

# The Sin of Partiality – Part 3

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – James addresses the religiously sinful practice of partiality in the body of Christ
2. aim – to cause us to remember that all are saved by grace through faith regardless of class
3. passage – James 2:1-13

### b. outline

1. The Definition of Partiality (James 2:1-4)
2. The Sin of Partiality (James 2:5-7)
3. The Cure for Partiality (James 2:8-13)

### c. opening

1. the **applicability** of the letter
  - a. **(again)** four months of preaching from this letter was designed to *prepare us* for this time – how utterly **relevant** this letter is to a time of self-quarantine and pandemic
2. the **current place** in the section
  - a. **2:1-13**: a *continuation* of the thought of **vv. 26-27** – *another* example of inconsistent religion: to show **partiality** towards others on the basis of class
  - b. James *defined* the concept in **vv. 1-4**: granting deference (or favoritism) to individuals based on their status *outside* of the church, something *other* than faith in Christ
  - c. James *declares* it as sin in **vv. 5-7** (and gives three [3] reasons *why*):
    1. **reason #1**: it is *religiously inconsistent* in claiming that salvation is *only by faith*, yet granting deference to some based on a *different standard* (*i.e.* an outward one)
    2. **reason #2**: it dishonors the poor man by failing to recognize his *true nature* as a believer, forgetting that all who are saved by faith are *equally* pure and holy in the sight of God
    3. **reason #3**: it perverts the message of the church that there is a standard *other than mercy* by which we are judged, a standard taken *from the world* which is inconsistent with Christ's
  - d. **(now)** James tells us what the “cure” is to this sin in **vv. 8-13**:
    1. **be what you are, live out your true nature, be consistent in what you are**
    2. **i.e.** Christians have been born again to live out a new nature, a nature that is characterized by the “royal law” that is inherent within them
      - a. “royal law” = the **cream** that rises to the top of the law of God – the Great Commandment to love God with everything in us and to love others selflessly
    3. **question**: how does this “royal law” apply to the sin of partiality – what does it mean to live out this royal law in relation to those around us, particularly those in different “classes?”

## III. Be Cure for Partiality (James 2:8-13)

### Content

#### c. the fulfillment of the royal law (v. 8)

1. **note (again)**: it is important to read the Scriptures *carefully* – not just to “skim” over the text, assume we *know* what it is saying, and then build a “theology” from a very *thin* reading
  - a. **i.e.** we must read this verse *carefully*, and we will note something interesting in it ...
  - b. **i.e.** the verse (and entire paragraph; see below) is more *complex* than a simple reading affords
2. James says that believers are to “*fulfill*” the royal law
  - a. he *does not* say that Christians are to “obey” the law, or “attempt to keep” the law, or “do your best to love your neighbor” – he uses a word that is more *significant* than just “obey”
  - b. “*fulfill*” (from *teleō*) = complete; finish; accomplish; keep; perform (all); end; perfect
    1. Paul uses the word in **Romans 13:6** as “*pay*” taxes = to “complete” your subjection to the governing authorities (**i.e.** your payment *completes* its purpose in government; see **Matt. 17:24**)
    2. literally: to *complete the purpose* of the law; to *accomplish the intention* of the royal law – not just to “try and obey it,” but to actually **be** the law as those reborn to **be such**

- c. the *Teleological Argument* for the existence of God:
1. **thesis (part 1):** that the universe is simply **too complex** for life to be the result of only “natural” forces – that the *irreducible* complexness of the various physical systems (*i.e.* energy, gravity, light, the physical constants, biological systems, etc.) are far too complex for *human life* (*i.e.* sentient, intelligent, rational, volitional, emotional, communicable life) to simply “form” in it
    - a. the **Watchmaker** (William Paley) = discovering a watch and examining its complexity *naturally* leads to the conclusion that an intelligent, volitional being must have designed and fabricated it – its complexity argues for a *watchmaker*, not for “random chance”
    - b. thus, an *objective* examination of the universe argues for the existence of a *designer*
      1. **note:** the evolutionist will respond with the insertion of *time* into the equation (*i.e.* if given enough time ...) *because of the reality of the Fall* – sin makes it *impossible* for man to be an *objective* observer due to the corruption of his *mind* and *heart* from sin
      2. thus the failure of most types of *evidential apologetics* to produce true converts
  2. **thesis (part 2):** that the existence *within* intelligent, rational, sentient life of **purpose** argues for the existence of a Creator who intended for his creation to have **meaning**
    - a. the **Watchmaker** = examining the watch reveals that it operates to measure time, thus the watch has a *purpose* – a “randomly” formed device could *never* achieve an *independent* purpose outside of itself, thus the watchmaker *designed* the device for a *purpose*
    - b. thus, the existence of *purpose* within human beings strongly argues for the nature of a Creator who established such purposes *in himself* and *outside of them*
      1. **note:** the secularist *denies* that life has any *transcendental meaning*, yet *contradicts* that in situations where life itself is threatened (*i.e.* their own and those they love)
        - a. **e.g.** in the defense of the vulnerable in a pandemic, normally strong evolutionists suddenly become “pro-life,” destroying an economy and every form of happiness to protect life that their “system” implies should be allowed to disappear
      2. **note:** the synergist *implies* that suffering has no meaning because everything is “up to us” as free-will creatures, yet *prays* that God would send relief to “override” the danger
        - a. **e.g.** is this pandemic a scourge by God upon the world to “awaken” the church such that it seeks a new “normal” for how it disciplines its people in the face of difficulty?
  3. **principle: the teleōs of human life is its purpose, and such purpose is given by a Creator**
    1. a biblical (reformed) worldview argues that all things have *purpose*, and this purpose is established by God the Creator *in eternity past* to glorify himself – by creating, sustaining, redeeming, regenerating, indwelling, and sending a people into a fallen world to imitate him
3. James uses the word *teleō* here instead of “obey” to imply that believers (*i.e.* regenerated followers of Christ by faith) **exist to complete the purposes of the royal law**, not just attempt to “keep it”
- a. **remember:** the “royal law” (the Great Commandment) is a summation of the Moral Code, which is (at its essence) *the very nature of God himself* (**Exo. 20:1-2**)
    1. **i.e.** murder – God is the source of life; adultery – God is faithful; theft – God is the owner of all things; false witness – God is truth; coveting – God loves himself more than anything else (and so should we; love the Lord with all your heart ...)
    2. **i.e.** we are *predestined* (given the purpose) to be conformed to the “*image*” of Christ (**Rom. 8:29**), the *ultimate law-keeper*, which he kept perfectly because **it was his nature to do so**
  - b. **thus, it is the very nature of the believer, his purpose, to love his neighbor as himself**
- d. the application of the royal law (to this sin; vv. 9-11)
1. in **v. 9**, James restates what he has been arguing all along: to show partiality (or favoritism) to the rich in the assembly (or dishonor the poor man) is sinful *because it is inconsistent with the purpose of the Christian in relation to the law of God*, in relation to the law *as the nature of God himself*
    - a. “*convicted*” = rebuked; reprovved; (better) exposed – shown to be something; such failure *exposes* an inconsistency between our nature and our actions (*i.e.* an impure and defiled religion)
    - b. showing such deference is *inconsistent* with what it means to love in the way we are born-again to love; to be *inconsistent* with our own nature as one reborn to *love the law of God*
  2. in **vv. 10-11**, James **emphasizes** the point by expressing a transcendent principle ...
    - a. **note:** it has *never* been the intention of James up until now to argue for *how one is justified salvifically*, so these verses (although commonly read in that context) are actually about *how one is to live as one already justified by faith* (**remember:** the letter is written to *believers*)
      1. **i.e.** they should not be “extracted” as a treatise on why keeping the law will never justify you (see also **vv. 14-26**) – they are designed to speak to what it means to *live out one’s justification*
      2. **IOW:** James is *not arguing* that the sin of partiality causes you to lose your salvation, but why it is *inconsistent* for believers to act in such a way, given their new nature

- b. **principle: it is *inconsistent* for the true follower of Jesus to “claim” to love God and love others while (at the same time) showing deference to rich people over poor people**
  - 1. **i.e.** this was an area of *blindness* in the early Jewish churches – to “carryover” the habit of giving deference to certain people was a *failure* to see that that was actually *unloving* – to “overlook” it (or to justify it as “trivial”) while claiming to be a Christian is *unloving*
  - 2. **e.g.** in **v. 11**, James uses another **preposterous example** to drive home the point: the law condemns *both* murder and adultery, but to stand before God and say “I hired a hitman to kill my wife, but I never cheated on her” would stand as the *ultimate* in hypocrisy
  - 3. thus, the Christian is to **never compromise the law of love** – it is inconsistent to claim to love God and others, but to “allow” certain sinful behaviors towards others to remain

**e. the command of the royal law (in this sin; vv. 12-13)**

- 1. **another imperative:** speak and act as those who live under a different law (**Rom. 7:6**)  
*“But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”*
  - a. we have been freed from the *slavery of checklists* to a new law, a law which sets us at “*liberty*” to truly love others without the worry of doubt re: our “success” at it
  - b. we have been set free to show “*mercy*” to others (**v. 13**)
    - 1. under the “old code” there was no mercy – the reprobate will be shown no mercy in judgment because they were not willing *or able* to show mercy (**i.e.** they are inherently selfish)
    - 2. under the “new code” mercy is the *key concept* – “*mercy triumphs over judgment*” =
      - a. the work of Christ is all about *mercy* – bringing God’s mercy to us, triumphing over wrath
      - b. therefore, the work of the believer is all about *mercy* – bringing Christ’s mercy to others, triumphing over all of the forms of wrath that come over a fallen, rebellious world
- 2. **question: how do you demonstrate who you truly are in the midst of a pandemic – how do you, as a born-again follower of Jesus, show mercy to others in such a time of great need?**
  - a. be *consistent* with the nature God has bestowed upon you in Christ by his Spirit
  - b. **be what you are, live out your true purpose as one given a new heart**