

James 2:1-13

The book of James, or the letter of James, is often called the Proverbs of the New Testament. In it is much wisdom and practical instruction. James teaches what the Christian life looks like lived out on an ongoing basis.

Your Sunday School lesson looked at some of James this morning. You studied James 2:1-13. Let's go to that passage to see what may have to say to us.

Read the verses.

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

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?

⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

⁷ Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well.

⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

¹¹ For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.

¹³ For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

Through the years, we have heard about the attributes of God. What is God like? What are the elements of His person, His nature? We have learned such

things as He is holy, He is just or righteous. He is peace. He is love. He is the God of wrath. In Good News Club these past two weeks, the kids heard two huge words that tell of God's nature and person. He is omniscient, that is He is all knowing. He is omnipotent, that is, He is all powerful. Believe it or not, the kids remember these words.

However, there is one element of God's nature that we don't often hear about. He is impartial. He does not show favorites when it comes to His righteous judgment. Thursday night, we were in Romans 2. There is a verse about God that should grab our attention. Verse 11 says, "***For there is no partiality with God.***"

That is what these verses in James is about. As God shows no partiality, then we too are do the same.

I want to look at these verses in light of three commands that are given to us that are all related. There are three commands. Between the three commands are explanations of what those commands are about.

The First Command comes in verse 1

Do not hold to your faith in the glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of favoritism.

If you want even a more now day translation, "Don't discriminate if you are going to say you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." The command is literally, "Do not possess faith..."Glorious is emphatic. We cannot glorify the Lord Jesus Christ while having an attitude of favoritism. We understand why. God is not a God of partiality.

In the verses that follow that command, James uses an illustration that probably happened. It involves the discrimination of a poor person. A poor person and a rich person walk into someone's church. The folks say to the rich man, "Sit in this place of honor." They say to the poor man, "Sit under my footstool." That is a possible translation.

We are very partial. It is part of our sinful, human nature. We tend to put everyone in some kind of stratified category, higher or lower than other people. It may have to do with their looks. It may have to do with what they wear. It has to do with the kind of car they drive, the kind of house they live in; sometimes it has to do with their race, sometimes with their social status.

Sometimes outward characteristics of personality are used. Does the person talk weird? Do they have tics. What kind of house do they live in?

All of those things with God are non-issues. They are of no significance at all. They mean absolutely nothing to Him.

Let me tell you something. If we are going to be a mission-minded church, not only in our giving and praying, but also in our going and doing, we do not need to be a discriminating people.

Why not be so? Two reasons: One, God is not discriminating. Already established. But want more biblical evidence? Let's go to OT passage. Deut 10: 17ff ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Second reason is in the verse this command is found. To be discriminating and showing partiality is to refuse to give glory to Jesus Christ. When we hold fast the faith in the Lord in a way that does not discriminate, we allow Jesus to show glory through us.

Second command is in verse 8.

⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the lroyal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well.

Do you see the command? Yes, it is the second part of the Great Commandment. You will love your neighbor as yourself. James calls this the Royal commandment, or the Kingdom Commandment.

One known pastor calls this a Sovereign Law or binding law. It is a supreme Law to love one another. I think that is plenty of emphasis on the importance of obeying this commandment.

If this law is obeyed, then there will be no partiality. How much are we to love our neighbor? How much do you love yourself? In the same way we love ourselves, we are to love our neighbor. Let me give you another standard. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you that you are to love one

another, even as I have loved you.” How much does Jesus love you? Romans 5:8 answers that question. But God demonstrates His love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What surrounds this verse are implications of the commandment. If we show partiality, we violate this commandment. If we violate this command, we are transgressors.

Can you imagine the world If this commandment were obeyed by all?

Third command is in verse 12. Speak and act as those who will be judged by the Law of Liberty.

What is the law of liberty? James does not give us that information by saying, “This is the Law of Liberty.” His explanation may have been given in the previous commandment. Love your neighbor as yourself. A possible reason for not saying, “This is the Law of Liberty,” and then saying it is that it may have been common knowledge among the early church what the law of liberty is. So, we need to go to other places to find out what the law of liberty is. One place is Galatians 5:13.

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do* not *turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Christians are set free from their sins. That is, we are forgiven and freed from the condemnation and dominion of sin. Now we are to live in that freedom— forgiven, not condemned by God. Does that produce lawlessness? Does that give us the license to let sinful, human nature produce lawlessness against each other? No. It produces love. The way love is expressed is not through mushy words towards each other, but service especially to those who are different from us. This includes showing partiality.

Let’s summarize.

Showing favoritism, partiality is a sin.

If we are going to be mission-minded church, it is a must that there be no partiality of any form. We have gotten to the point that we are willing to send money around the world to be used to minister to people to are different from

us, but not willing to go across the street to minister to people different from us. That is wrong.

To obey the command of loving our neighbor is to give glory to God, and display God character through our lives.

We are to speak and act as those who will be judged by the Law of Liberty.

Dr. James Rosscup, a writer and professor at Talbot Seminary wrote:

“When a man lives without mercy to others in God’s world, he simply shows off the fact that he himself has never responded a right to the immeasurable mercy of God. The mercy a man has shown others, as fruit of a life touched by God’s saving mercy, will triumph over judgment. His own sins worthy of judgment are removed by God’s working in his life, dissolves all the charges strict justice might bring against him.

“Thus, his showing of mercy is not a matter of heaping up personal merit to deserve salvation by his own good works. The mercy he shows is itself a work of God for which he can take no credit.”