

Whosoever Will 10-4-26

Good morning. Moving right along in James, we are up to chapter two already. We're going to look at the first thirteen verses today, and we're going to talk about mercy over favoritism. The entire second chapter of James is about our attitude towards God's word. How do we relate to it as we look at it, as we study it? And remember, of course, James is writing to a group of dispersed Jews. These are people. Who came out of the Jewish faith into Christianity because of persecution? They had been scattered around the world. Many of them living in exclusively in exclusively Gentile communities, but their entire lives up until the point of their salvation, they had depended on strict obedience to the Mosaic Law to be acceptable unto God. And now, all of a sudden, there is a new system. And because they are in remote locations, they don't have very many teachers.

They don't have many people to help them. That was, of course, the purpose behind Paul's missionary journeys: was to go to these scattered peoples, to take it to people that had never heard it, and to people that heard it but had no one to help them grow in it. James has already talked to his readers about being doers of God's word; don't just hear it, but apply it, use it. Just don't read it and walk away totally unchanged. That mature Christians should learn to act out their faith; they should learn to practice their faith. Immature Christians simply talk about their faith, what they would do, could do, should do. So there is a distinct difference here about how mature Christians and immature Christians treat God's Word. In writing to the church at Galatia, in chapter five, verse six, Paul talked to them about love that works through faith. He's talking here about heart knowledge and faith, not just head knowledge, not just studying it as as good literature as something academic to learn.

But being able to apply it both to your heart and to your to your actions. So in the first part of James chapter two, he's going to teach us that true spiritual maturity goes beyond knowledge and theory, and it manifests itself in how we live it out, how we basically treat other people. Is what he's going to talk to here in the first part of chapter two. Have you noticed how our culture changes through the years? We're in a System now where we're turning nouns into verbs. Rain used to mean weather. Now it means an act, as if to rain on somebody's parade. Google used to be a company, and now it's the act of searching on the internet. Book used to mean something you read, and now it's the act of acquiring something, like booking a hotel room or booking theater tickets. And lastly, adult. It used to describe a person.

But now it has become the act of being that person, of growing up, of maturing, of adulting. So a friend was recently talking to us about their son, who had lived at home a pretty long time, and had finally moved out and was was coming back around. And he says, "Why doesn't my money go as far as it used to when I used to live with you and mom?" And he said, while they were still pondering that thought, he says, "And furthermore, who is?" FICA, F I C A, and why does he take part of my salary every week? What am I paying him to do? So, adulting is a difficult process for all of us. But welcome to the

wonderful world of being a grown up. So that's kind of what James is talking about here: growing in the faith, being a grown up, adulting, learn how to handle trials. We talked about that a couple of weeks ago, and don't just.

Hear the word and walk away from it unchanged, but learn how to live it out in your life. How to make a difference in other people's lives with what you have learned from God's word. He starts off in verse one with one of his favorite greetings: "My brothers and sisters, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism." Again, he uses brothers and sisters, a reminder that they all had a common background. He had been Jewish, they had been Jewish. They've all come out of a lifetime of fear of breaking the law, of disobeying God's word, and being punished for it. Now they're bound by love. They have grace and mercy in their lives. They have been adopted into God's family, so they are still brothers and sisters, but in a whole new relationship. Now it is a relationship not based on fear of the law, but it's a relationship based on love and mercy and grace.

He talks about the the body to which they belonged, and it was no different than ours today. Though they were scattered, though they were away from their families, the congregations they were they were in probably had landowners, it had day laborers, probably some widows, some orphans, some very rich in faith, some very poor in the ways of the world. There were probably some French people, people that nobody else would have anything to do with. Curious about this newfound faith that these people were talking about, but certainly not committed to it. And there were probably even, like today, a few who acted like, looked like, talked like Christians, but had never been converted. So the brothers and sisters in that day were just like us today, just a melting pot of different people with different needs. But it's so easy for us to single out, to want to associate with those who think like us.

Look like us, smell like us, even like the same things that we like. The Bible calls this favoritism. It comes from a Greek word and it means a face or to lift up. It literally means to have a high opinion of somebody based on how they look or how they're dressed or how cultured they may or may not be. One writer in commenting on James three one said. We judge people by face, place, and race—how they look, how they act, where they came from, what is their position in society. Verse two says, "For if a man comes into your assembly, I'm talking about church, with a gold ring and is dressed in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes comes in, so he says, 'Let me give you a test. This is very simple. Somebody comes to church. Two people show up.'"

He uses assembly here, synagogue. We would call it worship service. A rich man and a poor man. The difference is very, very obvious. What do you do? How do you react to each of these people that show up on your door on Sunday morning? Verse three. You pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and you say, "You sit here in the good place." And you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down here by my footstool." Favoritism is unacceptable to God. It is totally incompatible with faith. Jesus was certainly no respecter of persons. The Bible says in Second Corinthians, "He who was rich became poor for our sake." Though James was

late in coming to faith in Jesus Christ, he did not believe on his brother until after he had Jesus had died. But these verses parallel very much some things that Matthew said.

In Matthew seven, the first part of the chapter, he says, "Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged, and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you." Matthew talking about how we do judge people by place, race, and face, and it wasn't a new concept. God had already addressed this in Leviticus chapter 19 when He was giving the law. He said to the Jews, "You shall not do injustice in judgment. You shall not show partiality to the poor, nor give preference to the great. But you are to judge your neighbor fairly." So it is a concept as old as the law. And Matthew just simply had to remind us about what God had said those many years ago. So in verse four, he goes on and says, "Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil motives?"

Now, when Moses was penning Leviticus, the passage that he was talking about here, primarily God was talking to earthly judges, those who ruled over the people. And if you remember, Moses had had problems with too much to do and too little of him to go around, and so they had elected elders and judges and assistants for him. So God is addressing these people, the people that will be handling the jurisdictions for the Jewish people as they go forward. So. He's talking to them about being fair and honest to all people. Position was very important to the Jews in the first century when James is writing. We talked in the Gospels about how the Pharisees and the scribes strutted around town, holding their position over people. They added long fringes to their robes. They prayed long and loud in public. When they gave, they made sure everybody knew they had given. They wore.

Bands on their wrists and on their foreheads that contained scripture. So position was very important to them, and they relied on it to hold it over the little people that they were so much better than them. But Jesus went out of his way to be no respecter of persons. He treated everybody exactly the same. He came in contact with the very wealthy, very influential Nicodemus, and yet he was as kind and gracious to the woman at the well as he had been to Nicodemus. He pointed out the widow with her mite to the disciples, and yet he was very kind and gracious to the tax collector Zacchaeus, who was a very wealthy, influential man. He dealt with both a Roman centurion and a lame beggar within just a few days of each other. So Jesus was a master at treating people equally, putting everybody on a level playing ground. In Matthew 22:16, the Bible says this.

The scribes and Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus with flattery, which was certainly not the wrong thing to do. He was immune to it. He says, and they sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. And if you remember from our study earlier, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Herodians didn't agree on anything except Jesus had to be eliminated. So the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Herodians go to Jesus with this trick question, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are truthful." And teach the way of God in truth, and do not care what anyone thinks. For you are not partial to anyone. And of course, they were actually speaking the truth, but they were trying to flatter Jesus into

going to their side of the story, not knowing that Jesus was totally immune to these types of tricks. Many years ago, Adrian Rogers was the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

And when asked about his church, he would always describe it as this: "It is the place where everybody is somebody, and Jesus is Lord." Verse five, he says, "Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters, did God not choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" In Jesus' day, the religious leaders judged him. By their standards, Jesus was not like them. He didn't treat people like they did. He did not dress like them. He did not speak like them. He did not do the things that they did. They accused him of being untaught. That he did not go to their rabbinical schools. He always associated with the wrong people, people from the other side of the track. He even ate with these wrong people in person. He didn't even own a house. He had nowhere to dwell.

He failed all of their tests of success and importance, but on the flip of that, they also failed all of his tests of what a true, dedicated servant of God should be. And he so often went to the poor and the distressed because he knew nobody else would. He knew the scribes and the Pharisees cared nothing about them. They were just there, and they had to deal with them. And so Jesus went out of his way. To the disenfranchised of his day, and the scribes and Pharisees are sort of accusing him of it, but at the same time telling the absolute truth about how he dealt with people. But once we are saved, God sees us in a different light. Jesus sees our future, not our past. Our shortcomings, our failures, have been forgiven, and the Bible says forgotten. We're the ones that cannot forget. We keep dredging up things that have happened before, but.

When we are saved, Jesus looks to the future, not our past, and He will choose the most unlikely of us to further His kingdom. He never makes the obvious choice. He never chooses the one that you and I would have chosen for a position or a place or an honor. When you look at the scriptures that we have been studying over the last couple of years, Isaac, David, Rahab, Saul of Tarsus, all. People that certainly the scribes and Pharisees would have never chosen. David, the least in his family. Isaac, the child of the magic birth. Rahab, the harlot. Saul, the hater of Christians. And look how all of these people played such an important part in advancing the gospel story. Look how they were the ones that God chose to move His creation forward. In grace, God gives each one of His children certain gifts.

And we were chosen before the foundation of the world, not for what we could do for Him, but what He was going to be able to do in and through us, and how He was going to change the world through people that at one time did not even know who He was. We certainly have nothing to offer. We go empty-handed when we come to Him, so He can fill us and can use us. God can make the rich very poor. So that they can learn to rely on Him, not on their wealth. But God can also make the poor very rich in ways they never dreamed possible. That they're going to have riches and glory that they never dreamed would be theirs. Verse six. But you have dishonored the poor man.

Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?

Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, said this: For consider your calling, brothers and sisters, that they were not many wise according to the flesh, and not many mighty, not many noble. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. So he's talking to the Corinthians about how they came to faith. And of all the unlikely candidates in the world, the Corinthian church was one of those. You know, in Paul's day, to say someone was a Corinthian was sort of a racial slur because the Corinthians were riotous, they were they were drunkards, they were everything that you would have never dreamed God's people could be. And yet, one of the first people groups that that Paul was able to reach and to convert. So the question is, what would you do?

With what God has given you in this new Christian life, will you honor the rich who abuse you, or or will you lift up the poor who needs you? The choice is going to be up to you, and you need to use God's word as your basis in how you deal with people. There is a world of difference between hearing God's word and seeing God's word, seeing it act out how we treat people, how people react. To God's word is a very important part of it. You can hear it all day long, but if it doesn't touch your heart in a way that converts your heart, then it has been a wasted effort. So you've got to not only hear it, you've got to see it acted out, and that's where we as Christians sometimes fall so short. And James kind of talks to him a little bit about that here. He says that good name by which you have been called, that good name is Christian, Christ-like one.

One of Christ's children, and consider, he says, "Look how the haughty and the proud abuse you, but look how Jesus lets you be called by His name and how He treats you. Why do you fawn over the wealthy who abuse you, and you ignore the good things of God? There's nothing we can do to impress God. He knows everything there is to know about us. He knows about us before we are born. So." How can we then sit in judgment of others whom God has created? Verse eight. If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You are doing well. James refers to it as the royal law. It's actually Leviticus 19:18. Again, he's pointing them back to their Jewish roots, pointing them back to things that they had known since childhood that had been drilled into them.

And Leviticus nineteen eighteen says this: You shall not take vengeance, nor hold any grudge against the sons of your people. But you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. This is the law of love. It is the royal law. And even in Jesus' ministry on earth, in Matthew chapter twenty-two, he referenced back to this. Someone came to him saying, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" And Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. And upon these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets. Of course, Jesus penned all of the

commandments. God penned them all for our benefit, and He expects us to obey them all.

But Jesus' death on the cross did away with this rigorous keeping of the written law. But now there is a law written on our hearts by God and by Jesus. It's a moral obligation, and it still applies. The principles of the law, the goodness of it, the Ten Commandments—these things have not been set aside by the death of Jesus. The moral components of the law are still there, but we do not have to religiously keep the jots and the tittles of the law anymore. That we have been set free from because we were simply not able to keep it. In John 13, John wrote this. He says, "I am giving you a new commandment that you love one another, just as I have loved you. That you also love one another." The disciples are about to be alone. He's going back to heaven, and this is his final instructions to them: Love each other like I have loved you. You were nothing when I called you, and look what I have made you into. One day you're going to turn the world.

Upside down. In Romans, Paul wrote, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor, and therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. That as we love one another, we are fulfilling that most important royal law." Verse nine. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin, and are convicted by the law as violators. For whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all. One writer said of the law, "You break one, you break them all." And unfortunately, we are all lawbreakers. We are absolutely impossible to keep God's law, and that's why He gave it to us to point the way to a better way, to point the way to Jesus. That through Him we are able to do those things that we never thought we could do. That we are able to be things that we never thought we could be. That He can fulfill the law in and through us.

Verse ten, he says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point is guilty of it all." Same thing that we looked at in verse nine, that the law is a unit. If you break one piece of it, you have broken all of it. He goes on and says, "For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' For now, if you do not commit adultery but you do commit murder, you have become a violator of the law. You can't pick and choose which parts of the law you want to keep." The same God that said "Do not murder" also says "Do not commit adultery." He also said, "Do not show favoritism." God gave the same weight to each element of the law. To break any part is to break all of it. And it's so easy to break the law—not even visibly, physically, but by our attitudes. You envy someone else's wealth or position. You become mad enough to kill.

Someone else got that promotion that you had been working so hard for. Your parents, your family, are such an embarrassment to you. All of these are attitudes of the heart, and all of these are things that are displeasing to God. That they are basically breaking the law with our attitude. Verse twelve. And so speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. For judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy. And mercy triumphs over judgment. You know, almost every mainstream Orthodox Christian faith unanimously agrees that one day Jesus Christ is coming back to Earth. It is going to be a visible second coming. He is going to come with

His saints. In 325 A.D., the Church adopted the Nicene Creed. It was written at the request of King Constantine.

And it defines many of the truths about our faith that we continue to believe even today. And one of these is, and this is from the Nicene Creed: He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. So it states that the purpose of Jesus' second coming is judgment. We know that the first time He came as a suffering servant, the second time He is coming as a judge. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess. That he is Lord. The lost will give an account of why they rejected Jesus' gift of salvation. The saved will give an account for basically what did we do with this new life we get? God gave us a whole new way of life, a new set of values, a new set of wants. Did we use them for His honor and glory? For those who did, there will be rewards for service. And what a shame to stand before the One who gave it all for us and have nothing to give back.

To him in return, no service, no good deed, nothing that we did to honor the life that he gave us. As we have read down through these verses, we've kind of learned to watch for three things: watch our words, what we say and how we say them. Sometimes our words can be hurtful, even when we don't intend them for them to be. We talked earlier about sometimes it's not what we say, but how we say it. It is the tone, the connotation of our words. The second thing is our deeds. God forgives our sins, yes, but He does not remove the consequences of those sins. The Bible teaches about how the sword never departed from David's family after his sin with Bathsheba. The sin was forgotten long ago, but the sword never departed from David's family. That was the consequence. So, sin does have consequence, even though sin is forgiven. The last one is our attitude, and it's what James has been talking about so much here.

How do we treat others? We should be merciful because we have received mercy. If we refuse mercy to another, mercy will be refused for us. So we always talk about treat others as you would like to be treated, and that is the point of this: that how can we expect to receive mercy if we are unkind and unmerciful to another of God's created beings? The church must never evaluate people by their wealth. By their social influence, by their education, their ethnicity, their appearance—none of these things have any place in God's house. As we greet new people, as we meet them, we are to have blinders on. We are to see them simply as God's child, and all God's children have needs, and this is the place where those needs can certainly be met. I told you a couple of weeks ago that we're going to be going through this and looking at people named James.

As we look at America 250, and this week his name was James Madison. He was the fourth president of the United States, great proponent of the of the separation of church and state. He continued the practice that was begun by his predecessor Thomas Jefferson by attending church services held in the U.S. Capitol building in 1800. Even as the building was under construction, before they had even occupied it. Christ approved. Excuse me. Congress approved the use of it as a church building, a place of legislature to be used for worship services. It was actually a practice that began with Thomas

Jefferson and it continued down through the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. In June of 1875, James Madison wrote this: "It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage."

Before any man can be considered as a member of civil society, he must be considered as a subject of the governor of the universe. Actually, stating here that as you go to the ballot box, as you vote, and remember this was written in 1875, that as these things were written, he was saying, as you look at people of honor. People that you want to vote for, consider: Do they serve the governor of the universe? That even as long ago as that, that it was important that people be honored for their Christian faith. That it was an honorable thing to serve God and to serve your country. And Madison wrote that this was a very important thing. Hebrews 10:25 said this: The writer of Hebrews affirmed, not abandoning our own meeting together, as it is the habit of some people.

That we should assemble ourselves together, even if it happens to be in the U.S. Capitol, and worship God. Let's pray over the things we've learned today and see how we can use those in the weeks to come as we serve God. Father, thank you for this word. Thank you that it is alive and vibrant today as it was when James penned it. Lord, help us to learn it, to understand it, but God, not only just to hear it and to learn it, but to apply it, Lord, to our lives as we go about daily. That we would live lives that are pleasing to you, Lord. That we would live lives that people see something in us that they are lacking. They don't even know what they're missing, Lord. But they know there's something more out there than they have. So blessed now as we go this week, Lord. That we would honor, that we would glorify you in all that we say and do. For it's in your name that we pray. Amen.

James chapter two Verses 1-13 Mercy over favoritism

James stresses the importance of our walk over our talk
Mature Christians practice their faith
Immature Christians talk about their faith
James says the important thing is how we manifest our faith

One writer has described the rich man in vs 2
As having a jewel on every joint and a nugget on every knuckle

The Royal Law encourages us to:
Treat others with dignity regardless of social or economic status
Pursue unity within the church – keep everyone on equal ground

Reflect Christ' compassion to those who are socially, physically,
economically or racially unlike us

This week try:
Forgiving someone who has hurt you
Show compassion instead of criticism when the moment occurs

His name was James Madison – the fourth President of the
United States

He was a great proponent of the separation of Church and State.
He continued the practice of his predecessor, Thomas Jefferson,
by attending church services held in the US Capitol building. In

1800, even before the building was occupied, Congress
approved its use as a church building – a practice that continued
thru the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. Madison wrote in
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“It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such
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The writer of Hebrews affirmed – “not abandoning our
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as is the habit of some people”
Hebrews 10:25

Matthew 7		James 2	
vv. 1-2	Prohibition against judging	v. 1	Prohibition against judgmental favoritism
vv. 3-5	Illustration of removing one's own faults so that one can help remove others' faults	vv. 2-4	Illustration of removing one's own partiality so that one can judge or instruct others
v. 6	Warning not to despise what is sacred in favor of dogs or pigs that will harm you	vv. 5-7	Warning not to despise brothers who are rich in faith in favor of others who harm you
vv. 7-11	Encouragement to ask and to believe		
v. 12	Summary of the law as doing to others what you would want for yourself	vv. 8-11	Summary of the law as loving others as yourself
vv. 13-14	Summary admonition to follow the narrow way that leads to life	vv. 12-13	Summary admonition to follow the law that gives freedom

Enduring Trials: A Matter of Life & Death

The Path That Leads to Life

James 1:2-4, 12

1

Facing Trials

"Count it all joy...when you meet trials of various kinds" (v.2)

2

Faith Is Tested

"...the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (v.3)

3

Perseverance

"Let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (v.4)

4

Completeness

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial...he has stood the test" (v.12a)

THE CROWN OF LIFE

"...he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him" (v.12b)

The Path That Leads to Death

James 1:13-15

1

Facing Temptation

"Let no one say...'I am being tempted by God'" (v.13)

2

Desire Lures & Entices

"...each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (v.14)

3

Conception

"Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin" (v.15a)

4

Sin Grows

"...and sin, when it is fully grown..." (v.15a)

DEATH

"...sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death" (v.15)