

**Passage:** James 2:1-13

**Title:** The Test of Partiality

**Summary:** In our last study the Lord spoke to us about how we hear and listen to people (swift to hear and slow to speak and wrath); and in this study He will speak to us on “how we see people”. Jesus did not just see people with His eyes, but with His heart too, He looked past the outward appearances, and looked into the depth of the person. Today’s passage will speak to us on doing the same.

*James 2:1–13 (NKJV) <sup>1</sup> My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. <sup>2</sup> For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, <sup>3</sup> and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” <sup>4</sup> have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup> Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? <sup>7</sup> Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? <sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; <sup>9</sup> but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. <sup>11</sup> For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup> So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

**Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:**

**(Matthew 7:12 NKJV)** "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

**(Matthew 5:3 NKJV)** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Written by James / Didn't believe – to Leader / Hindsight / Everyday Living**

The Book of James was written by none other than Jesus' brother James. James was a leader in the church, a pillar in the church (Acts 21). James didn't believe that Jesus was God when He walked this earth (John 7:5); but after the resurrection Jesus appears to him (1 Cor 15:4-7), and everything changed. James is going to write us this letter, he will talk about everyday practical stuff. He will talk about trials in life, our works, our tongue, prayer, and other things; as he writes these things, no doubt he will be remembering how Jesus handled them, reflecting back on watching situations, and watching his oldest brother. He will reflect on Jesus' life of love, and a life of sinlessness, in a world that can be so hateful at times, and so full of sin. James will write these things based on hindsight, based on first hand witnessing of how his older brother lived life, everyday. James watched Jesus handle everyday life, and that is what this book is about; it is about living everyday life as a Follower of God, in a fallen world.

## **Jesus Rubbed Off / Nature Illustrations / Favorite Teacher - Sermon on Mount**

We can see how much Jesus rubbed off on James, for James style resembles his brother so much. Like Jesus used nature as illustrations for His teaching points, so does James some 30 times. He uses nature analogies such as the sea, flowers, sun, fire, horses and ships to name a few). It is obvious who James favorite teacher was, because this epistle covers every topic that Jesus covered in the Sermon on the Mount. There is amazing parallelisms between the two; James does not actually quote the Lord's words, but he obviously had internalized Jesus' teachings and reproduced them with spiritual depth. Jesus covered about 30 topics in the Sermon on the Mount, and we will see that James touches on every one of them in this epistle. The Book of James is Sermon on the Mount 2. The Book is also very quick and concise, moving from thought-to-thought quickly. So the Book of James is the New Testament Version of the Old Testament Proverbs. It resembles Proverbs because it is very poetic the way it flows its thoughts using illustrations and analogies.

## So We can Examine Self / How am I Doing

Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount so that we might examine ourselves and ask the question, “so how am I doing in each of these areas?” James writes to the church, to us, and as we read, we have to ask ourselves, “so how am I doing in these areas?” This book is practical and applicable for us living in the year 2022, and the ultimate goal of this epistle is giving to us in verse 4 of chapter 1, to bring us into maturity, perfect and lacking nothing.

As in school, we take tests to see how much of a handle and mastery we have on a subject, we will do the same in this book.

### 3 Key Verses

Here are three key verses to get us going:

*James 2:20 (NKJV)*<sup>20</sup> *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

*James 1:22 (NKJV)*<sup>22</sup> *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

*James 1:4-5 (NKJV)*<sup>4</sup> *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*<sup>5</sup> *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

### *Real Faith – Shows Up in Real Life*

#### The Outline of the Book of James:

##### Chapter 1

- Introduction (1:1)
- The Test of Perseverance and Suffering (1:2-12)
- The Test of Blame in Temptation (1:12-18)
- The Test of Response to the Word (1:19-27)

##### Chapter 2

- The Test of Partiality (2:1-9)
- The Test of the Law (2:10-13)
- The Test of Faith and Works (2:14-26)

##### Chapter 3

- The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)
- The Test of Wisdom Applied (3:13-18)

##### Chapter 4

- The Test of the World's Influence (4:1-12)
- The Test of Dependence (4:13-17)

##### Chapter 5

- The Test of Endurance (5:1-11)
- The Test of Prayerfulness (5:12-20)

### **Intensely Practical / In Your Face / Hebrews / Earthly Scene**

This book is an intensely practical book that packs a powerful punch. James is the kinda book that is in your face, and get it right. In Hebrews we explored the heavenly scene, now James we explore the earthly scene. It was wonderful spending a few months in the heavenlies, I could have stayed in Hebrews for another year, but the fact is until heaven, we are living here (so the blessings of verse-by-verse studying). Studying this book will have a great effect on you, This book is that practical, God even promises us that as we saw last study:

*(James 1:25 NKJV)* *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

In our last study the Lord spoke to us about how we hear and listen to people (swift to hear and slow to speak and wrath); and in this study He will speak to us on “how we see people”. Jesus did not just see people with His eyes, but with His heart too, He looked past the outward appearances, and looked into the depth of the person. Today’s passage will speak to us on doing the same.

### Jesus looked at people, and He saw them!

#### Jesus looking upon them with love, desiring to set them free – from them!

**Mark 10:21–22 (NKJV)** <sup>21</sup> Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” <sup>22</sup> But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

#### Jesus looking upon them with love, desiring to make them a rock, solid and sure in my faith!

**John 1:42 (NKJV)** <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

#### Jesus looking upon them with love, desiring to dine with a sinner such as them, regardless of my past!

**Luke 19:5 (NKJV)** <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

#### Jesus looking upon them with love, desiring to teach them His Word, which is His very Heart. Jesus wants to give them His heart!

**Mark 6:34 (NKJV)** <sup>34</sup> And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.

#### Jesus looking upon them with love, desiring them, before they ever even saw Him!

**John 1:48 (NKJV)** <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

#### Jesus looking upon them with love, desiring to make them whole!

**John 5:5–6 (NKJV)** <sup>5</sup> Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”

What we have before us is James, the half brother of Jesus. No one knew Jesus in these written forms that we call the Bible longer than this man James as he's the oldest brother of at least four that we know of for the family of Jesus and two sisters and James is going to write in a hindsight, no doubt, because he watched his brother handle all these things and today as we look at favoritism, we know it's in reflection of how he saw his brother handle favoritism and those with power, prestige, those with respect and authority, those who people looked up to and on the other side, those who people look down to and we see the heart of Jesus in this and so beautiful because it's God calling us to the heart of Jesus. Favoritism, partiality, God's reading through it all for us, leaving it all clearly before us, a call, a cry, a plea to have a heart for those who have and those who have not and I know we always say the ministry to the poor, but our heart should break to the ministry to the powerful and the proud because who will reach them? Who will pray for them? Who will have compassion on them if it's not us for their souls and their salvation.

Written by Ole Camel Knees, is a man who prayed, inspired by the Holy Spirit, lays out and pours out what's put before us.

What we have, as we always say for this book, a book on faith, real faith that shows up in real life.

What we'll see in our passage today is that faith loves.

### Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

**Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)** <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

### **In Every Study**

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?

- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

*Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*

**(James 2:1 NKJV) My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.**

Verse 1, Lord of glory and that's our whole purpose. Lord, what I'm doing right now, how can I do it that it brings You glory? 1 Corinthians 10, whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God. How can I bring You glory in the midst of this trial? How can I bring You glory in the midst of this temptation? How can I bring You glory as I serve widows and orphans? How can I bring You glory with my tongue and now how can I bring You glory by not showing partiality, favoritism.

Whatever we do, may we do it for the glory of God. Today's topic for glory to God is how we see other people and not showing partiality.

*1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)* <sup>31</sup> *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

### **Sent to Finish**

He didn't win a medal. In fact, he came nowhere near. But, in defeat and in pain, he came to represent something much more profound and enduring than many sportsmen achieve in illustrious careers. John Stephen Akhwari was never likely to win the men's marathon, but his chances were wrecked when, perhaps because of the effects of the high altitude, he succumbed to cramps that slowed his progress. If that was painful, then worse was to come after he was involved in a melee of athletes jockeying for position.

Akhwari fell to the ground, gashing his knee and also causing a dislocation. He also smashed his shoulder against the pavement. Most observers, seeing his injuries, assumed he would pull out and go to hospital. Instead, he received medical attention and returned to the track to continue his race. His pace, of course, was now much lower, but his resolve to complete the event remained intact. Eighteen of the 75 starters had pulled out; he did now wish to add to that number.

And so, more than an hour after the winner, Tanzania's Akhwari crossed the line in last place, cheered home by a few thousand spectators who had remained in the stadium after the sun went down. The medals had already been awarded. By the time he reached the stadium, he was limping and the bandage around his leg was flapping in the breeze.

He was asked why he'd carried on, and his response has gone down in sporting history. "My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race," he said. "They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

Christian, we may be exhausted, limping, or wounded right now from an earlier fall. We may feel like there's is no way we can go on to the end. But there are witnesses cheering us on...and God didn't send us this far just to begin -- He brought us here to run the whole race! So, let's get up! Brush off the dirt and keep going! He will give us the strength!

*Hebrews 12:1-2 (NKJV)* <sup>1</sup> *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

### **Polarizing**

Although our topic may be speaking of rich and poor, the core context is looking at the outward and making determination of the inward. Thus this passage can easily cross over to the area of race, nationality, education, looks, age, and the likes. We live in some of the most polarizing times in the history of humanity, and I pray that we don't get swept away by it, but for every person we look at and we say how can I treat this person in the love of Christ, for the glory of God. Lord may we finish well in living to bring You glory.

While visiting in South Africa, Mohandas Gandhi became impressed with the teachings of Jesus and thought of converting to Christianity, until he attended church. He saw prejudice among its members, and concluded, "If Christian have caste differences of their own, I might as well stay a Hindu.

Once a street person went to join a church. The pastor wasn't sure if the church wanted "her type." He told her to give him a week to think it over, but the week went by, and still no decision. He then said he needed another week... and on and on this went. Finally, in prayer, the Lord spoke to the woman. "My child, don't worry about joining that church. I've been trying for twenty years, and they won't let Me in either."

**(James 2:2 NKJV) For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, (James 2:3 NKJV) and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"**

There is something in us that we have to be aware of when it comes the rich and beautiful, famous and popular. God is no respecter of person, nor should we (as we see when Peter came to the Gentiles): *(Acts 10:34 KJV) Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:*

*(Acts 10:34 NKJV) Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.*

Showing impartiality, we need to all be on guard. It's easy for all of us to do it. Look at Samuel there in Judges. He was one of the most godly, spiritual leaders in all of the Bible. Hard to find him doing anything wrong and yet we see when he came to anoint the king that God had to correct him ever so lovingly and say, "God doesn't look at the outward appearance, but He looks at the heart of man," as Samuel wanted to anoint the one that looked like someone, something of respect and authority and power. Whereas God would say, "No. I look at the heart," and that's really what the whole calling of partiality is, to be on guard. We're not looking at the heart of the man, the woman. We're looking at the outward and then we're tagging that to their heart and it's a disservice to them and of course it's a disservice to the church. *1 Samuel 16:7 (NKJV) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

## **Youth / Peer Pressure / 2 Fold Danger**

You youth, this is a greater struggle for you as you are faced with peer pressure. If I can just be accepted by the Football Captain, or the Head Cheerleader. If I can just get in with the Cool Crowd, then life would be so much better. There is a two-fold danger there.

## **First / Compromise / Are They Doers of the Word / No Pedestal**

First, you may compromise your Christian values to be accepted by them. Well if I am going to hang with the cool crowd, then I'm going to have to do what they do. Well are they going to Youth Group or parties? Are they into being Doers of the Word, or Doers of the World? Don't compromise or abandoned the blessings of God to be accepted. They are not better than you, don't put them on a pedestal. You lift them up, and they will pull you down. Remember, you are sons and daughters of God, His own special people:

*(1 Peter 2:9 NKJV) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

## **Secondly / Missed Blessing / The Beggar**

Secondly, seeking to be accepted and seen by them, can cause you to miss a blessing right before your eyes. Who am I talking about? I am talking about the kid in the corner, that nobody talks to, that other kids make fun, the unaccepted, the lonely, and possibly - the lost.

- The famous Russian author who wrote the novel, War and Peace, tells the story of walking down the street in Russia and a beggar asked him for change to buy bread. He truly didn't have any change, and he put his hand on the mans shoulder, looked him in the eye, and said, "friend, I am sorry I have nothing for you today." The beggar's eyes became filled with tears as he said, "you have given me more than a morsel, for you have given me a banquet, for you have called me

friend." How long had it been for this man that someone had touched him in love, and someone called him friend?

## Kids in School – Neighborhood / Want to Be Like Jesus

There are kids in your school and neighborhood who are dying for someone to call them friend. You don't have to preach to the multitude, or raise the dead to be like Jesus, all you have to do is go find someone who is just looking to be accepted for who they are, and accept them:

**Luke 4:17–19 (NKJV)** <sup>17</sup> And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup> *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;* <sup>19</sup> *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

## Our Church

It applies here, inside the walls of this church for all of us. I make this point over and over, this is OUR church. God puts structure and order to the church in order to meet His plans and purpose for the church, **people are at different levels of maturity, but there are no levels of saints.** God ranks no one over another, we are equally precious in God's eyes, no matter how well, or not so well we are doing spiritually. When you are not doing so well, don't let that lie of Satan keep you from coming – you know the one, ohh you are not worthy to fellowship.

## Last Stop / My First Church / If They Only Knew

As for those coming into the church, for many people, this church will be there last stop, their last shot with God. They have gone to churches and been rejected, blown-off, or equally as bad, unseen. They leave and say never-again, I will never again allow myself to be put in this position again, I will never be vulnerable again, and they never try church, or God again. I've told you before, when I got saved, I went to a Calvary Chapel, somewhat large (about 1,000), but nobody talked to me. I would walk up to a group of singles and they would blow me off. If only they knew what God had done in my life, what He had saved me from. They looked at me as immature and unstable, and of course I was, I just got saved with 27 years of the world deeply rooted in me. You never know when you may be someone's last stop, last try for someone to call them "friend".

**(James 2:4 NKJV) have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?**

We all hate it when we are judged, but here the Lord says if you show partiality, your are actually judging, and therefore guilty of the very thing we all despise (judgment and criticality).

Many churches, they don't want to admit it, but how many churches, their elder board is filled with businessmen who are great businessmen? But I've seen it so many times. They might be great businessmen and have tremendous wealth, but their spirituality is about one inch thick. They're only on the business board because of their wealth and I think there's a place that every church needs to be on guard about things such as that. Business savvy doesn't make you spiritually deep. I've been pastoring a long time, and I have withstood my share of people who have tried to influence me with their money (rather than their spirituality), and a word to anyone in the ministry, God provides (trust in that He does), and don't be influenced by money.

Hey, just make a little point here that James is not a pastoral epistle. It's a Christian epistle on how Christians are to live and it says if anyone should come into your congregation that's important and relevant in that he's given ownership to the whole congregation to call it out when they see partiality and I know there's a place that people expect the pastor to lead and carry forth all discipline, but here is the discipline that is given the calling to all the congregation that when anyone sees partiality, it's to be confronted and I would say somebody in this church showing partiality, especially anything that we see that mirrors into racism, there's a place that anybody in the church to say, "Hey, that's not welcome here," or if anyone sees the partiality. Maybe it's somebody with a handicap. Maybe it's somebody with a hard time upon their life. Maybe it's somebody who is impoverished or poor and they're not being esteemed

and valued in the church. It's a place for the church to call it out and tell the person who's the offender, "Not here, not ever. That needs to stop."

**(James 2:5 NKJV) Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?**

**(James 2:6 NKJV) But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?**

He says, "The poor, rich in faith," because you know what? When all that you have is Jesus, you'll find the depths of your faith that all that I have is Jesus and many poor will come and tell you that he was all that they needed. He had the deception of riches back in chapter one, talking about trials. If I just had money they could buy my way out. Not always, not always. But when they can, then people put their faith in their money, their insurance policy, their job, rather than put their faith in Jesus.

Verse five, totally crushes, dispels this prosperity doctrine, the American prosperity doctrine. If you're great in faith, you'll have wealth and health. James speaking, the heart of the Lord says, not so. Not so at all. I have a place that I always say as I'm preparing, as I'm studying, getting ready to deliver, one of my things is always, "So what?" I ask myself at the end, after I prepare, I ask myself most always as I'm stepping down, "So what?" So what if everybody took the word that you taught and declared as the minister of the gospel? So what would happen to their life?

Would their marriages be strengthened, protected? If they apply, would their faith grow? Would they raise their children in the way of the Lord, or would it be, "So what," they left, they felt good about the message. A little sermonette, maybe. A little light show with the worship, went and left here unchanged. That's always one of my reviews that I do.

But anytime I'm teaching, I always look at my teaching. I said, "Can I teach this anywhere and everywhere, in the county that we live, to the city 10 miles up the road? When I step into the pulpit in India? When I step in the mission field in Nicaragua, Mexico, and if I was to go to China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, could I still teach the same word?" Prosperity doctrine, it just doesn't fly. It's pretty much bound in the borders of the wealthy nations.

But.....Here's a place that it goes the other way too, in that we can see a partiality that if people have money, people look up to them like you can't be godly. You love your money, or you got your money through selfish means, oppression and the likes. Even the poor can show partiality to the rich. In both cases there's an errancy that God's displeased with.

Let's just look at the beauty and the heart of the Lord and the heart that he desires for us to have, as well as James looks at his brother's heart. Oh, what a heart Jesus had for the widows as he would know his mother would become a widow and yet he would care for her, even at the cross before death. All the way to sin and shame and nakedness laid bare before the world.

Yet he would say to his disciple, because his brothers were not yet believers and he would say, "Son, behold your mother. Mother, behold your son," as he would entrust Mary to John his care for the widow and his care and heart for the orphans that he tells us here in James 1, that's pure and undefiled religion. This type of word for religion isn't the worldly word as people come up with all kinds of ways to relink to God. That's literally what the word means in Latin, to relink. Yet people try to relink through their own efforts or their own ways.

But the word religion here is service unto God, reflecting the very heart of God. The very heart of God, care for the orphans. They're fatherless, they're motherless, they have no voice. Speak for them. Then here in verse five, his heart for the poor. He sees them. He says, "In this fallen world, you will have the poor among you," as we've talked, poverty truly comes through the fall.

It's not the fall as in earthquakes nor even famines, but the earthquake of greed. Man, not looking out for the poor. Man, more than enough food to take care of the poor, to house the poor, to educate the poor, and yet greed and oppression, votes and politics. Both sides of the aisle, both parties, all nations. But Jesus says to remember them, to minister to them, to serve them. What a calling for all of us. We don't have to go far. We don't have to go far, to honor and fulfill his word.

**(James 2:6 NKJV) But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?**

Verse six, they can take the poor to court, because they have the money to. They have the money to get the best lawyer. The poor doesn't. They have the money to show up. Well kept, best suit and then they oppress the poor who doesn't have the money to fight, because they can't afford the lawyer. God brings an indictment on the rich. Don't think that rags and holes in your clothes is the dividing line for poor. It's anyone who has the influence above another and uses it to wield to their advantage. I think all of us need to be on guard of that.

Best case in point I can give you, it was wealth and power that crucified the Lord. Those with the money wanted to protect the money. We see the religious with their wealth and power and they were going to go to all means to protect that wealth along with their pride, at whatever the cost.

**(James 2:7 NKJV) Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?**

**(James 2:8 NKJV) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;**

**Who is my neighbor, biblically speaking?**

Many Christians talk about the importance of loving God and loving others, and rightly so. Jesus declared these to be the greatest commandments (Mark 12:28–34; see Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18). The idea that we are to love others is sometimes more specifically stated as the call to love one's neighbor as oneself. "Who is my neighbor?" becomes a natural question to ask.

**Mark 12:28–34 (NKJV)** <sup>28</sup> Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. <sup>31</sup> And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." <sup>32</sup> So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. <sup>33</sup> And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." <sup>34</sup> Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

**Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (NKJV)** <sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

The command to love one's neighbor as oneself comes originally from Leviticus 19:18, which says, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." The Jews of Jesus' day would largely have understood their "neighbor" to be their fellow Israelites. But God has a broader definition in mind. Loving one's neighbor is more than simply loving those who are like us and who can love us in return.

**Leviticus 19:18 (NKJV)** <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

On another note of equal importance, to hold a grudge in Leviticus, to not forgive, to be resentful will hinder your prayers. Do you want your prayer life choked out? Then choke it out with unforgiveness, holding this grudge, not loving your neighbor.

**Mark 11:25 (NKJV)** <sup>25</sup> "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Luke 10 records an incident in which a scribe, an expert on the Jewish law, tested Jesus about what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus turned the question back to the scribe (Luke 10:25–37). The scribe

responded with the command to love God with all of one's being and to love one's neighbor as himself. Jesus affirmed the response. But the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asked, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied with the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

*Luke 10:25–37 (NKJV)* <sup>25</sup> And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" <sup>27</sup> So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' " <sup>28</sup> And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." <sup>29</sup> But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' <sup>36</sup> So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" <sup>37</sup> And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

In this passage, the lawyer, he's trying to find a technicality, a loophole. He wants to be righteous in the works that he's done, measured up to the standard that he has set and yet when Jesus said to love your neighbor, he's looking for the loophole because truly he knows that he hasn't. That's why he asked. But he is looking for a loophole so that he can try to close it up and say that he's done all that needs to be done, nothing new under the sun. So many people looking for loopholes, looking for some type of legality that they can feel that they've checked off or can be excused from. But Jesus, as He tells the story, He leaves knowing in the ability that they can check it off or be excused from. He puts this right before this man, this lawyer who says, "Who is my neighbor."

In the parable (but can't say for sure as it could have been a true story), a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho is attacked and left for dead on the side of the road. A priest walking by sees the man but passes on the other side of the road. The same happens when a Levite travels through. In essence, two Jews, both of whom were from the priestly line of Israelites and should have known and followed God's law, failed to show love to their fellow Israelite in need. However, Jesus said, along came a Samaritan, a person generally disdained by the Jews because of cultural and religious differences. And it was the Samaritan who stopped to help the injured man. He cared for the man's wounds and paid for him to stay at an inn. In short, a person whom the Jews would have considered "unclean" and outside of God's covenant demonstrated compassion for one who would have considered him an enemy. Jesus asked the scribe which of the three passersby was a neighbor to the injured man. "The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise'" (Luke 10:37).

Jesus in the story that's told, He makes the Samaritan the good guy, the hero of the story and the religious couldn't take it. They couldn't bring themselves to agree that a Samaritan who was looked down upon, was considered half pure, considered racial impurity, they just couldn't take it and they couldn't bring themselves to say the Samaritan did what was right and how fitting for us as we live in a day today of man and his look and his racial purity or impurity. We think the partiality is rich and poor. It's very clear in our passage, but it goes way beyond that. The point of the passage is showing partiality. In that day, the rich and the poor, clearly, but there was the partiality between the Jews and the Samaritans and here we are living today, the battle of the skin, showing partiality based on skin color and it goes both ways. It goes always, anytime anyone looks and makes a decision about another based on their skin color, whether it is white or whether it's black, whether it's brown, whether it's anywhere in between. That's this partiality that Jesus is saying. Check your heart. Determine your heart. I'm trying to show you your heart and that's the whole point of James, that we can have a heart examination and then get a heart and course adjustment by the Great Surgeon who can make this great change.

Who's my neighbor? Back to Jesus speaking to the lawyer, He's saying to him, "You know all this stuff. You just don't do." It takes us back to our passage last week. Be doers of the word not hearers only. You can have all the head knowledge in the word. But real faith shows up in real life and this is one of the greatest places that it shows up. It doesn't show partiality. It doesn't show favoritism. It respects and esteems all. It elevates and loves all and it calls out and calls down those that don't carry forth the royal law of loving the Lord thy God and loving thy neighbor as thyself.

Truly, our neighbor is thus anyone in our proximity with whom we can share God's love. We are called not only to love those who are similar to us or with whom we are comfortable, but all whom God places in our path. In fact, Jesus said, "I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:44–48). God shows love to all people (John 3:16–18; Romans 1:19–20; 2 Peter 3:9). As His children (John 1:12), we are called to do the same.

*Matthew 5:44–48 (NKJV)* <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father 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. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

It is important to understand what true love is. We love people by genuinely seeking what is best for them. Loving others does not mean agreeing with everything they say or do, nor does it mean acting in ways that always gain their approval. Loving our neighbors means attending to their needs—both physical and spiritual. We love our neighbors when we, like the Samaritan in Jesus' parable, have compassion for them and help meet their needs as we are able. We love our neighbors best when we share God's truth with them. Jesus alone can save (John 14:6; Acts 4:12), and He alone can meet people's every need.

*John 3:16–18 (NKJV)* <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. <sup>18</sup> "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

*John 14:6 (NKJV)* <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

*Acts 4:12 (NKJV)* <sup>12</sup> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

We love our neighbors, including our neighbors who seem like enemies to us, when we act toward them with a heart that first loves God. If we are ourselves to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind and soul, and to love our neighbors as ourselves..... I see that if we are to love (in regards to our love of God – with all our heart, mind, and soul), then that is how I am to love others, with all my heart, mind, and soul as well.

*Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (NKJV)* <sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

*Leviticus 19:18 (NKJV)* <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

We love our neighbors out of an overflow of God's love for us and as a way of demonstrating our love toward God (1 John 4:7–12; Colossians 4:5–6; 1 Peter 3:15–16).

*1 John 4:7–12 (NKJV)* <sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

*Colossians 4:5–6 (NKJV)* <sup>5</sup> Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

*1 Peter 3:15–16 (NKJV)* <sup>15</sup> But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

**(James 2:8 NKJV)** If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;

**(James 2:9 NKJV)** but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Then the Lord just draws arrow and releases and he puts into the category, those that show partiality are guilty of sin. He even goes to say, "And there's no grading on a curve when it comes to sin." Partiality joins the offense of adultery and murder. That's something for us to ponder on.

**James 2:10–13 (NKJV)** <sup>10</sup> For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. <sup>11</sup> For He who said, "*Do not commit adultery,*" also said, "*Do not murder.*" Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup> So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

## Conclusion

The royal law, love the Lord, your God. Love your neighbor as yourself. You know? What we can get ourselves all wrapped up on, "Okay, I got to remind myself to feed the poor, look out for the widows, not to oppress, not to elevate, not to show partiality. Oh don't forget bridle my tongue." All these things, again, they come down to, it's the Sermon on the Mount. In many ways, it's to reveal our heart and how well we're doing and it's to ask our question, "How well am I doing with the royal law?"

Because all I got to do is just treat people and love people as I desire. As I want to be treated, that's how I need to treat somebody. That's how I need to honor somebody. I want to be seen. I want to be heard. I want compassion. I want empathy. I want love. Okay, so now how do I give that to my wife, my children, the person to my left, to my right, the person I pass in the workplace, person behind the counter? You know what? I think one of the biggest things that Jesus did what he did, because yeah, He spent time with the Father in the morning. He got away so he could connect with the Lord for the day. He knew the word. The word was going through him.

One of the biggest things I see is he saw people. He didn't look past people. He stopped and looked and when he looked, he saw. Last week we talked about, you know how much someone cares by how long they hear, listen to you. As we were called to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. This week there's a calling for us to look and see. To see partiality sees all the outward, sees the clothing, the hair, the possessions, the car they drive, and all these things. There's a place, do we hear them, our neighbor? There's a place, do we see them, our neighbor?

## The Kid & The Elder

I am reminded of a story that I read some time ago. It was about a young man in college who had just gotten saved. He didn't have a car, didn't know anyone in the town, and all he wanted was to worship the Lord and learn the Bible. He finds this rather established church near the university, there was no youth his age by 20 years. He comes in that Sunday morning with his tattered blue jeans, wrinkled T-shirt, and flip-flops on. His hair not combed, nor face shaven. He comes a little late, they had already started worship, not knowing or just his style he walks all the way to the front of the sanctuary and sits down on the floor right in the front, closes his eyes and lifts his hands and begins to worship the Lord. The whole church sees him, and people are appalled by his attire and appearance, they mumble to each other, something must be done, we can't have this. He is a distraction, what if he stains the carpet. And then they see one of the elders making his way to the young man. The people are relieved that something is going to be done. It takes the elder a while to get there using his walking cane, but when he gets there all eyes are upon him, and they are amazed as they watch him work his way to the floor, and sits next to the young man, and lifts his arms and begins to worship the Lord. The Pastor gets up to preach, he says today I will give a sermon, but it will pale in comparison to the sermon you just saw.

So "The Test of Partiality", how are we doing?

Next, "the Test of the Law"; it is not just how we view people externally, but how we evaluate ourselves inwardly.

## Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

**Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)** <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

### **In Every Study**

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

*Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*