

Partiality and True Faith

Sermon 7 in the James Series

James 2:8-17

We continue in James chapter 2. This is by far the most controversial chapter in the book. Pastor Jeff read the entirety of the chapter for you and last week we looked at the first 7 verses – in the context of rich vs. poor.

The theme is PARTIALITY. That is today's theme too. We can see that by reading verse 1 and verse 8-9.

I. The Sin of Partiality 2:1-13

A. An Example of Partiality 1-7

We examined this passage last week.

We won't go over that territory again – but we will seek to balance out the obligation of “giving alms” – something we purposely did not do last week so we could FEEL the tension and obligation.

B. Partiality is a Sin Against God's Law 8-13

1. Judging James Wrongly

Some come to the text pre-supposing that James is a legalist or even a moderate Judiaser – trying to bind the all the Jewish law on his readers.

They then carry that wrong thought over into the next section – pre-supposing that James is trying to fight against Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone.

BUT – if that is the case, why did James and the Apostles cooperate together as they did in Acts 15?

If that is true, why does the Apostle Paul raise an offering for the Jerusalem Church from the Gentiles and why do the Apostle Paul and Pastor James show nothing but respect for one another when they meet in Jerusalem right before Paul is arrested.

Douglas Moo and other scholars make the point that James is not fighting against Paul's doctrine of Abraham being justified by faith – as seen in Romans 4, because most agree James was written BEFORE the book of Romans.

No doubt, there is an error that James is fighting against, but it is an error that we should be fighting against also – and an error that Paul himself fights against.

2. What is the “Royal Law” – v. 8

- Could mean a regal law
- Could mean the law of a kingdom
- Could mean the law of a king.

But we need not wonder what James means by “royal law”.

-- It is in the context of partiality.

-- He cites our Lord's definition of the second table of the 10 commandments.

The first and greatest commandment – love God with all your heart, soul and strength.

The second is like unto it --

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

-- If that is not enough proof – he actually cites 2 of the last 6 commandments – and puts adultery against murder.

3. Partiality is Against the Law of God -- v. 9-10

While it is true that we can't say partiality is a sin against commandment 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 – what we CAN say is – as Christ gave us a synopsis of the 10 Commandments – he raised them to an even higher moral standard

Hatred is the sin of murder
Lust is the sin of adultery

Partiality is the sin of NOT LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR as YOURSELF.

James is used to a cultural context of self-righteousness.

James ministered in a very religious context – where partiality was a part of everyday life – and even considered SPIRITUAL.

You might recall – the problems Christ had with the religious leaders as he “ate with publicans and sinners:

James applies this – not to publicans and sinners, per se – but to treating people with respect and high regard – whether they be rich or poor.

4. Application – the Law of Liberty 12-13

Christ gave the “golden rule” – which is just another form of “love your neighbor as yourself”.

It comes to us as “Treat others the way you want to be treated.”
“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Matthew 7:12 -- *Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Or the parable of the Good Samaritan.

There is REAL LIBERTY in obeying the law of God.
There is injustice and sin in selfishly mistreating others.
Partiality is a GREAT sin – prejudice, selfishness and pride.

v. 13 -- James gives us a proverbial saying that leads us into our next section.

II. Faith without Works 2:14-17

A. Be warmed and Filled 14-15

Last week we talked about the importance of tangibly helping and giving to those who are in need – as we finished chapter 1. **1:27**

Is a person fed by saying – BE FILLED?

Is a person made warm by saying – BE WARM?

You can pray for a person – and that IS doing something.

But simply offering good wishes and refusing to help – when it is in the power of your hand to do so – is useless – and James uses this as his FIRST illustration that a FAITH that is ALL TALK and NO ACTION is no REAL FAITH at all.

NOW

It is important to realize that there is a balance here.

The poor you have with you always.

But – the church is a community – and we should be ready to help those who are the closest to us.

Direct family is our number one priority.

Our church family is our next priority.

The Christian community at large comes next.

Helping whenever we can is the next priority.

When is HELPING not really HELPING at all?

--When a person is IRRESPONSIBLE.

-- When a person will not obey God – he or she WILL suffer the natural consequences.

How should we know who to help and when to help?

This became a problem very quickly in the Christian community.

We can see the generosity of the Jerusalem church – even to the point of selling property and giving it to meet needs.

We can see the generosity of the Gentile church – giving sacrificially, even giving out of their poverty to meet the need of the believers in Jerusalem.

By the time we come to the turn of the century – this had become a real problem in the Christian Churches.

They were known for their generosity.
They were known for their hospitality.
There were those MORE THAN HAPPY to live off the good-will and generosity of other people.

This wasn't a problem that waited until the turn of the century.

2 Thess 3:10 -- *For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.* ¹¹ *For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.* ¹² *Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.* ¹³ *But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.*

The Didache has strong warnings against those who would live off of the hard work of others.

*1:5 – Give to everyone asking you to give and do not ask for it back.
Blessed is the one giving according to the rule.
For he is blameless*

*Woe to the one taking
If one has a need and takes he will be blameless
On the other hand the one not having need*

*Will stand in the day of judgment
As to why he took it and for what use.*

*But also, concerning this rule it has been said:
Let your alms sweat in your hands
Until you know to whom you might give it.*

*4:5 – Do not become one who
Stretches out your hands for the purpose of taking
Or withdraws them for the purpose of giving.*

You shall not turn away from the one being in need.

It was a day where there were traveling preachers.
And the churches showed hospitality to these visiting ministers.
But – we can see from the Didache that some were taking advantage of this too.

11:4 -- And concerning the prophets – act thus:

*Every Apostle coming to you – let him be received as the Lord.
He will not remain with you except for one day
And if there be a need, also another day.
But if he should remain three days – he is a false prophet.*

*And when leaving, let the apostle take nothing except a loaf
That he has what he needs until he lodge at the next place
But if he should ask for money – he is a false prophet.*

So you can see the practical problem they were dealing with early in the history of the church.

B. Abraham – a case study in faith and works 17

Next week we will deal with the rest of the chapter, which, as I said, is one of the most controversial paragraphs in all of the New Testament.

If we understand James 5 illustrations, regarding v. 17, we will understand the important truth that he is proclaiming.

1. Be warmed and filled
2. The demons
3. Abraham's offering of Isaac
4. Rahab
5. A body without the spirit

v. 17

Gen. 12

Now the LORD had said to Abram:

***“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.
² I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
³ I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”***

⁷*Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him*

Here is progressive revelation and the unfolding drama of redemption.
we see a multitude of promises given for the first time – and they will be repeated.

- I will make you a great nation
- I will bless you
- I will make your name great
- I will make you to be a blessing
- I will bless those who bless you
- I will curse those who curse you
- **IN YOU** all the families of the earth shall be blessed -- **Messiah**
- To your descendants I will give this land.

None of these promises are fully explained or fleshed out fully.

Some would be fleshed out later – in Abram’s lifetime – and some would require centuries for a full understanding.

There would need to be a great deal of faith on Abram’s part to believe these promises – for they all had to do with the future, and some required action on his part – (moving).

Genesis 13

¹⁴ And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants^[b] forever. ¹⁶ And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.”

¹⁸ Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre,^[c] which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.

Now Abraham is in the land.

Not a great deal added to the promise.

The promise is re-confirmed.

The promise is given a little more “definition”.

-- Your descendants will be AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH

– but he had no children.

-- Walk throughout the land

-- You are a stranger in living in a tent

– But THIS is the land your descendants will inherit.

He could only believe it BY FAITH.

Genesis 15

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

² But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." ⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.
The promise is renewed, but now we are told something so important that it is repeated 4 times in the New Testament.

Romans 4:3, 22; Gal. 3:6; **James 2:23**

This was before Ishmael was born
Man's attempt to bring about the will of God.
But God will not be mocked.

This is before circumcision was given – when Ismael was 12 years old.
This is before Isaac was born – which was after circumcision.

Now, James quotes from Genesis 15 – and he is proving his point by an illustration from Genesis 22.

Don't you think James knew his Scriptures well enough to know the order of the Biblical accounts?

Of course he did.
But speaks exactly to the point he is making.

We will finish this next week – but in short James and Paul are not using the language of "justified" in the same way.

James' point is obvious – a faith that has NO FRUIT is not real faith.

Paul's point is – a salvation that includes any merit or works of men – is not real salvation.

Romans 3:19-27

Where is boasting? v. 27

Does Abraham have ANYTHING to boast about?

No

But Abraham DOES have faith.

A faith GIVEN and GROWN by God.

A faith tested and tried by God.

A faith that is a real and true faith.

4:1-8

4:20-25

This SO GREAT SALVATION cannot be earned.

And this SO GREAT SALVATION is not for the self-righteous.

It is for SINNERS.

It is for those who will BELIEVE GOD.

It is for those who will repent of their sins – and put their faith and trust solely in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know Him?

Do you believe in Him?

Are you FULLY trusting Him?