

## James, a Bible Study - Chapter 2

1. Read James 2
2. **V1: My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.**
  - a. What are the dangers of showing favoritism within the church?
  - b. Look at [Luke 20:21](#); [Mark 12:14](#); [Matthew 22:16](#). What does Jesus teach about showing partiality?
  - c. Have you ever shown favoritism to other believers? What was your motivation?
3. **V2-4: Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup>If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," <sup>4</sup>have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?**
  - a. Note: There must have been a certain initial awkwardness when a master found himself sitting next to his slave or when a master arrived at a service in which his slave was actually the leader. The gap between the slave, who in law was nothing more than a living tool, and the master was so wide as to cause problems of approach on either side. Further, in its early days, the Church was predominantly poor and humble; and therefore if a rich man was converted and came to the Christian fellowship, there must have been a very real temptation to make a fuss of him and treat him as a special trophy for Christ.
  - b. Why are earthly distinctions of wealth and social class irrelevant in the face of the Gospel?
  - c. Why was it so important for the Early Church to root out snobbery?
  - d. Why is this passage especially important as the church and its members have, over time, become more affluent?
  - e. How is showing favoritism related to being judgmental?

4. **V5-7: Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? <sup>7</sup>Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?**
  - a. While all people are of value to God, what evidence do we have that he had a special heart for the poor?
  - b. One of the primary messages of Christianity is that those who mattered to no one else mattered intensely to God. Why would poor people find this so attractive?
  - c. What do you think of the statement that “It was a simple fact that the gospel offered so much to the poor and demanded so much from the rich?”
5. **V8-11: If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. <sup>9</sup>But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. <sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. <sup>11</sup>For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.**
  - a. James continues his discussion on favoritism by introducing and defining “the royal law.” Look at Matthew 22:36-40. How does this royal law compare/contrast with the great commandment?
  - b. What point is James making in v10?
  - c. Why is v10 so troubling?
6. **V12-13: Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, <sup>13</sup>because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**
  - a. Summarize in your own words the point James is making.
  - b. We have seen this idea before. Forgive to be forgiven. Show mercy to be shown mercy. Judge not lest you be judged. What is the larger principle in play here?
  - c. Why is mercy so much more important than judgment?
7. **V14-26: What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? <sup>15</sup>Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup>If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup>In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. <sup>18</sup>But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. <sup>19</sup>You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. <sup>20</sup>You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. <sup>23</sup>And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. <sup>24</sup>You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>In the same**

**way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? <sup>26</sup>As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.**

- a. How does James tie faith to works in this passage?
- b. While we are not saved by works, why is it important that works should be an extension or manifestation of our faith?
- c. James appears to be saying that if your faith does not produce works then your faith is not genuine. What do you think of this observation?
- d. One commentator says we are not saved by work, but saved for work. What do you think of this statement?
- e. How has God equipped us to work (have deeds?)
- f. The one thing that James cannot stand is profession without practice, words without deeds. He chooses a vivid illustration (v15-17) of what he means. What use is sympathy/empathy without some attempt to address the need?
- g. How were the faiths of both Abraham and Rahab “proved?”