

Reflection Guide - James 2:1-13

1 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, 3 and 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,"

Now, most of us read that and think, *"that's gross...horrible...we'd never do that"* But A family hops out of their shiny new Suburban, well groomed, smiling welcome them, hug them...another man gets off the bus out front, you can probably smell him before he gets to the door, looks like he hasn't changed in days or showered in weeks...he comes in...what then? Is he welcomed, warmly...or is he tolerated? Do you look and wonder why he's here? Assume he's here to panhandle?

From here James is going to make his argument for WHY God's people are to show no partiality:

1. Partiality Exposes an Evil Lurking In Your Heart

4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

When we act with partiality towards others, our behavior to people is driven by some external / superficial standard. We've put ourselves in the position to judge the value of another person THis exposes the evil thoughts behind our judgment. We are saying that person is not worth my mercy, attention, love

2. PARTIALITY IS DISTINCTLY ANTI-GOSPEL...[opposite of Gospel Centered](#)

5 Listen, 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?

God shows no partiality...

Rm 2:9-11 in race: *There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.*

So, don't show partiality, withholding love, affection, warmth, hospitality, friendship, mercy, kindness to people based on a superficial / external appearance.

- We have to fight against the pull in our own hearts towards this...the way that we treat others is not to be determined by their economic class, age, clothing, gender, weight, skin color, or [attractiveness to us](#).
- How many of you remember picking teams back when you were kids? Shirts and skins...there were always certain kids that everyone wanted to pick...faster, strong, etc.
- Did you know you were already training yourself to see life through a decidedly anti-gospel lens?
 - God doesn't pick His teams like you and I do
 - If he did, trust me, none of us would be on the team
 - The Gospel reminds you that you're not awesome!

1 Corinthians 1:26.

"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

Deuteronomy 7:7, *"I did not set My love on you or choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples. For you were the fewest of all peoples. But because I loved you and kept the oath which I swore to your forefathers."*

3. Partiality Dishonors God. Dishonors His Character.

- You step out from under His grace and become your own mini-god.
- He didn't save you b/c you were so great, so pretty, so influential...so now you requiring others to meet your criteria of awesomeness is decidedly anti-gospel
- God didn't save you like that...that's now how His mercy works

4. PARTIALITY IS FOOLISH.

Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

- wanted the favor of those who were far from God...showing them favor doesn't gain you anything, it actually hurts you
- So desperately want to be seen as cool by the influential around you that you dishonor this one so that you can cozy up to this other one who dishonors the Name of the one who has saved you!
- This need to be seen as cool...we have to put it to death...the gospel makes us a people on the margins...people on the margins get marginalized...you can't make Jesus and the gospel cool enough for the world b/c it requires a humility that is anti-the gospel of our culture.

5. PARTIALITY IS A VIOLATION OF GOD'S WORD. Dishonors His Word. It's sin.

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

Mt. 22 or Mk 12 - when asked by a scribe to answer what He thought the most important commandment from God was...Jesus answered, Jesus answered, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these." ... "all the law and prophets hang on these two commandments."

But he knows our human hearts are always looking for a way to not have to deal...to justify.

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 but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

The reality of it is, some then and some here this morning will listen to the royal law and go *"I am loving my neighbor as myself"* ...

- What God is saying is...*we'll, let's just examine how you've defined "neighbor"*
- This was the foundation for the parable of the Good Samaritan...*"seeking to justify himself...who is my neighbor" ... Luke 10:25... "the one who showed him mercy"*
 - Wanted to justify to Jesus and himself that he was keeping the Royal Law, he was loving his neighbor...but he was exposed of being guilty of "selective neighboring"...*1st century profiling...*

11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

The same God stands behind the whole Law! You can't pick and choose.

- Do we take partiality this seriously?
- Have you fallen prey to self-deception and let yourself off the hook?

THE GOSPEL CALLS US INTO A RADICAL GRACE DRIVEN WAY OF LIVING

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

AS CHRISTIANS WE WILL BE JUDGED UNDER THE LAW OF LIBERTY!

- when you stand before the throne you won't be judged according to your works, because if you're judged according to your works, you'll be condemned.
- But you're judged according to Christ's works, and you're accepted according to Christ's works, and you're declared righteous according to Christ's works. And you're invited into the kingdom of heaven because of Christ's works.
- That's the law of liberty. And he says, now, if you've received that mercy from God, if you've received that liberty, that freedom from the bondage to sin and condemnation through the mercy

and grace of God, how are you going to treat other people? Isn't your heart going to overflow with mercy?

So speak and act...live and love others as those who know they will be judged under the grace of God!

- He won't judge you based on external superficials...not even on your own good works...but on those of Jesus! - That's mercy...that's freeing...grace drives us to obey!

1:25 - *[25] the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

- If we hear the Word of the Lord and do not do it, it reveals we might not have truly been saved.
 - if we can hear the Word and go, "*I don't care*,"...you have to wrestle.
 - Please don't hear me making demands for perfection. We're not going to be perfect. It's progress not perfection.
- I'm saying, no desire for progress at all, then label yourself correctly...unbeliever. Then we can wrestle.
 - True Faith was born for Freedom...we'll see, this faith is evidenced by new ways of living...New Roots produce New Fruit
 - But as long as you think you're saved when all the objective evidence is saying you're not, you're snared by self-deception, deceived by a weak Christianity that has none of the Holy Spirit's power, none of the gladness of heart that comes in knowing Christ.

13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

"A Christian is someone who has tasted and lives on the mercy of Christ, if we show partiality because of riches or race and come to no remorse and no repentance—we don't know him and we will perish. But if we have tasted his mercy and treasure it, and live in the liberty of his love, then we will show mercy and that mercy will be the evidence of our faith which carries us through the judgment."

If we say we have faith in Christ and lean our hope into the mercy He has shown us and yet we don't extend that same mercy to others, rather we judge them by some external superficial standard then we are revealing that we have not truly understood and received the Gospel. If we see it in ourselves...a disdain for a group of people, white, black, brown, old, rich, poor, sexually confused, etc...if we see it in us...then we seek to put it to death. We fight it....not perfection...it's progress...it's fighting...repenting / confessing / gospel

Mercy triumphs over judgment.

God is saying, "I didn't look at your worth...if I did that you'd be in hell." My grace, my mercy is the lens I see you through. It's what you are to reflect to the broken world around you.

While you were dead in your sins and trespasses...God sent His only Son to live the life that God created you to live and then to die the death that you deserve to die for your sin. You were unlovely. Yet Jesus died in your place, gave you promises you didn't deserve and blessings you could never earn. That's Mercy. Having been shown such mercy...living in the light of such mercy...it becomes instinctive to act and reflect such mercy.

Jesus came to us...The cross exposes the standards of the world for what they are. Empty. The world's glories are fleeting. But as the gospel takes root, we will be most drawn to the mercy that God has shown us in Christ. That's what our hearts will find most glorious. As it does we will be more and more characterized as merciful...rather than partial. Confess the darkness...repent...return to the the mercy of God in the Gospel...then take a first step. Re-define "neighbor"...as you return to the gospel and assess the cost to Christ to move toward you in mercy...the fear that holds you back from moving out to others will grow dim