right?

The stereotype we face is being all **BUDDY-BUDDY** with fellow believers, and **UNCARING** (at best) or **HOSTILE** to those who don't believe like we do.

And isn't that how the lost world acts toward us. "Tow the cultural line and you're tolerated; however, intolerance will be met with equal and opposite intolerance."

It's easier to love those who are like us.

Jesus said as much in the sermon on the mount...

### **Matthew 5:46-47**

**46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?**

Jesus is saying, "Way to go! You're acting like a lost person!"

When we act like our heavenly Father toward lost people, that's when we hear things like...

*"You're not like other Christians I know."*

PRAISE GOD! They're getting a glimpse of Who the Savior truly is through us!

Now, a hard fact of life is that, to some degree or another, we all show favoritism.

And whenever we do that, what we're saying is that some people are more or less important than others.

You say, "Not me. I'm not like that. I'd never treat someone that way."

THIS IS HARD! It stings!

There are certain people that we tend to veer away from.

The proof is in HOW WE TREAT THEM.

### **James 2:2-4**

**2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, You sit here in a good place, while you say to the poor man, You stand over there, or, Sit down at my feet, 4**



**have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?**

Did you catch the first thing these believers did to the one who was finely dressed? **THEY PAID ATTENTION TO HIM.**

*Do we give those who have less than us the time of day?*

*Do we take those who look and act differently than us seriously?*

*Do we desire to be close to them?*

*Are we okay with being associated with them?*

*When we see them in public, do we greet them, or hope they don't see us?*

*Would we help them like we help family or close friends?*

*Is "the good" that they offer us good enough?*

James knew the believers he was writing to had the tendency to focus on the “Gold ring and fine clothing.” They were looking upon outward appearances.

Samuel was looking to anoint Israel's second king. He was looking for someone like Saul, who was tall and handsome...

### **1 Samuel 16:7**

**But the LORD said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.**

And at heart, we're all in need of Him as the next person.

But what catches our eye? In our day, James might've well said...

*If someone walks in with the newest phone...*

*If someone pulls up in a Mercedes, a BMW, or even a new truck or Jeep...*

*If someone entertains you with tales of exotic travel or rubbing elbows with famous individuals...*

*If someone beautiful walks in...*

*If someone who seems to have it all together enters...*

That's who we show favor to, right?

The rich

The famous

The beautiful

The generous

The agreeable (those who believe the way we believe)

Those who are like us

But if we **ALLOW OUR ACTIONS TO BE INFLUENCED** by another person's outward appearance, just as the LORD told Samuel,

we're looking at things **LIKE THE WORLD** does, and not as God does.

And why is that so grieving?

The end of verse four says those who show favoritism become "**judges with evil thoughts.**"

What's the evil thought? It's the thought that **SOME PEOPLE ARE LESS VALUABLE** than others.

James 2:5

**5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?**

"Listen, my beloved..." It's like James was saying, "Listen, **HEAR MY HEART...**"

Have you ever considered how **MUCH OF JAMES IS A REBUKE?**

Also, keep in mind that this is a **CIRCULAR LETTER**, meaning that it wasn't necessarily addressed to anyone specific; James

just meant for it to go out and reach as many people as it could.

Imagine being the one delivering the letter to another town.

"What have you got there?"

"It's a letter from James. It's a doozie."

"Oh, yeah, I've heard about this letter."

But when I hear this, I really do hear James saying, "Guys, now come on. Hear my heart. I love you! But don't you understand that God has chosen those who are poor to be rich in faith? The poor are heirs of the kingdom!"

**Matthew 5:3**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

"Favoritism should have no place among you."

James 2:5

**5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?**

You see, the poor were sometimes deemed more pious because of how **THEY ONLY HAD GOD TO DEPEND ON.**

The Greek word translated "poor person" speaks of a **person reduced to begging for alms**; it is used to describe someone who has no wealth, influence and honor, and it can even refer to those "destitute of Christian virtues and eternal riches."

Of such individuals, the NET Bible commentates, ***"men of this class most readily give themselves up to Christ's teaching and proved themselves fitted to lay hold of the heavenly treasure."***

They had nothing and no one else in the world to depend on!

James 2:6

**6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?**

How were the poor dishonored?

**Remember how the world tells you you're not enough?**

Well, these poor people were told that they were **NOBODIES IN THE WORLD**, and when they entered the assembly of believers, believers told them they were **NOBODIES IN THE KINGDOM**.

Whispering to the poor person: “Hey. Hey. Yeah, you. Hop up real quick.”

Louder to the rich person: “Yes, sir! Come have a seat right here!”

Whispering again: “Why don’t you go stand over there. Or just sit on the floor today.”

Meanwhile, the person you favor treats you terribly and doesn't give it a second thought!

**The rich could bring suits against the poor, and the poor couldn’t do the same back to them.** And if a wealthy person

did take a poor person to court, they were helpless; **they didn't have the ability to articulate their case nor the resources to pay someone else to.** Even if the rich did have a suit brought against them, they could pay someone to defend them. **The poor just got ran over.**

James 2:7

**7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?**

How did they blaspheme the Name?

**Revelation 3:17**

**For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing...**

**Proverbs 30:7-9**

7 Two things I ask of you;  
deny them not to me before I die:  
8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
**give me neither poverty nor riches;**  
**feed me with the food that is needful for me,**  
9 lest I be full and deny you  
and say, **Who is the LORD?**  
or lest I be poor and steal  
and profane the name of my God.



**"I WORKED HARD** to get where I am. I did it."

*These are the people you choose to favor?*

### **APPLICATION:**

So, what's the **ANSWER** to favoritism? **LOVE** like you want to be loved—**UNCONDITIONALLY**.

### **James 2:8-9**

**8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.**

### **Matthew 22:35-40**

**35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? 37 And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as**

**yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.**

GREAT COMMANDMENT: Love God and love others; the law and prophets (literally God's will and character) is summed up in love (Matthew 22:40).

Love is the **PERFECT BOND OF UNITY...**

### **Colossians 3:12-14**

**12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**

Love is a deliberate choice. You have to **DECIDE AHEAD OF TIME** that you're going to enter situations with love.

It's like we talked about a little while back regarding wisdom. You don't ask God for it and wait to hear it before deciding if you'll follow it. You ask HIM because you trust He has what you need, and you commit to obeying whatever He shows you whenever He shows you.

The same is true with an attitude of love. You don't wait to meet someone to decide whether or not you're going to love them.

I'll never forget a poem I heard from a person led to Christ through a church ministry of Lee Strobel. "Maggie" was someone who distrusted Christians because, in her experience, they weren't genuine. However, through the efforts of a loving couple, she learned what Jesus was really like, and she gave her heart to Him.

*Maggie's Poem*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that you represent Jesus to me?'*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that when you treat me with gentleness,  
it raises the question in my mind  
that maybe He is gentle, too.  
Maybe He isn't someone who laughs when I am hurt.*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that when you listen to my questions  
and you don't laugh,  
I think, "What if Jesus is interested in me, too?"*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that when I hear you talk honestly about arguments*

*and conflict and scars from your past  
that I think, "Maybe I am just a regular person  
instead of a bad, no good little girl who deserves abuse."*

*If you care, I think maybe He cares --  
and then there's this flame of hope  
that burns inside of me  
and for a while I am afraid to breathe  
because it might go out.*

*Do you know  
do you understand  
that your words are His words?  
Your face is His face to someone like me?  
Please -- be who you say you are.  
Please, God, don't let this be another trick.  
Please let this be real. Please!*

***Do you know  
do you understand  
that you represent  
Jesus to me?***

God made up His mind about you before the foundation of the world. "I LOVE YOU!" Are you going to show the world that you're His children? Be like Him.