

## James 2

The book of James holds nothing back when it comes to putting some real world application into our faith. James makes it really easy for us to understand, if we are going to be like Christ, then let's not beat around the bush, we need to be adjusted. Adjusted in our attitude, our words, the way we perceive others and our walk with Christ itself. James reminds us of the importance of joy in the midst of our trials and finally as he closes out chapter one with a reassessment if you will of our priorities. Simply put, love God then love others. Faith and works combining perfectly to glorify God and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

We move into James Chapter 2 and we take a deep breath to turn the page but James comes right at us with another area of our lives that is so easy for us to let slip from our grasp. ***James 2:1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.*** It's important here to keep the world as James knew it as the backdrop for these vs. James wasn't writing to the modern world, he was focused, like we all should be at times, on the area that God had placed him in and those are the people that James was ministering to.

Yes there is a world that needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am a huge fan of missions. The Lord has led us into Africa, Mexico, Guatemala, We have taken students into New York, New Orleans, Colorado and other places on short term trips to help others in need and to share God's love outside of our normal circles. Those places, however, are not where I live. Joplin is my home and it's this home that I feel God has called me to minister in and to. Now from time to time God will spin me out to another adventure somewhere but I have learned over the years that Joplin is the vocational training that God will use in my life to work out all of the kinks and the rough spots in my walk before He sends me outside of the fence.

Hopefully my life is a picture of ***Acts 17:26-28 He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;***

I could have been born anytime, anywhere but God has chosen this specific time and place for me to live in, I try and not take that lightly.

Anyway, James is no exception here, he is where he is to minister to who he has been given. All that said to say this, James wrote to a very partial part of the world, a world filled with prejudice and hatred based on class, ethnicity, nationality, and religious background. In the world that James grew up in people were routinely and permanently categorized because of who they were. Paul faced a very similar battle and both James and Paul understood the heart of Christ was to unify the people, not create further divide... ***Col 3:9-11 ...***

***since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*** What a truth to remember in the times we face..

I like the way the “message” translation reads in the next vs..***James 2:1-13 My dear friends, don't let public opinion influence how you live out our glorious, Christ-originated faith. 2 If a man enters your church wearing an expensive suit, and a street person wearing rags comes in right after him, 3 and you say to the man in the suit, "Sit here, sir; this is the best seat in the house!" and either ignore the street person or say, "Better sit here in the back row," 4 haven't you segregated God's children and proved that you are judges who can't be trusted?***

***5 Listen, dear friends. Isn't it clear by now that God operates quite differently? He chose the world's down-and-out as the kingdom's first citizens, with full rights and privileges. This kingdom is promised to anyone who loves God. 6 And here you are abusing these same citizens! Isn't it the high and mighty who exploit you, who use the courts to rob you blind? 7 Aren't they the ones who scorn the new name — "Christian" — used in your baptisms?***

***8 You do well when you complete the Royal Rule of the Scriptures: "Love others as you love yourself." 9 But if you play up to these so-called important people, you go against the Rule and stand convicted by it. 10 You can't pick and choose in these things, specializing in keeping one or two things in God's law and ignoring others. 11 The same God who said, "Don't commit adultery," also said, "Don't murder." If you don't commit adultery but go ahead and murder, do you think your non-adultery will cancel out your murder? No, you're a murderer, period.***

***12 Talk and act like a person expecting to be judged by the Rule that sets us free. 13 For if you refuse to act kindly, you can hardly expect to be treated kindly. Kind mercy wins over harsh judgment every time.***

On the river this year with the students We spoke about Masks and how they can be used by us to pretend to be somebody we are not. Its a crazy little quirk we have to not be fully satisfied in our current financial and social situations. It Seems like just a little more money and we would finally get to hang out with some friends we like. After all, gatherings of friends are rarely portrayed in commercials for what they look like in real life.

If its a BBQ, the yard is perfect, the people are all dressed in perfect summer clothes, the pool is blue and inviting, and the food, man the food is amazing and bountiful, meanwhile at the Hibbard house..a completely different scene is being played out.. plastic forks, paper plates, an angry little dog and just general chaos ensues the entire time.. Don't get me wrong, I love it but there are those among us who do not..

James reminds us to see people as God sees them, valuable, capable, created beings that are designed to do kingdom work and this has nothing to do with financial success or the outward appearance. Period.

To show partiality shows that we care more for the outward appearance than we do upon the heart. **1 Samuel 16:7** shows us the proper perspective.. *For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*

To show partiality shows that we misunderstand who is important in the sight of God. If we assume that the rich man is more important to God or more blessed by God, we will begin to put a lot of our focus on those temporary things and not enough on the eternal.

Also, showing partiality reveals just how selfish and self centered we really are. Not all of the time but a lot of the time we favor the **rich over the poor** because we believe we can get more from the rich man. He can add things to our lives, (goods, finances, social status, etc. that the poor can't. **(value)** If we could just see the value in people the way God sees us then our lives will be better for it.

**Vs 14-26.** James just skips right out of partiality and into works vs faith. Its such an important area to be solid in and so if it seems like it comes up over and over, its probably for a good reason. Vs 17 is so crucial to understand.. notice what James doesn't say.. *He is not saying the Faith without works is dead.. Why?*

*Because if that were the case we could all begin to simply do a work and build our faith. There are those who believe in this type of faith.. Do this or do that, act out in this way or involve yourself in this certain type of activity and your faith will be established.. James isn't saying that at all, what he is saying is that the two are not separate, they go hand in hand, your faith is not established by works alone, but a faith on its own, without works, will die.*

**Vs 18-20** James emphasizes the works in our life, mixed with our faith are a key foothold for us to stand on. Here, He removes the argument that some have the gift of faith and some works and you may or may not have both. Each of us has been gifted individually, for the most part that's true, we are all gifted in areas that are different and God imparts to us our own particular skill set.

James is simply making this point, I cant see your faith but I can see your works. In other words, If you say you have faith, then it will manifest at some point in works, service, in and out of the church. A true faith will not allow you to just sit and do nothing, serving God is a display of faith and they should be a fairly common occurrence in our lives. It is part of the two great commands, love God and then love others. *Keep in mind here that your salvation is complete, it was a finished work on the cross, God has no requirements in service for you to fulfill to bridge any gaps . We are talking simply about the overflow of that faith in God in your life. How that display of faith shows up in your life is up to you. There are tons of avenues for us to display that faith in and around those we are called to love. Doesn't matter how or where, Just make sure you are faithful, moving about in some way shape or form.*

He References Abraham and Rahab and those are great examples of faith into works. The faith of Abraham showed itself as a true work of God as he climbed that hill, in faith, to obey the command of God to sacrifice Isaac, his firstborn. He was willing to do what God had told him to do, without question. Likewise Rahab, used here faith in God to hide the spies from capture. She is a picture of using faith to help others, both of these examples are so crucial for us to understand, faith to respond to God, faith to put His desires first in our lives, faith to move, faith to help, faith into works. What a simple and yet powerful too God has allowed us access to in our lives.

***James closes us us out Chapter 2 with a charge if you will. A call to action for each and everyone of us to put into action the faith that is alive in us. James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.***

May we become believers who act in and because of our faith. Not just vessels who are filled and ready for use, but vessels who are are constantly being emptied and refilled, over and over, always using what we have been given for the business of God.