

# JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

## WARNINGS ABOUT PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE – JAMES 2:1-13

### 1. **REVIEW:**

A. THE **HARD WORDS** OF James 2:1-13 ARE OFTEN A CHALLENGE TO THE **INAUTHENTIC FAITH** OF THOSE WHO ARE **ONLY RELIGIOUS**.

1. JAMES SAYS, “IF YOU SAY YOU BELIEVE LIKE YOU SHOULD... WHY DO YOU LIVE LIKE YOU SHOULDN’T?”

B. JAMES WRITES THAT THE **SIGNS** OF A **MATURE CHRISTIAN** ARE:

1. A **JOYFUL ATTITUDE** OF **ENDURANCE** THROUGH **TRIALS** WHICH **PROVES** OUR **FAITH**. (James 1:2-12)

2. **VICTORY** OVER **TEMPTATION** WHICH **DEMONSTRATES** OUR **CHARACTER**. (James 1:13-15)

3. **PRACTICING** WHAT GOD’S **WORD** SAYS TO “**DO**” WHICH **GIVES** US **PEACE**. (James 1:22-25)

4. **NOT** SHOWING **PARTIALITY** OR **PREJUDICE** WHICH **GLORIFIES** **GOD** **NOT** **MEN** OR **WOMEN**. (James 2:1-13)

### 2. IN THE **FIRST** **VERSE** (2:1), JAMES STATES THE GUIDING **PRINCIPLE** OF THIS SECTION:

A. **James 2:1** (NLT2) My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have **faith** in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you **favor** some people over others? = **PARTIALITY** = **GLORIFYING MAN, NOT GOD**.

1. **NOTE** JAMES IS WRITING TO **CHRISTIANS**... “My dear brothers and sisters” ... **NOT** TO PEOPLE WHO ARE **ONLY RELIGIOUS**.

B. THROUGH MOST OF MY LIFE, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER SALVATION... I’VE STRUGGLED WITH A FORM OF CHRISTIANITY THAT’S **OBSESSED** **WITH** **EXTERNALS**.

1. **MANY** **BELIEVERS** DRAW **QUICK CONCLUSIONS** ABOUT PEOPLE BASED MERELY ON OUR **FIRST IMPRESSIONS** — ALMOST AS IF WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT “man looks at the **outward appearance**, but the LORD looks at the **heart**” (1 Samuel 16:7).

a. **THOSE THOUGHTS** SHOW BOTH **PARTIALITY** AND **PREJUDICE**!

C. **PARTIALITY** MEANS AN **UNFAIR BIAS** IN **FAVOR** OF **ONE PERSON** OVER **ANOTHER** OFTEN **BASED** ON **EXTERNAL FEATURES**.

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1. THE WHOLE POINT OF James 2:1-13 IS TO DIFFUSE PARTIAL THINKING.
- D. PREJUDICE IS A WORD THAT EMPHASIZES A PREJUDGMENT OF SOMEONE OFTEN BASED ON EXTERNAL FEATURES, CAUSING US TO FORM AN OPINION BEFORE KNOWING ALL THE FACTS.
- E. THE WHOLE POINT OF James 2:1-13 IS TO DIFFUSE PREJUDICIAL THINKING.
- F. NOTE PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE ARE FLIP-SIDES OF THE COIN OF JUDGING OTHERS BASED ON OUTWARD APPEARANCE... WHILE FORGETTING THAT GOD LOOKS AT OUR HEART.
  1. 1 Samuel 16:7 (NASB) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
  2. Proverbs 21:2 (NLT2) People may be right in their own eyes, but the LORD examines their heart.
- G. PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE HAPPEN BECAUSE OF LEARNED HABITS FUELED BY PRIDE AND BY NOT UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD ABOUT FORMING JUDGEMENTS BASED ON OUTWARD APPEARANCES.
  1. LEARNED HABITS
    - a. NO ONE IS BORN PARTIAL OR PREJUDICED!
      - 1) THOSE TRAITS ARE MOST OFTEN LEARNED IN OUR HOMES AND NEIGHBORHOODS, OR FROM FRIENDS AND AT SCHOOLS.
    - b. JAMES ADDRESSES THEM BECAUSE THEY HAVE INFILTRATED THE CHURCH.
      - 1) "Brothers and sisters" = FELLOW CHRISTIANS.
        - i. PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE EXISTED IN THE CHURCH WHEN JAMES WROTE IN THE 1<sup>st</sup> CENTURY... AND THEY STILL EXIST IN THE CHURCH IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY!!
        - ii. JAMES SAYS THEY ARE SINS!

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3. IN THE **SECOND** SECTION (2:2-4), JAMES PROVIDES A **REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATION** OF THE **PRINCIPLE** “how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?”.

A. **James 2:2-4 (NLT2)** For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor” — well, **doesn’t this discrimination (PREJUDICE) show that your judgments are guided by evil motives (PREJUDICE)?**

B. JAMES WANTED TO **HELP** CHRISTIANS **PRACTICE** GOD’S WORD... SO HE GAVE US A **SIMPLE TEST**:

1. HE SENT **TWO VISITORS** TO A **CHURCH SERVICE**, A **RICH MAN** AND A **POOR MAN**, AND HE WATCHED TO SEE **HOW THEY WERE TREATED**.
2. BECAUSE. **THE WAY WE BEHAVE TOWARD PEOPLE INDICATES WHAT WE REALLY BELIEVE ABOUT GOD!**

a. **Matthew 22:36-39 (NASB)** "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, '**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**'

b. **1 John 4:20-21 (NLT2)** If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

c. And he has given us this **command**: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

C. **GOD DOES NOT SHOW PARTIALITY... HE IS NOT A RESPECTER OF PERSONS**

1. **THEREFORE... JAMES SAYS, CHRISTIANS MUST NOT SHOW PARTIALITY**

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James 2:1 (NLT2) My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ **if** you favor some people over others?

2. Romans 2:11 (NASB) For **there is no partiality with God**.
3. Acts 10:34 (NASB) Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand *now* that **God is not one to show partiality**,
4. Ephesians 6:9 (NASB) And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and **there is no partiality with Him**.

5. PLUS 22 OTHER SPECIFIC **VERSES** STATING THAT **GOD IS NOT A RESPECTER OF PERSONS** BECAUSE **HE DOES NOT SHOW PARTIALITY**.

D. **GOD DOES NOT SHOW PARTIALITY... HE IS NOT A RESPECTER OF PERSONS**

1. **THEREFORE... JAMES SAYS, CHRISTIANS MUST NOT SHOW PARTIALITY EITHER!**

2. **NOTE JESUS DID NOT SHOW PARTIALITY.**

E. **\$100 BILL ILLUSTRATION**

1. **IT'S PAST TIME FOR US CHRISTIANS TO STOP JUDGING PEOPLE BASED ON THEIR PAST AND/OR ON EXTERNAL APPEARANCES!**

4. IN THE **THIRD SECTION (2:5-11)**, JAMES EXPLAINS THE **REASONS WHY PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE ARE INCONSISTENT WITH AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH**.

A. James 2:5-11 (NLT2) Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't **God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith**? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear? Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you favor some people over others (**PARTIALITY**), you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as

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guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

B. ... HE GIVES THREE REASONS WHY PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE ARE INCONSISTENT WITH AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH:

1. A THEOLOGICAL REASON,
2. A LOGICAL REASON,
3. AND A BIBLICAL REASON.

C. THE THEOLOGICAL REASON WHY PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE ARE INCONSISTENT WITH AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH (2:5).

1. James 2:5 (NLT2) Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him?
2. GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY, SO NEITHER SHOULD HIS CHILDREN. THE APOSTLE PAUL DEVELOPS THIS THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE IN 1Corinthians 1:26-29 (NLT2) Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.
3. SHOWING PARTIALITY IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH GOD'S GRACE... BECAUSE GOD, IN HIS GRACE, "CHOSE" THE POOR TO BE RICH IN FAITH.
4. NOTE THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT RICH PEOPLE ARE NOT CHOSEN.
  - a. AT THE TIME JAMES WROTE IN THE FIRST CENTURY MOST "CHRISTIANS" WERE POOR, AND THEY WERE OFTEN DESPISED AND TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY THE RICH.
    - 1) James 1:1 (NLT2) This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the "twelve tribes" — Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!
    - 2) NOTE THEY "scattered" BECAUSE OF JEWISH OPPRESSION!

D. THE LOGICAL REASON WHY PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE ARE INCONSISTENT WITH AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH (2:6-7).

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1. James 2:6-7 (NLT2) But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the **rich** who **oppress** you and **drag you into court**? Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?
2. JAMES ASKS **TWO RHETORICAL QUESTIONS**, WHICH **REVEAL MUCH** ABOUT THE **SITUATION** IN WHICH THE **JEWISH CHRISTIANS** FOUND THEMSELVES.
  - a. **FIRST**, THE **RICH** AND **POWERFUL** WERE **PERSECUTING** THE **CHRISTIANS**, **DRAWING** THEM BEFORE THE **AUTHORITIES** (2:6).
  - b. **SECOND**, THE **RICH** AND **POWERFUL** WERE **BLASPHEMING** **CHRIST'S NAME** (2:7).

1) READING BETWEEN THE LINES, WE CAN TELL THAT THE **POOR** WERE **NOT INVOLVED** IN THIS KIND OF **PERSECUTION**.

3. SOOOO... **INDISCRIMINATELY SHOWING FAVORITISM** TOWARD THE **RICH** AND **MISTREATING** THE **POOR MADE NO SENSE AT ALL!**
  - a. IT WAS **NOT LOGICAL**.

#### E. THE **BIBLICAL REASON WHY PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE ARE INCONSISTENT** WITH **AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH** (2:8-11).

1. James 2:8-11 (NLT2) Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.
2. JAMES **POINTS HIS READERS TO SCRIPTURE** (THE **BIBLICAL REASON**), WHICH **EXCLUDES ALL PARTIALITY**.
  - a. Leviticus 19:18 (NASB) but you **shall** love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.
  - b. Matthew 7:12 (NLT2) "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.
  - c. Mark 12:29-31 (NLT2) Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second

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is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

- d. **Romans 13:10 (NLT2)** These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to others, so **love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.**
  - e. **Galatians 5:14 (NLT2)** For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
  - f. **GIVEN THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF THIS “ROYAL LAW,” TO BREAK THIS ONE LAW IS LIKE BREAKING ALL OF THEM; AND, VICE VERSA, IF YOU BREAK ANY OF THE OTHERS, YOU’VE BROKEN THIS ONE (JAS. 2:11).**
    - 1) **FOR THIS REASON, PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE — WHICH REFUSE TO LOVE ALL EQUALLY—TRANSGRESSES THE GREAT COMMANDMENT.**
    - 2) **James 2:10 (NLT2)** For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as **guilty** as a person who has broken all of God’s laws.
5. **IN THE FOURTH SECTION (2:12-13), JAMES ENDS WITH A FINAL EXHORTATION TO “DO” WHAT’S RIGHT.**
- A. **James 2:12-13 (NLT2)** So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.
  - B. **JAMES WRAPS UP HIS INDICTMENT AGAINST PARTIALITY WITH AN EXHORTATION TO APPLY HIS TEACHING.**
    - 1. **LET SCRIPTURE BE YOUR STANDARD!**
    - 2. **LET LOVE BE YOUR LAW!**
    - 3. **LET MERCY BE YOUR MESSAGE!**
  - C. **HE SAYS NOT TO SPEAK OR ACT OUT OF CULTURAL CONDITIONING = PARTIALITY AND PREJUDICE.**

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1. BECAUSE TO **SPEAK AND ACT IN THAT WAY TURNS BELIEVERS INTO LAWBREAKERS, SUBJECTING THEM TO GOD'S DISCIPLINE.**

2. **NOTE BELIEVERS WILL NEVER FALL UNDER CONDEMNATION BY GOD.**

a. **Romans 8:1 (NLT2)** So now there is **no condemnation** for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

b. **BUT... BELIEVERS WILL BE JUDGED AND REWARDED ON HOW THEY CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN THIS LIFE.**

#### D. JAMES REVEALS THE **STANDARD** BY WHICH **ALL BELIEVERS WILL BE JUDGED:**

1. **James 2:12 (NASB)** “So speak and so act as those who are to be **judged** by the law of liberty.”

2. IN THE CONTEXT OF JAMES 2:8-11, WE KNOW THE **LAW** JAMES HAD IN MIND — THE **LAW OF LIBERTY**, THE **ROYAL LAW** THAT **EXCLUDES ALL PREJUDICE** AND **PUTS AWAY ALL PARTIALITY** IS:

a. **Mark 12:29-31 (NLT2)** Jesus replied, “The most important **commandment** is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘**Love your neighbor as yourself.**’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

#### E. REGARDING “MERCY” JAMES SAYS...

1. “There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.”

a. THAT DOES **NOT MEAN** THAT WE **EARN MERCY BY SHOWING MERCY**, BECAUSE IT IS **IMPOSSIBLE TO EARN MERCY. IF IT IS EARNED, IT IS NOT MERCY!**

b. **MERCY AND JUSTICE:**



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- 1) WHERE GOD FINDS REPENTANCE AND FAITH, HE IS ABLE TO SHOW MERCY; WHERE HE FINDS REBELLION AND UNBELIEF, HE MUST ADMINISTER JUSTICE.
- 2) IT IS THE HEART THAT DETERMINES THE TREATMENT.