

Title: Personal Favoritism

Text: James 2:1-13

Turn in your Bibles, please, to James chapter 2. The book of James is dealing with the "HOW TO'S" OF CHRISTIAN LIVING. (1A) In chapter 1 we looked at the topic: HOW TO LIVE WITH FAITH AND TRIALS. Now, we come to (2A) on your outline. And in the next few weeks we will be looking at THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH AND WORKS. And the (1B) first thing I want you to notice is that FAITH REMOVES DISCRIMINATION. Or, as Vs 1 says PERSONAL FAVORITISM. Let's look at it.

James chapter 2 beginning with Vs 1...(READ VS 1-13)

PRAYER

There once was a man who had an interesting coat. The coat contained perhaps the world's largest patches. They were everywhere. It was a coat covered with patches. But, the interesting thing about this coat was that there were no patches on the back of the coat, except one little patch. And this little patch was right in the middle of the back of the coat. Large patches, loosely sowed on, hanging all over the front of the coat. And one very small patch in the middle of his back. And nothing else on the back of the coat.

When someone ask him about the coat, he said, "My coat represents sin. And these big patches represent the sins of all the people that I see from day to day. Each time I see a person and his sin, I put a patch on the front of my coat. And then he was ask: Well, that is nice, but what is the small patch in the middle of your back? Well, he said, "that is my own sin and I can't see it."

So, when James comes to the subject of PERSONAL FAVORITISM, some times we are much like the man with the coat. We can see sin in everyone else, but we cannot see it in ourselves. The Bible teaches us in I Sam. 16:7 that man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

One of the great tragedies of our day is that we are faced with the reversal of the situation described here in James 2. And thus, it makes it very difficult to recognize sin.

Difficult To Recognize sin.

WHAT DO I MEAN?

In the day in which James wrote, the majority of the ^{Christian} people were ^{very} ~~really~~ very poor. The moment a Jew acknowledged Christ as the Messiah, he was cut-off economically from the life of Israel. He couldn't buy or sell. And these ^{Christian} people were poor. They had to bring their possessions together in order to feed and care for one another. There were needs..tremendous needs. And these early christians were very poor.

And James refers to one rich man who comes into their presence and the way they treat him. But, my friends, ~~I say to you that we have~~ ^{in our day} reversed this ^{today}. We live in a nation of abundance (some ^{acceptance} ~~shortages~~ true). But, the poorest ^{Christian} member in American, today, would be considered wealthy by the same standards of James. We have much. And in our day the situation is reversed. Instead of Personal Favoritism to the rich we have it with the poor. And many people today because they have not the proper dress, or the proper appearance or the proper manners or the proper kind of life or business or skin color cannot find a place of acceptance in ^{many} ~~the~~ churches. People, because they are what they are, because they are victims of everything they have experienced, people who are good people, and talented people, and people whose hearts the Lord loves, ^{yet} cannot find fellowship in the churches because there is Personal Favoritism.....

This reminds me of the preacher in a country town who was faced with a man who did not have a suit of ~~clothes~~ clothes that was nice enough to wear to church. And the preacher insisted that he come to church. He said, "We want you to come." "And we don't care if you wear your work clothes or not."

The man ask if there was anyone else who came to church wearing their work clothes? The preacher said, "No, there isn't." And the man replied, "Then I wouldn't feel at home." The preacher said, "Will you come if I guarantee you that next Sunday there will be someone else wearing work clothes." And you can guess who it was....it was the preacher, himself/

You see, I think we do have the problem of Personal Favoritism....

(I am Not suggesting this is a problem in our church but it could be)

I would like you to notice the importance of this problem as pointed out by James in chapter 2, verse 1. "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of Personal Favoritism."

(1C) Now, in this verse I see the importance of this problem in three ways.

(1D) First, James says that this problem comes from not giving attention to the principle of faith.

Notice, Vs 1: "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism."

Here is a lesson we all need to learn. That we have earned nothing of God's blessings. That there is not one thing we can do this week that will earn God's righteousness. The only righteousness that I have as a person is the righteousness that I have received by faith. *you receive Christ, and God allows you to be righteous*

And if you are here this morning, and you are wondering whether or not God could save you, let me say that God does not play favoritism. God loves you and He wants to save you. You see, salvation is not a matter of what I do. Salvation is a matter of what God has done for me through Jesus Christ. He saved me through his own son. The blood of Jesus paid for all my sins. And the only righteousness that I shall every have from now until Christ comes again is the righteousness I received by faith in Jesus Christ.

"My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism." And if we do, it means that we are not paying attention to the principle of faith. Faith believes and does not earn

29/ Secondly, the importance of this problem of Personal Favoritism is seen in this verse when he points out the indifference as to who the Lord is. I would like to translate this verse literally for you. It would read: "My brethren, do not hold your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is glory. The emphasis is upon "WHO CHRIST IS." He is Glory. It is talking about the majesty and beauty of ~~his~~ ^{the} person of Jesus Christ. He IS GLORY

So, Isn't it ridiculous when people have personal favoritism? When, Jesus, our life, is our glory. When everything that we have by faith is in Jesus. And the life of Jesus can be in the poor and in the rich. The life of Jesus knows no boundaries and limits. The life of Jesus is given to any person who comes to him by faith.

What really makes a person beautiful? Is it the clothes we wear? The car we drive? ~~The~~ ^{The} home we live in? The company we kept? The things we own? ^{we own of} What makes us attractive/?

Have we come so far that we no longer can distinguish in the christian world what really makes someone beautiful? Whether poor or rich, that ~~what~~ which makes us beautiful is the life of Jesus in us. That which makes a life radiate is Jesus.

30/ Third, the importance of this problem of personal favoritism is seen in Vs 1 in the inconsistency with our own testimony.

"My brethren do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.".....WHY?.....Because it makes us inconsistent in our testimony.

Now can we say on the one hand that God has no personal favoritism, and on the other hand we show personal favoritism?

This passage bothers me. This passage is something that every Christian should feel the impacted off. Is there anyone in your frame of reference that you cannot love? If it is true, then you are committing sin. You have not let the Holy Spirit take wholed of your life, if there is some class of people, some group, or some individaul who is beyond the love of God in your heart. And James says, "you commit sin and violate the royal law of God. You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

So, this could become a very serious problem in our church.

(2C) Now, I would like you to notice in Vs 2-4, the illustration that James presents. There are two things, here, which present the importance of this problem, both in appearance and in attitude.

(1D) First, notice the appearance in Vs 2 . "For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes."

Now, many people have taken this verse as a dondemnation of all jewery. That is not correct. The point is that no one in Jame's day would have had a gold ring. Only, the rich would have worn a gold right. Again, do you see how we have reversed the standard? Today, we all have gold rings. But, in Jame's day, if you had a gold ring you were the exception to the rule. Very few of the majority of the people knew what it would be like to wear gold jewery:

"And if there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes." And you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes." That is, he is attractive and we see his appearance and we say..."Man, there is a tremendous person." By the way, how do we know he is a tremendous prson? We judge him by his appearance

^{Remember}
I am ~~thinking~~ of a man that I know who is one of the most intelligent persons I have every known. He is outstanding in knowledge, in his growth in Christ, in his whole spirit and attitude. And his enthusiasm is beyond distraction. And yet, I have to honestly say that he is the worst dresser I have every seen. He is absolutely "sloopy."

And yet, how many of us will judge and evaluate a person by what he wears...his appearance. And what does God say through -out the Bible: "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." God knows your heart. God knows what we are really like...

(20) Now, in the second place, notice "THE ATTITUDE." Vs 3: To the rich man we say "you sit here in a good place, and to the poor man, you stand over there, or set down by my footstool."

In other words...to the poorly dressed person we say sit on the floor. We don't have any chairs for you.... THE ATTITUDE....As though because of what we possess or how we look or appear, we deserve something more than the person who is poorly dressed, or, the person who has very little.

30 Now, beginning at Vs 5 and carrying on to the end of Vs 13, James gives us instruction concerning this problem. And we need to understand God's instruction. Here is the application. *What do we do? Three Simple Things to Keep us From the Path of Personal Enrichment*

10 Number one, Know the purpose of God. Vs 5, "Listen, my beloved brethren, did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love him?"

God has chosen the poor. He says in I Cor chapter 1: "He has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." God choose the poor. He's,also, chosen the rich, It reminds me of what Queen Elizabeth said: She was always glad for the little "M" in I Corinthians chapter 1.

And the illustration is clear - do not show partiality or favoritism in the Body of Christ. There who? because in God's world we are all equal. There is neither male nor female - all should be one in the Bond of Love.

It says "Not many, mighty, not many noble are called. She said, "I am so thankful for the "M". God did not say "Not any noble are called."..... And I am thankful also.

But, I want you to know that God has centered his whole work from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation in the POOR of this world. That has been God's ministry. Check for yourself. Through the whole history of Israel, what has God been concerned with? The poor and the suffering and the persecuted. And beloved, if we are going to do the job that God wants us to do, we must go out to the suffering of this world and introduce them to the saving faith in Jesus Christ. DO WE HAVE PERSONAL FAVORITISM? Is there any class or group of people who is beyond our love?.....

(God is testing our Nation)
Security...God or our military
Love.....Vast numbers of people coming into our land...

(20)

Then, secondly, I would like you to notice in Vs 8 where he says, "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin."

I cannot translate or understand this verse in any other way then this: if I do not love someone, if there is some individual, no matter who he is, if I do not love him, then I am violating the law of God. The royal law, the law that summarizes the entire law. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." *That is what God wants us to do. Love our neighbor.*

~~And I am remained in my heart that only the Spirit of God in my life can cause me to love people that way. If I am not...I am committing SIN.~~

Vs 9 says, "If you show partiality, you are committing sin." *af* refusal to love a person because of appearance or business or opportunity, no matter what it is, is showing partiality and is committing SIN....

Do you know...?

(3D) But, my Christian friends, are you not as surprised as I was when I read Verses 12 and 13? "So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment."

What judgment is God talking about? If you are new to the understanding of "judgements" in the Bible, basically there are two important things to know. First, there is a great judgment for UNBELIEVERS. Second, there is a judgment for believers. And they are not the same.

There will be a time when all unbelievers will stand before God. This is recorded in the book of Revelation, chapter 20. It is called the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT. All unbelievers will have to give an account of what they have done with Jesus Christ. And the fact is because they have not received Jesus as Lord and Saviour their sentence is all ready determined. In the Bible we read, "Whoever is not found written in the book of life (when you accept Christ, your name is written in the book of life) "Whoever is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire." Eternal punishment for all those who have refused to accept Jesus as Saviour. *who refuse to believe that Jesus is God.*

But, there is also a judgment seat for all believers. This is called the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Cor. 5:10 says "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds."

The issue, here, is not the question of salvation. For that has been settled. That was settled the moment you received Jesus as Lord and Saviour of your life. The gift of God that we received is eternal life. To live forever with the Lord because of our faith in Jesus. But, we will stand there one day and face Jesus Christ. And we will be required to give an account of how we have lived our Christian life. And the issue will be our commitment *and faithfulness*

And isn't it interesting that God says, here, in this passage of James, talking about this little matter of personal favoritism, he says, "he will have judgment without mercy that has showed not mercy."

It is a question of reward and evaluation of a christian's life, as he stands before God.

And beloved, if we have shown no mercy, no love and concern in our hearts, God says he will show no mercy to us.

Have you ever wondered what it will be like to stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Often, I think about it. I am sure there will be no fear of eternal punishment, for that has been removed. Romans 8:1 says that "there will be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

But, I have often wondered in my heart what it will be like. I wonder how many of these POOR in James will be at the front of the line to receive their reward. And I wonder how many of us with so much, so many possessions, so many opportunities, I wonder how many of us will be at the end of the line.

I don't know what it will be like to look into the face of Jesus. I am glad that He shows no personal favoritism. But, as I understand God's Word for my life, right now, it causes me deep concern. For Jesus teaches through James, that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. If Jesus is in us, we must love. Love must control us. The James clearly says that if we do not love, we are committing sin. And sin needs to be confessed. And may I remind all of us, that when we practice sin, we are breaking that beautiful relationship with God. And the power of the Holy Spirit's ministry in us is without fruit.

I don't know where you stand today. God shows no personal favoritism. If you have never received Jesus into your life, you can do it right now. You can ask Christ to come in and save you.

But, my Christian friends, if you are aware, today, of this problem in your life, and you sense a real need of settling this problem, I urge you to quietly confess to the Lord this sin. To seek his forgiveness. And to ask Him to ^{open} open your life and give to you the ^g love for people.

And I pray that we will always be known as a loving, caring church family. A church that never shows favoritism to anyone.

MAY THIS BE A PART OF OUR VISION AND VICTORY IN 1997.

SHALL WE CLOSE WITH PRAYER