

Sneaky Favoritism

082017 Today we move into lesson two of [James 2](#), the second chapter of James. James begins to talk about some of the problems that were in the early church. Interestingly enough because of human nature, the same problems are in the church today. Let's remember that James was the half brother of Jesus. He at first did not believe in Jesus but after the resurrection the resurrected Lord appeared to him. He then became the pastor of the church at Jerusalem. Now the church in Jerusalem-you've heard the term flagship church- oh yeah- the traditional strong base from which all other churches benefited.

Because of the persecution of Christians in the 1st century, mainly 34AD and 44AD Jewish Christians began to scatter, They scattered all throughout the Roman Empire. James was writing letters to the Christians to encourage them in their faith. James was probably one of the first books written in New Testament times. The reason we know this is because he was martyred in about 60 or 62 A.D.

He mentions some very specific problems, first enduring in faith through these trials, then addresses temptation to fall from faith because of these trials...and now how to treat one another ...remembering you are all in some kind of trial...and all dealing with temptations...

The theme of this lesson would be James 2: 8; "It is good when you truly obey our Lord's royal command found in Scripture: "Love your neighbor as yourself,". This is really the essence of everything he's talking about- love your neighbor as yourself. He begins by introducing the problem of favoritism or discrimination. Was there a teacher's pet when you were in school? Were any of you the teacher's pet? You were! I always wanted to be the teacher's pet! I was one of those children who just blended in. There was always a teacher's pet. Oh, how nobody likes the teacher's pet! Why? Because the teacher plays favorites and gives them everything- like running errands, cleaning the chalk board, going to recess early and going to get the ice cream. I know because I never was one of those people! If only it would stay so simple. Unfortunately that attitude grows into very destructive things if it's not stopped. That is favoritism and discrimination and it really, really sins against the nature of God.

Interestingly enough, favoritism and discrimination were a big problem in the early church in the 1st century. and in the 21st century...

Lets learn from James ..how to be a people who live by the golden rule given throughout scripture.. and is the theme for today:

James 2: 8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.

- **So he starts out the third teaching of his letter...**

James 2:1 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

- Even though he writes this years after the two scattering persecutions...the root of favoritism...was exposed in the early years of the church...
- and it was revealed as it often is ...when we go through trials ...we are tempted to judge people and treat people Undoubtedly James was already aware that the first major conflict of the early church was discrimination and favoritism. It was a problem in that culture as well as this one

AC 6:1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

- **This situation occurs some time after Pentecost. Now God had shown that he accepted all who would come..**
- **they had probably came into the community of believers on Pentecost :**

AC 2: 2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

AC 2: 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from

Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”

- **Then Peter preached to them the Gospel**

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- many ...many of these people stayed...

Acts 2:44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

- **People are living in common and have been selling property and distributing food to the poor members of the community.**
- so with funds from sales of property and home and general giving they provided food for the widows and the needy among them...
- in Acts 4:34 we are told... ³⁴ There were no needy persons among them.
- within a couple years it changed...more resistance from the Jewish leadership against this group...and needs were arising...and favoritism was exposed..

AC 6:1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

- **prejudice was being practiced at distribution...the Hebraic Jews were getting preferential treatment over the Grecian or Hellenistic Jews**
- **Hebraic Jews** were the ones living around and in Jerusalem...and spoke Hebrew or Aramaic ...they considered themselves more patriotic, they were culturally different than their Grecian brothers and spoke the Language of their forefathers...in a nutshell they were better.
- **The Grecian or Hellenistic Jews ...**from the surrounding nations and carried themselves like the cultures, were heavily influenced by the Greek way of life...discussion and philosophy and were more tolerant of Gentiles since they themselves were scattered from their homeland years earlier...and they usually spoke Greek and their native language

- **The distribution of food was not right or fair...so the apostles did something about it...**

6:² *So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."*

- **The Apostles whose responsibilities had grown ...had to start divesting themselves of some of the responsibilities of the community...to focus on their main priorities...**
- **one cannot do it all....**
- **I BELIEVE this IS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF HOW God WORKS....we all start out as generalist then as God develops us ... and he focuses our skills in a more specified way... while he provides adequate help to carry and make the work more effective and efficient...**
- **and People like it...**
- **two cautions...one can hold on to long or let go to soon...so we need wisdom...and that comes from soliciting the advice of others...which the twelve did among themselves...and they came up with a great solution....let the people choose whom they want to be governed by...**

AC 6:5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

- **they chose seven men who were Grecians...or Hellenistics...they chose men who had a vested interest in the well being of those being taken advantage of...men they trusted**
 - **these were not positions of power but positions of service...so they looked for those who preached what they practiced...a life of faith and Godliness...**
 - **they chose men full of faith...men who trusted and respected God...men who knew who the ultimate judge was... you can trust someone who demonstrates clearly whom they put their trust in**
 - **they were men who exhibited a like connected to the leading of the Holy Spirit..**
- ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*
- **they presented these men to the Apostles and they prayed about it and then commissioned them for this ministry of compassion...**

AC 6:7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

- interesting that Luke adds this statement in...but it is true humble godly leadership is very attractive...
- when people are involved in the mission it is very attractive...and attractive things attract...
- this also impacted a large number of Priests...**the Priest were under the authority of the Sanhedrin...and saw corruption and abuse of power first hand...by those who were to serve God and the people...**when they saw the miracles and heard the power filled preaching and witnessed the transformation of lives...their hearts were moved to listen
- **Now some people have used this passage to designate one area of ministry more important than another....**i do not hold to this position nor do I think the scriptures teaches that... it simply and rightfully designates different focus's of ministry...

So James is saying favoritism destroys...equality builds!....

Here is the Principle.... If there is no grace for some, there can be no grace for all.

- We can have all the right words but our actions and attitudes can be entirely different. There's got to be harmony between both in order to know that it is true faith.

James mentions some very specific problems... Rich favoritism..and Sin favoritism!

*James 2: 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not **discriminated among yourselves** and become judges with evil thoughts?*

- **Remember these are both God's kids!! He is writing to believers...not unbelievers!!**
- James simply says this...we are not to judge people with the same measuring rod the way the world does...and the rich and powerful always are in a more favorable and advantageous position than the poor and needy, who are vulnerable in every way...
- and the way the religious leaders did in James times and sometimes do now..those who followed the law considered themselves far superior in their own eyes...and felt God agreed with them.....

- **But James reminds them... by Kingdom standards the poor by gifting have been given more faith!**

⁵ *Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*

- **In Scripture Faith is spoken of quantitatively...it is measurable...it is witnessed in action and thus can be measured. listen to how it is described in the Bible**
- **Increase our faith the disciples asked..stand firm in your faith,.. little faith..great faith....Jesus saw their faith...According to your faith...lack of faith...broke faith**
- **you have so little faith...some turn away from the faith**
- **Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples....pray that your faith may not fail.**
- **your faith is being reported all over the world...faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."...walk in the footsteps of the faith...there is a righteousness that comes by faith....may your faith continues to grow**

^{2 Cor 5:7} *We live by **faith**, not by sight. Faith is the spiritual food of our lives...*

- **and it seems the believing poor have been gifted with a greater quantity of faith... it is not that they deserve it more than others...it is that they are given this grace gift...to help them..for they have not the material blessings to lean on...**
- **So James warns...**

⁶ *But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?*

- **Don't judge by the world's standards!!! it is the rich and powerful in the world who do the most harm in the world!! for they have the means and the power!!**
- **and they are the ones who blaspheme curse the name of God!!**

⁸ *If you really keep the **royal law**(highest law) found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.*

- **so he says check yourselves...remember he is talking to God's kids! this favoritism/prejudice thing is big time breaking of the Royal Law!!**

¹⁰ *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery,"¹ also said, "You shall not murder."*

If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you **have become a lawbreaker.** ¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,

- What is the law of freedom? the law of love...what does the law of love demand...mercy!

¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. **Mercy triumphs over judgment.**

- *Favoritism is a deceptive sin.. for it rates people...*
- *the deceptive part is believing our rating system is the same as God's*
- *those who are better and those who are worse...*
- *as those who need less mercy from those who need more...God says you all need mercy! and a lot of it!! so therefore don't be stingy giving it to others*
- *you do not know what God is working out in and through someone...including you!*

John 9 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

- **What works? one a miracle he will see...and probably appreciate it more than one who has had vision their whole life..**
- **two as a testimony of Jesus..power and mercy...the blind man did not even have the faith to ask for help...yet was graced by God..and shown mercy..**
- **He gets a new life ..with all those challenges...**
- **a testimony to religious that judged his family...for this calamity**
- **Jesus did not consider him to messed up to use!**
- **the same is for us...you never know what God is up to..in someone's life///so be merciful**