

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Gold Rings, Filthy Clothes, and Kingdom Eyes”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): James/Jacob 2:1-8; Jas. 1:18-27; Lev. 19:18; Lk. 14:1-14; Ps. 110:1

Most of us would like to think we treat people fairly. We would like to believe that when someone walks into the room, we see them the way God sees them. But if we are honest, there is often a hidden calculation happening in our hearts before we even realize it. Does this person benefit me? Can they help me? Will being close to them elevate my life? Or is this person going to cost me something, ask something from me, or make me uncomfortable?

That is the very place Jacob presses on in Jas. 2. He is not dealing with faith as merely something we say we believe. He is dealing with faith as something that becomes visible in how we live, how we speak, how we welcome, and how we value people. We have been brought forth by the word of truth to become a kind of firstfruits of God's creation. That means when people encounter us, they are meant to encounter those who are becoming like Yeshua. So Jacob asks us to look honestly at our lives and our gatherings: are we holding the faith of our glorious Lord Yeshua while also holding on to favoritism?

1. FAITH IN THE GLORIOUS ONE LEAVES NO ROOM FOR FAVORITISM

Jacob begins plainly: *“My brothers and sisters, do not hold the faith of our glorious Lord Yeshua the Messiah while showing favoritism.”* (Jas. 2:1). The language forces us to wrestle with what we are actually holding. Do we have favoritism, or do we have the faith of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, the Glorious One? Because we cannot truly cling to both. Favoritism is not a small social weakness; it is a behavior that is inconsistent with our faith. Faith and faithfulness go hand in hand. Faith is not simply the intellectual acceptance of truth. It is trust that is demonstrated.

The word for favoritism has to do with receiving someone “according to the face”, judging according to appearance. It is making distinctions based on what can be seen on the surface. But is that the way Yeshua operated? Throughout His life, Yeshua gave honor to all, but He did not chase proximity to power. He saw those on the edges, those overlooked, those pushed aside, and He brought them near. He loved them, healed them, and lifted them. The One through whom all things were made revealed true glory through humility. So the question comes back to us: is the way we treat people consistent with the example of Yeshua?

2. THE SEATS WE GIVE REVEAL THE JUDGMENTS WE MAKE

Jacob gives a painfully practical example: *“For if a man with a gold ring and fine clothes comes into your synagogue, and a poor person in filthy clothes also comes in; and you pay special attention to the one wearing the fine clothing and you say, ‘Sit here in a good place’;*

and you say to the poor person, 'Stand there,' or 'Sit by my footstool'; haven't you made distinctions between yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (Jas. 2:2–4). One person comes in gold-ringed and dressed in bright, impressive clothing. Another comes in destitute, a beggar in filthy clothes. One seems like he might benefit you. The other looks like he cost you. And the treatment they receive exposes the heart.

The problem begins with what we see, but it quickly becomes what we say. To one we say, "Sit here in a good place." To the other, "Stand there," or "Sit under what is under my feet." We would never speak to the wealthy person that way. We would never treat the "important" person that way. But when someone appears to have nothing to offer us, our actions can reveal an ugly truth. Jacob says that when we attempt to discern someone's value based on external features, we become judges with evil thoughts. The inner dialogue is not from God. It is not the character of Yeshua. It is the old filthiness of the heart that James/Jacob. 1 told us to lay aside.

3. THE ROYAL LAW CALLS US TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELVES

Jacob then turns our eyes back to the values of the Kingdom: *"Listen, my dear brothers and sisters. Didn't God choose the poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that He promised to those who love Him?"* (Jas. 2:5). This is Kingdom-of-God stuff. God is the richest of the rich, and yet He bends low. He comes to us in our poverty. He comes to the oppressed. He brings slaves out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. This is His Name. This is His character. So when we dishonor the poor while fawning over those with power, we are not reflecting Him.

Then Jacob gives the heart of the matter: *"If, however, you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well."* (Jas. 2:8). This is the law of the Kingdom, the supreme law, the royal law. Be doers of the word, not hearers only. If we love our neighbor as ourselves, we are doing what is good. If we lose sight of that, even while being religious, we miss the heart of the law because the law is pointing us to the heart of God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. That is what Kingdom faith looks like when it walks into the room.

CONCLUSION

This passage asks us to let the Lord search places in us that we may not want to see. Where are we making distinctions based on appearance, status, money, usefulness, influence, or comfort? Where are we running a cost-benefit analysis on people made in the likeness of God? Where have we welcomed the person who could elevate us while quietly keeping distance from the one who might require love, patience, generosity, or sacrifice? Jacob is not simply correcting bad manners. He is confronting a faith that says one thing but does another.

So today, the call is to come before the Lord and lay aside the filthy garments of favoritism, selfish calculation, and appearance-based judgment. Ask Him to give you the

eyes of Yeshua. Ask Him to make you a doer of the royal law. If you recognize that your heart has been pulled toward status, influence, or self-benefit, bring that honestly before Him. And if you have never surrendered your life to Yeshua, the Glorious One who humbled Himself for you, today is the day to come to Him. He came near to us in our poverty, sin, and brokenness, not because we could repay Him or benefit Him, but because He loved us. Receive His mercy, and let His love reshape the way you see every person who crosses your path.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In Jas. 2:1, Jacob says not to hold faith in Yeshua while showing favoritism. Why are those two things inconsistent with one another?
2. In the example of the rich man and the poor man, what do the different seats reveal about the heart of the community?
3. Where do you see modern forms of favoritism based on appearance, wealth, influence, education, politics, popularity, or usefulness?
4. Have you ever noticed yourself doing a quiet “cost-benefit analysis” with people? What kinds of people are you most tempted to move toward or pull away from?
5. What would it look like this week to intentionally fulfill the royal law by loving your neighbor as yourself?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gracious Lord who reached down to us when we were filthy and in the depths of sin, search us and know us. Show us the places where we have made distinctions that do not reflect Your heart. Forgive us for the ways we have judged by appearances, honored influence, or overlooked those who could not repay us. Lay aside the filthiness in us that still clings to the values of the world.

Teach us to walk in the faith of our glorious Lord Yeshua the Messiah. Give us His eyes for the poor, the overlooked, the uncomfortable, and the forgotten. Make us doers of the word and not hearers only. Lead us in the royal law of Your Kingdom, that we would love our neighbors as ourselves and reflect Your Name faithfully in the world.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.