

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

There was once a town drunk who gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

He immediately stopped drinking and began to look for a church and had purposed in his heart that he would attend the first church he found.

Determined to turn his life around he found a church and went in.

He was met at the door by a couple of ushers and they told the man, "Please go home and clean up, take a bath – you smell, cut your hair, shave your beard and then you can come back to church." The man left and did what they asked and came back to the same church the next week.

Once again, he was met at the door by the ushers. The former drunk said, "I have done what you asked, I am clean, my hair is now cut and combed, I am clean shaven and I am ready to come to church."

The ushers said to the man, "That is good but your clothes are dirty and torn up. Go get a suit so that you will look nice for church."

A little sad, the man decided to do what they asked, after all this was the church he felt he was supposed to attend. So he went out and bought a nice suit, determined that this time they would let him in so he could worship God.

The next Sunday the former drunk returned to that same church – wearing his purchased suit - but this time the man was met by the two ushers and the senior pastor.

Together, the three of them explained to the man that he could not come into the church because of his past.

How would it look if the town drunk came to their church?

The man walked out of the church totally dejected because he desired to worship God in a house of worship with the men and women of God.

He sat down on the steps in front of the church and put his head in his hands and began to cry.

As he sat there, he felt the hand of someone touch his shoulder. Before he could look up he heard a voice say, "Don't worry my friend, I have been trying to get into that church for years and they won't let me in either."

The former drunk looked up and saw the man that touched his shoulder; it was our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You see, the church had set conditions on who they would accept into their church – they looked at the former drunk's appearance and they set in their minds that they did

not want him there. They looked at the former drunk's past and they set their minds that they did not want him there.

But in doing so, they also prevented Jesus from coming into the church.

This is what James is going to teach us this morning in our text.

Let's pray...

Our text is the first half of chapter 2 –

However, I want to start at the last two verses of chapter one.

What James is going to speak of here in chapter two is a continuation of what true religion looks like or what true faith in action (spiritual maturity) really looks like.

[Jas 1:26-27 NKJV] 26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion [is] useless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, [and] to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

[Jas 2:1-13 NKJV] 1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, [the Lord] of glory, with partiality. 2 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, 3 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," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 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? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? 8 If you really fulfill [the] royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; 9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one [point], he is guilty of all. 11 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. 12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

As I read the illustration at the beginning – as the church did not allow the former drunk into their worship service, I am pretty sure one of the things that came to our mind was – I would never do something like that.

But we must remember that we all have a natural tendency to form judgments based on outward appearances.

We all have a tendency to form judgments based on someone's past.

I had an individual in one of my bible studies a few years back that was a registered sex offender. One day, a lady came to me and said that some people in the group wanted me to tell him that he was no longer welcomed in our bible study.

They had already had judged him. They had already made up their minds.

[Jas 2:1 NKJV] 1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

Once again, James is writing to the first generation of believers. They were mostly Jews who had become born again. They were being persecuted and scattered around the world.

However, one of the things that they were practicing as they met was that they were showing partiality or favoritism.

And we know this because the Greek word that James uses here for do not – has the meaning of –**Stop doing it!!!**

James had already observed this sin taking place within the early church and he wants to correct the problem before it got worse.

And James will give an illustration of this partiality or favoritism in the next few verses.

However, before James provides the illustration, he provides them with one word – describing Jesus that by itself could solve their problem. And that word is glory.

One of the reasons that they were showing partiality or favoritism was that they were moved by the temporary glory displayed by the wealthy.

Their flashy clothing and the gold rings that were displayed on their fingers.

And by reminding the early church that Jesus is the Lord of glory – James is saying, “If you are going to be attracted to glory, keep your eyes on Jesus, Who not only sits in glory, but is returning in glory.”

Not only is He going to return in glory – something else happens as we continue to focus on Jesus, the Lord of glory.

Turn with me to 2 Cor 3,

[2Co 3:18 NKJV] 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Paul says that we will be transformed.

The more time we spend in His presence, in His word, in obedience – we gain a little more “glory” each time.

And one day, He is going to complete His work in us, and we will be glorified.

So there is no reason to get distracted by the fading false glory of this world.

If we want glory – we should glory in Jesus.

[Jas 2:2 NKJV] 2 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,

I asked you to make a note of gold rings. Because during this time – people would display their wealth by the number of rings that they wore on their hands.

One didn't have to look at someone's bank account to see how wealthy they were – one just looked at their fingers.

The poor man described here in verse two would be someone that would resemble a homeless man nowadays.

One of the individuals is obviously wealthy, while the other one is obviously poor as seen by their outward appearance.

[Jas 2:3-4 NKJV] 3 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," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Two men arrive simultaneously, needing to be seated.

The poor man isn't turned away.

He isn't described as being mistreated.

It was not uncommon for those in the early church to "stand," or to have to sit on the floor.

Their problem was with how they reacted, in comparison, to the man of wealth and status.

They treated the rich guy differently. They showed partiality or favoritism toward him.

And because of this, James is comparing them to judges with evil thoughts – not because they are judgmental but because they were acting like unjust, worldly, corrupt, bribe loving judges.

Showing partiality demonstrates that we are being selfish. We tend to favor the rich man because we think we can get more from the rich man over the poor man.

Showing partiality shows that we care more about what is on the outside than what is on the inside – in the heart.

When we went through the book of 1 Samuel, God commands Samuel to go to Jesse's house because God was going to provide Himself a king amongst Jesse's sons.

This was after God had rejected Saul as King.

And Samuel goes to Jesse's house and he finds Eliab – the one that looked like Saul.

The handsome one – the tall one, surely this is the one that God is going to anoint.

And God commands Samuel to not focus on his outward appearance because He will make His decision by looking at the inside. At the heart.

That is what James is challenging the church to do.

[Jas 2:5 NKJV] 5 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?

The emphasis here in verse 5 is on God's choosing, and this involves the grace of God.

If salvation was based on merit, by what we do, it would not be by grace.

So when those in the church decided to show partiality or favoritism to the rich over the poor, what they are doing is dishonoring the very people that God has singled out for special blessings in this life and the next.

They were going against the choosing of God.

This doesn't mean that God only chooses the poor and not the rich – because we have many examples of rich believers in scripture.

Rich people have their own obstacles to deal with – rich people will tend to place their trust in their riches.

That is why Jesus said [Mat 19:24 NKJV] 24 "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

However, those that are poor are more likely to place their trust in Him because they have nowhere else to place their trust and when they become poor in spirit, they recognize need for God's grace.

[Jas 2:6-7 NKJV] 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

James here reminds his readers that the rich, who they are showing partiality to – they are the ones that often times bring hardships upon them.

They are the ones taking you to court –

They are the ones that are foreclosing on your property to collect a debt. They are the ones that are loaning you money at an outrageous interest rate, they are the ones that are paying you low wages.

They are the ones ridiculing the Christian's claims about Jesus.

All of this is so that he/she can get richer – **yet why do you continue to show them partiality?**

[Jas 2:8-9 NKJV] 8 If you really fulfill [the] **royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; 9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.**

What is the royal law according to scripture???

Turn with me to Matt 22,

[Mat 22:34-40 NKJV] 34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked [Him a question], testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which [is] the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is [the] first and great commandment. 39 "And [the] second [is] like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Why does James refer to it as the royal law?

Because it was commanded by the King of Kings.

Why doesn't James mention loving the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind?

He did - back in verse five, when he referred to them as "those who love the Lord." His focus here is on loving your neighbor as yourself.

Love your neighbor as yourself and, by default, you keep every other possible law.

If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will honor your parents... You will not murder, commit adultery, or steal from your neighbor... You will not bear false witness against your neighbor... And you will not covet anything of your neighbor's.

If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not show partiality.

To show partiality is a violation of the royal law.

And James says that they are guilty!!!

It is both "sin," and "transgression."

- Sin is any lack of conformity to the will of God, a failure to meet His standards.
- Transgression is the breaking of a known law.

[Jas 2:10-11 NKJV] 10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one [point], he is guilty of all. 11 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.

James knew that some in the early church would argue that ... they acknowledge that they were showing partiality toward the rich, but somehow that was a lesser violation than someone who murdered or someone who committed adultery.

For those of us that come from Catholic backgrounds – these were referred to as venial sins.

I remember reading about them in the Catechism –

These are the ones that I can get away with doing and I just have to guard myself against doing any of the so called, mortal sins.

However, this way of thinking about sin results in a person overlooking the severity of sin and transgressions. It weights sins, so that if I don't commit any of the 'big ones,' I feel OK about myself.

It fosters an environment within which so-called lesser sins take hold.

But James' point is, whatever the sin, it renders you a lawbreaker. You can be a good person in every other way, but if you break the law, you are a lawbreaker.

Always remember that not all sins are the same in consequence or offense, but all make you guilty.

[Jas 2:12 NKJV] 12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

James is reminding the early church that we are to guard are words and our conduct.

Our words need to be accompanied with godly actions – James will speak about this more in detail next week as we go through the second half of chapter two.

James is telling us to live in light of the fact that we will soon stand before Jesus Christ, who will reward us for our faithful obedience, but also save us through the fire as our worthless deeds go up in smoke.

Our deeds and works will be judged based upon our motivation. Did we do it unto the Lord or did we do it so that we may receive glory here on earth.

[Jas 2:13 NKJV] 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

If you want to receive God's mercy, then show mercy to others.

If we refuse to be merciful to others, then we will face the same treatment by God.

Turn with me to Matt 18,

[Mat 18:23-34 NKJV] 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 "And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 "But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 "The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 "Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands

on him and took [him] by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 "So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 "And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 "So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 "Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 'Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 "And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

God wants to be merciful to us. We must learn to be merciful to others as well.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

