



No: 5 James - The first will be last and the last first

Read James 1:9-11 and 2:1-13 Favouritism

"...as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism." James 2:1

James having pointed out that true religion is 'looking after the orphans and widows.....keep oneself from being polluted by the world' (**James 1:27**), goes on to enlarge on this subject. He points out how we as true Christian believers should behave towards one another, which is totally opposite to the way the world does. He reminds us of where our focus should be, 'glorious Lord Jesus Christ', before we look to people. He is particularly considering our attitude to those who look as if they have more or less than we have.

We cannot be a Christian by just agreeing with the right biblical facts or sound doctrine it will be a natural outworking of our faith that we behave towards others just the way God wants us to, in obedience to His Word. We receive salvation by faith alone but we work out our salvation (**Philippians 2:12**) by acting on our faith in obedience to the Word.

Jesus showed no favouritism and loved all people regardless of whether they were rich or poor. We no longer have the right to live for ourselves as we belong to Jesus and represent Him in the world. So we have to respond to people just like He did, with the Holy Spirit in us. If we walk in the Spirit we will not respond in the flesh (**1 Peter 4:2; Galatians 5:16**). He will enable us to be full of His love, (**1 John 2:5**) slow to speak, quick to listen (**James 1:19**) and an ability to be honest without being offensive (**2 Corinthians 5:20-21**). The fruit of the Holy Spirit will pour out of us (**John 15:5**) and people will be drawn to Jesus.

What is favouritism?

Choosing or treating a person differently than another for the motive of personal gain.

Why do we show favouritism?

- 1. Sin - James 2:9; Galatians 5:20.**
- 2. Double standard - Malachi 2:9**
- 3. Evil thinking - Romans 12:3; James 2:5**
- 4. Proud - Proverbs 13:10**
- 5. Judgmental - James 2:2-3**
- 6. Manipulative - James 2:6-7**
- 7. Show prejudice - James 2:3-4**
- 8. Misplaced loyalty - 1 Corinthians 4:6**

Favouritism comes from the wrong attitude in our own heart. We take one look at a person and immediately come to a conclusion regarding their spiritual condition, their social status (clothes, money, house), education, life habits, past sin, and we decide whether we want to associate with them again or not. We have emotions of jealousy, fear, self righteousness, prejudice, and competitiveness.

In the Church today people are often chosen for a job (**Philippians 1:17**) because of their financial position, their natural ability, or social influence, not because they have spiritual gifts to equip them. This so often causes problems (**James 2:6**) as the person feels they are so capable. They do not do any of the work by faith in God's strength, or with a servant heart. They suffer burnout and are offended (**James 3:14,16**) when the job is taken from them, as they were never meant to be doing it in the first place. The person who was meant to be in the position, but did not have basic education, but had a passion to serve God in that area, is having a wilderness experience wondering why he is not being used. This dishonours the Name

of Christ and causes all the devices of the devil to work at causing division in the Body of Christ, **1 Corinthians 4:6-13**.

No one person should have any priority over another but all should look at others better than themselves (**Romans 12:3**) As any person who is called by God to do a job, either in the Church or secular is anointed for that task, **1 John 2:26-27**. That means that the whole power of God, through the Holy Spirit, is available to do that job. That is far greater than any natural ability. Then if we are anointed we can be humble as we recognise that it is Christ in us that does the work, so we have no reason to boast, **Ephesians 2:9**.

What is the answer?

- 1.** Faith in Jesus Christ - **Ephesians 2:19**
- 2.** Right Self image - **James 2:5; Matthew 5:3; Psalm 139**
- 3.** Royal Law of Love - **James 2:8; Galatians 5:13-15**.
- 4.** Equality for all people - **Galatians 3:28**
- 5.** True wealth in heaven - **1 Timothy 6:17-19; Matthew 6:17-19**
- 6.** Right priorities - heart focused during worship **John 4:23-24**.
- 7.** Treat others like Jesus did - **Matthew 18:35; Philippians 2:2**
- 8.** Remember where wealth comes from - **Deuteronomy 8:18**
- 9.** Humility - **Psalm 25:9; James 4:6**
- 10.** All parts of one body - **Ephesians 4:25**
- 11.** We are all repentant sinners - **Romans 3:23**.

The Cross is a great equaliser. - Because of Jesus' death we are all one.

- Our hostility against each other has been put to death.
- We can all have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit
- We are no longer foreigners to God or each other.
- We are all being built into a holy temple with Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

When we meet together with other people if we do not lay aside what we see with our physical eyes and focus on Jesus with our spiritual eyes and let the Holy Spirit speak to our spirit in the worship, then He will be grieved and we will miss out on a great blessing. When we come together with others we must continually remember that we are **all** repentant sinners, and we cannot afford to make distinctions between people because of their outward appearance (**James 2:5**)

God's perspective sees the poor in this world as being the rich ones as they are full of faith, **James 2:5**. Jesus said, "**Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**" **Matthew 5:3**

These are people who may be poor in this world's possessions but recognise their desperate need of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is so hard for someone who has an abundance of wealth to recognise that all they have comes from God (**Deuteronomy 8:18; Matthew 19:23-24**) and it all belongs to Him, **Mark 10:21-22**.

If we do favour anyone it should be the poor and the powerless, if we follow the example of Jesus. These are those with very little money but also those with simple values whom society devalues. We should not walk the same way as the world or let the world's values into the Church.

Law and Grace

In the Body of Christ we need to constantly be reminded that we are no longer under the Law, **Galatians 3:13**. If we choose to put ourselves back under the Law which binds (**Galatians 3:3,5**), having chosen to receive Grace (the unmerited favour of God), then we have to obey it to the letter, otherwise we have broken it all (**James 2:11**) Too often we are saved by grace (**Ephesians 2:8**) and then slip into living under rules and regulations and we condemn others who do not obey all the extra laws we have in our own minds, just like the Pharisees in Jesus day, **Matthew 23:13-15**. We only exist today and are walking with God because of His

amazing mercy so we must ALWAYS look and see others through the eyes of Mercy, **James 2:13** .

"So from now on we regard no-one from a worldly point of view..." 2 Corinthians 5:16

The Real Church Home Challenges 05

1. What picture do you conjure up in your mind when you think about favouritism?

Read the notes about Favouritism.

2. Which two points from the notes do you think are the chief reasons we show favouritism?

3. Look up two verses relevant to the '**answers to favouritism**' that you find most helpful. Write them out here.

4. What is true wealth according to Timothy? **1 Timothy 6:17-19.**

5. What heart changes have you made this week relating to anyone you had a problem with according to this Word?

Read James Chapter 2:14-26.

6. What two kinds of faith are there described in this passage?

7. James asks the question 'Can such faith save him?' **James 2:14**
Write down what you think is the answer to this question. Give reasons.

8. What example does James use to make his point? **James 2:15-16**

9. Are there people you know like this? How could you personally become involved in helping to solve some social problem in your community?

It is often said that there is one God and we all worship Him in our own way. The latest 'buzz-word' is '*multi-faith*'. James states that 'demons believe that there is one God - and tremble'.

- 10.** How would you answer a person who said that he believed that every one will go to heaven

- 11.** Those who believe that faith without deeds is valid are described in **James 2:20**. What single word does James use to describe them?

- 12.** Read **James 2:21-24** carefully, more than once. It discusses the evidence shown to us by Abraham.

 - a. How did the faith of Abraham demonstrate itself?

 - b. What was the result of this demonstration of faith on Abraham's part?

- 13.** So we see that faith is made **complete** in actions.

 - a. How does the result affect God?

 - b. How does the result affect the individual who exercises his faith?

- 14. Read Joshua 02** James uses the example of Rahab to illustrate his point, **James 2:25**.

 - a. What two actions did Rahab take in her treatment of the spies?

 - b. What was the result for both her and her household?

 - c. Why was Rahab told to stay inside her house?

- 15.** Can you find a parallel to the story of Rahab in our relationship with Jesus Christ?

- 16.** Does James mean literal death when he talks about the body and the spirit? **James 2:26**

- 17.** How closely related are faith and works according to this illustration?(**Galatians 5:6**)

- 18.** Do you need to change anything in your life as a result of your study of this passage of Scripture?