**“JAMES” SERIES**

**#4: “The Sin of Partiality”**

**SCRIPTURE:** James 2:1-13

***1My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 2For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” 4have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 1Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 6But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you and the ones who drag you into court? 7Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?***

***8If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. 9But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. 13For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.***

**INTRO:**

The Greek word translated ***“partiality”*** here literally means “reception of face.” As it’s used here, it refers to the acceptance of certain people on the basis of external appearance, while rejecting others on the same superficial grounds. I’m reminded here of 1st Samuel 16:7, where God told Samuel, ***“…the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”***

Apparently, their assemblies were open to anyone who wanted to come, but these Jewish Christians were showing partiality to a certain class of people and snubbing those who weren’t of the “upper crust.” Does this have any application in 2022? Are we guilty of the sin of not loving our neighbor as ourselves?

First, then,

***THE SITUATION IS THAT OF OUR SUNDAY GATHERING FOR WORSHIP, WHICH IS OPEN TO ANYONE.***

Posted online are several accounts of preachers who posed as homeless men and attended the assembly of the church they served. One preacher, who had been called to a ten-thousand-member church, showed up his first Sunday looking and smelling like a homeless man. I read about another minister who stepped into the pulpit looking like a homeless man, and while he preached on James 2, his daughter helped him change into the neatly dressed man the congregation was used to.

My brother-in-law, while he was minister of the Cassville, MO Christian Church, dressed as a badly kempt homeless man, entered the worship assembly a little late one Sunday and noisily took a seat in a prominent area of the worship center. He wreaked of soiled clothing and had a filthy face, with a cap pulled down low. His clothing was ragged as well as soiled. He sang loud and off key and made snide comments at intervals. At one point, a couple of the deacons tried to silence him, and they even tried to usher him out of the service, but he put up such a fuss that they gave up on that. Finally, when it came time to preach, he stood up and stepped up to the pulpit, revealing his true identity, and began his sermon on James 2.

How would you have reacted in such an instance? Probably about the same as those deacons reacted. Huh? I will say that they were not entirely wrong. No one should be allowed to disrupt a worship assembly. But the point to be made was that we, too, judge people by their outward appearance.

I remember when the very old congregation in Winona, MO selected their first church elders. They wanted to choose the prominent businessmen of the town who were members of the church – the man who owned two banks, the mayor, etc. They definitely showed partiality to the prominent and wealthy. But in the end they rightfully chose the most dedicated, God-loving, Scripture-loving men .

***ARE WE GUILTY OF ANY PARTIALITY?***

Are we? We have visitors regularly. Do we treat them all the same? Or do we show partiality?

I will say this morning, that I haven’t seen any of the partiality that James talks about. Have you?

We have a visitor’s packet that we give to every visiting individual or couple. We try to make visitors feel welcome, but we try not to embarrass them in any way.

During my ONE YEAR with a particular church, I remember one Sunday when we had a family of five, I believe, visit. Knowing that I usually made a follow up call on visitors, one of the men said, “Larry, you don’t need to call on those people; they’re not OUR KIND OF PEOPLE. That’s one reason I left that church after only one year!

***THANK THE LORD THAT WE ARE JUDGED NOT BY THE LAW OF MOSES, BUT BY THE LAW OF LIBERTY AND MERCY.***

Look at what James says about the law: ***“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.”*** There are people who believe the Mosaic Law is still in effect! Do you want to live under such a system? I don’t. Such a law system was used to prepare us for the New Covenant of grace and mercy. Hebrews 9:15-17 explains it: ***“…he*** (Jesus) ***is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.”***

By the way, this is why the thief on the cross cannot be used as an example of how to be saved. He professed belief in Jesus before the death of Jesus, hence, before the New Covenant went into effect. The New Covenant or Will was probated on the day of Pentecost, when Peter told his listeners to ***“…repent and be baptized.”***

The New Covenant is a ***“law of liberty.”*** Do you understand what that means?

1. First of all, it means that we are not and will not be judged as those who lived under the Old Covenant were judged: You broke one law, you were guilty as if you broke them all.
2. Second, it means that we can go to heaven IN SPITE OF our sin. Paul wrote in Romans 3:21-24, ***“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus…”*** Aren’t you glad?
3. It means that you are secure in Christ. You don’t have to say, “I hope I’m saved,” or “I hope I make it to heaven.” As long as you are a believer, living for Christ and looking forward to His return, you are secure. This is not “Once saved, always saved.” It’s as Paul wrote in Romans 8:1: ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***
4. It means that you should show the same mercy toward your brother, your sister, or your neighbor. Jesus himself said, ***“…if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”*** (Matthew 6:15).

Remember when you were told to wear your “Sunday best,” and when those at church seemed to be in a “fashion parade”? And when a woman dared not wear pants to church – you had to put on a dress? There was a time when no man would wear “jeans” to church; now I see preachers in some of the mega churches standing before congregations of hundreds and thousands in jeans! Aren’t you glad those “dress up” days are over? I sure am.

The elders at Community Christian in Round Rock, TX used to do an annual evaluation of me. I remember one of them always rated my dress as “informally neat” because I wore tieless shirts, slacks, and a sport coat.

**CONCLUSION:**

J. Vernon McGee tells a story that took place in London. A young preacher by the name of Caesar Milan was invited to a very large and prominent home where a choice musical was to be presented. On the program was a young lady who thrilled the audience with her singing and playing. When she finished, the young preacher threaded his way through the crowd which had gathered around her. When he finally got her attention, he said, “Young lady, when you were singing and playing, I sat there and thought how tremendously the cause of Christ would be benefitted if you would dedicate yourself and your talent to the Lord. But,” he added, “you are just as much a sinner as the worst drunkard in the street or any harlot on Scarlet Street. But I am glad to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, will cleanse you from all sin if you will come to Him.”

In a very haughty manner, she turned to him and said, “You are very insulting, sir,” and started to walk away. He said, “Lady, I did not mean any offense, but I pray that the Spirit of God will convict you.”

That night, this young woman could not sleep. At two o’clock in the morning she got out of bed, knelt down, and cried out to the Lord. Then she, Charlotte Elliot, sat down and wrote one of Christendom’s favorite hymns: Just As I Am.

Just as I am, without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me,

And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,

O Lamb of God, I come!