

# Show No Partiality

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[ 0 : 00 ] James chapter 2, verses 1-4.

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. 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, 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, have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? The Bible, God's word, tells us what God is like, and it tells us also what he's not like.

It reveals God's character, his inherent qualities, which are called his attributes. For example, the Bible says that God is infinite, that God is sovereign, that God is holy, God is love, and that he is just.

There are other attributes that the Bible reveals about God, but one attribute of his that I think is often overlooked by us is his impartiality, even though it's a repeated theme throughout Scripture.

[ 1 : 44 ] God is impartial in his dealings with people, and in that way, along with his other attributes, he is unlike us.

We'd all like to believe that we don't judge a book by its cover, that we don't pass judgments on people based upon their outward appearances, but the truth is that without even thinking about it, we tend to categorize people and rank them based upon their looks, their clothes, their race and ethnicity, by their social status, by their personality type, their intelligence, their wealth, their power, by the car that they drive, by the neighborhood that they live in.

But all of those things are non-issues with God, and they should be non-issues for us. In Deuteronomy 10, 17 through 18, God calls his people to reflect his impartial character.

There it says, For the Lord your God is a God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great and mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. So, where we're at in James, we know that James has been writing about the authenticity of salvation, and how it's proven to be genuine by being not just a hearer of God's word, but a doer of God's word.

[ 3 : 28 ] And so, in verse 27 of chapter 1, the verse that precedes our text this morning, James writes, Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

As Pastor Tyler preached last week, genuine faith, undefiled faith, not only takes notice of the least of these, but takes action to serve them unselfishly and sacrificially.

We shouldn't determine a person's value based upon their race, their ethnicity, their social status, or their wealth. Like God, we are to be impartial, understanding that all have sinned, all have fallen short of God's glory, all are in need of the gospel, all are in need of knowing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

So the main idea for this morning's message is this, the gospel is available with equality to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. The gospel is available with equality to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

In Galatians 3.28, the Apostle Paul says that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus.

[ 5 : 04 ] Now, that verse doesn't mean that differences don't exist among us, but that in Christ they should not and they do not matter.

In Christ, it doesn't matter about your ethnic identity, your gender, or your age, or your station in life. If you are in Christ, you are one of God's chosen people and you stand to inherit all that God has promised to you in his word.

Not only should we not show partiality to one another in the church, we are commanded by Jesus to be impartial in our witness to unbelievers.

We are to go and make disciples of all nations, all peoples. And to do this, we must see others the way that God sees them without showing any kind of favoritism.

And this is the focus of James 2, verses 1-13. Today we'll cover verses 1-4. And in these verses, they tell us two ways that being partial and showing favoritism contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 21 ] So why is this important? Well, the gospel reveals that Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, came down to the lowly, to sinners like you and me.

And he substituted his life for the poorest of the poor, to those totally and utterly unable to save themselves.

That by faith in him, we who are poor in spirit may become rich in him. 2 Corinthians 8-9 says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

If you, if we as a church show favoritism, then we're not acting like Christ, but like the world. The world loves to honor the rich and neglect the poor.

The world system is based on showing honor and respect and deference to people whom you stand to gain the most from. If we allow the world's ways to become our ways, then our testimony and example to it will be greatly diminished, if not completely lost.

[ 7 : 51 ] The gospel that we proclaim will be contradicted by our actions. And the name of Jesus Christ will be put to shame.

And so I ask you, is that what you want? Or not? You don't want Jesus Christ and his name to be put to shame by you or our church by showing favoritism, do you?

So the first way that being partial or showing favoritism contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ is that showing favoritism demonstrates an attitude that contradicts the gospel.

Look again at verse one. He writes, My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. Now, that verse is pretty straightforward, isn't it?

Having genuine faith in Jesus Christ while holding an attitude of personal favoritism contradicts and is incompatible with the gospel. James' description of Jesus being the Lord of glory is meant to remind his readers of the depths to which Jesus descended to save them, to save us.

[ 9 : 01 ] Not only did he descend by adding a human nature to his divine nature, but he descended by being born in a manger in Bethlehem. He descended by being raised in the obscure town of Nazareth by parents who were not part of the elite of their society.

He descended still further by dying on the cross, bearing the burden of sins and enduring the wrath of God towards them. And all throughout Jesus' life here on earth, his conduct demonstrated that there was no one whom he considered to be beneath him or unworthy of him.

For example, in John 4, Jesus takes a seat next to a well. He knows that he has a divine appointment with a woman, though she didn't know it.

He speaks to her. He asks her for a drink. And she's stunned by that. Not just that he would ask her for a drink, but that he would dare to speak to her at all.

Jesus was a man and he was a Jew. She was a woman and a Samaritan. In speaking to her, Jesus was breaking the protocols of their culture because men did not speak to women and Jews certainly did not speak to Samaritans or had any kind of dealings with Samaritans.

[ 10 : 31 ] In the eyes of society, this woman was way beneath Jesus on the social ladder. But Jesus didn't care. He's not afraid to be seen with her.

He's not afraid to be seen speaking to her. He's not concerned with keeping and maintaining the norms of society. And what's more astonishing is that Jesus knew things about her before he even spoke with her.

She had been married and divorced five times and was presently when she met Jesus living with a man who was not her husband.

Eventually, Jesus leads her to see that what she's been looking for in all of those relationships, love, meaning, purpose, safety, could only be realized and satisfied in knowing him.

but just before she left to inform her village that she had met the Messiah, invite them to come out with her to meet Jesus, Jesus' disciples arrive.

[ 11 : 48 ] And they had been out shopping in town, getting supplies, and in verse 27, it records their reaction when they see Jesus speaking to this woman.

It says, just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, what do you seek or why are you talking with her?

See, marveled there. What was happening is the disciples were scandalized by this. They were astounded by this. They were put off by this.

They couldn't believe that Jesus would waste time talking with of all people, this Samaritan woman. Now, keep in mind that they didn't know the skeletons that she was hiding in her closet.

But Jesus doesn't discriminate, neither does the gospel, and neither should we. When people like the Samaritan woman interact with us, when they enter into our church building, do we receive them the way that Jesus received this woman, or do we receive them with an attitude that is more characteristic of his disciples here in John 4?

[ 13 : 05 ] Thinking they are unworthy of Jesus, too far gone, unworthy of his grace, of his forgiveness, his mercy, of having the slate wiped completely clean by coming to faith in him.

If you think anyone unworthy of Jesus, then you don't know Jesus or yourself well enough. We should never, as a church, have some kind of profile in our church or in our minds of the kind of people that we want to reach.

church. We should never gear our ministries to reach only a certain demographic of people or a certain segment of our community to the exclusion of others.

Jesus transformed this woman's life with the result that through her testimony, many came to faith in him. no one would have saw that coming based upon the cheap value that they placed on this woman.

But it made no difference to Jesus whether the person he spoke to or ministered to, whether they shared his ethnicity, was a wealthy person of influence like Nicodemus, or if they were a filthy, rotten scoundrel like Zacchaeus, whether they were a well-respected religious figure, a common worshiper, a beggar, a prostitute, rich, poor, clean, unclean, disabled, diseased, or dead.

[ 14 : 52 ] OU or Oklahoma State fan. And those of us who know better, a KU fan. But he didn't discriminate. Did he?

His overriding concern always was for their eternal soul and the condition of it. That they would know him as their Lord and Savior.

And you and I should act the same. It should be no different. The gospel is the great equalizer. It puts all of us on the same level, doesn't it?

Romans 3 23 says for all have sin. And fall short of the glory of God. The gospel is also available with absolute equality to everyone who believes in the Savior that it proclaims.

Romans 1 16 says for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[ 15 : 53 ] In Romans 6 23 we read for the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. You know we have differences don't we?

We don't all share the same interests. We have different roles to play as part of the church as part of the body of Christ but our attitudes towards one another must not demonstrate favoritism in ways that corrupt our church and its witness to unbelievers.

1 John 3 16 through 19 he pleads with the church with believers by this we know love that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers but if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against them how does God's love abide in him?

Little children let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth by this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him.

So now the second way that showing favoritism contradicts the gospel it's through making distinctions making distinctions based on appearances contradicts the gospel in verses 2 through 4 James uses an illustration to demonstrate how favoritism was being shown in the churches that he was writing to in verse 2 the beginning he says for if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly so what we need to understand is at this time the majority of converts to Christianity were Jewish and they were poor many of the first Christians became poor because they

became Christians their faith ostracized them from their families from society people did not want to have any kind of business with them they not only didn't want to do business with them but they hated them and they persecuted them for their faith but in

[ 17 : 53 ] Acts chapter 2 we are told how these early Christians came together to support one another without showing partiality Acts 2 44 through 45 says and all who believed were together and had all things in common and they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need not all the first Christians were poor some were wealthy some owned property and they gave or they sold that property in order to help others in need as we read in Acts chapter 4 verses 34 through 37 there was not a needy person among them for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles feet and it was distributed to each as any had need thus Joseph who was also called by the apostles Barnabas which means son of encouragement a Levite a native of Cyprus sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it all at the apostles feet now James illustration here reveals that there must have been at least in some of those churches wealthy members or at least the occasional wealthy visitor who was their guest when they gathered to worship in James illustration a church here is visited by a man with gold rings literally gold fingers now the case was the same for them as it is for us today wearing jewelry is a sign of great wealth

I know one thing they like to do before NFL games is they'll show the players walking to the locker rooms and often times they have their sparkly necklaces their sparkly rings their bling right and it's the same case today as it was back then the more bling you had the more sparkly you were the more wealthy you were able to tell everybody that you were in Greek fine clothing was used to describe bright or brilliant clothing so think of celebrities when they walk the red carpet in custom made designer clothes which they purchased for more than you make in a year or maybe in two years from the context that James uses it seems that the man in this illustration who looks like he's just stepped off the red carpet and into one of their churches is a visiting unbeliever but he's not the only visitor that the church received that day as

James continues with his illustration verse two and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in so to put it in our context imagine you're in the foyer before worship service starts maybe your job is to be a greeter and to hand out bulletins as people come in imagine you see a new Tesla or whatever a luxury automobile pull into our parking lot and out steps a man and he's wearing a tailored Armani suit you see the sun glitter off his gold Rolex watch and maybe even as he approaches the door you see that he's bringing with him a Bible that's your favorite translation at the same time here comes another man and he's walking up the sidewalk and he's wearing pajamas with stains on them with holes in them holes in his shoes maybe he's not even wearing shoes he's just wearing flip flops or something like that and he's carrying all that he has all his possessions in a plastic

Walmart sack how would you respond maybe probably you would respond in the way that these people did according to James illustration in the rest of verses 3 through 4 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 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts in most assemblies synagogues of that day there were only a few benches to sit on usually only one or two these were the chief seats that Jesus said the scribes and the Pharisees coveted most people usually stood in the synagogue or they sat on the ground cross legged on the floor occasionally someone would bring a footstool with them probably someone who had a seat on one of those benches and so what

James pictures here is someone who not only refuses to give up their seat for the poor man but who won't even give up their footstool to the poor man now how might we be guilty of doing the same thing today let's have a conversation about where you sit in the church where you're sitting right now first of all let's make it clear that there are!

[ 23 : 28 ] no assigned seats in this sanctuary amen amen okay but that you're all looking at you like what even though there are no assigned seats in the sanctuary doesn't keep us and I'm guilty of this too of referring to the place where we sit as my pew that's that's my pew and so you could see someone like the poor man in James' illustration think of them as coming in and sitting in your pew my place and if you saw that you could feel disgusted by it either because they've broken your routine and you feel inconvenience because now you have to find somewhere else to sit but that might mean that you're going to take the seat of someone else's pew you might be in somebody else's seat or maybe they aren't sitting in your spot in your pew but next to your spot on the pew

and maybe they don't smell very good and that can be inconvenient too or maybe you intentionally sit down by them you in that way put them at your feet so you can keep an eye on them making sure they don't try to take money out of one of the offering boxes or rummage through someone's purses when people aren't looking or cause some other kind of trouble now look

I understand the times that we are living in and we need to take measures to ensure the safety of the people in our church especially our children but should our first thought in seeing someone like the poor man in James' illustration and seeing them enter our church should our first thought be to judge them to see them as a threat see them as an inconvenience or to treat them as a guest and more than that someone whom we desire to not only treat with hospitality but to share the gospel with instead don't ask a guest or a visitor to move to accommodate you you move to accommodate them if you see someone sitting alone you move over to sit with them or if you see them standing and looking for a seat you invite them to sit with you and give them your seat some of you were here and remember five years ago on

Sunday mornings we brought all the adult Sunday school classes together and we went through a series called welcome here and one of the applications from that study was to sit somewhere different in the sanctuary you remember that and the point was to help us better gain understanding of what it's like for a visitor to come into our church and to feel how uncomfortable that can often feel for them and I think maybe it's time that we do that again maybe every few weeks and you know we should be happy when when we come into the sanctuary and we see someone sitting in the place where we're used to sitting shouldn't we it means that the Lord has brought someone to us and we should be grateful for the opportunity to receive them to welcome them no matter what we might be tempted to think about them based on external judgments

Because as James points out to make distinctions and to show favoritism based on a person's appearance is to judge a person with evil thoughts it's sinful it's unlike Christ in Matthew 19 Jesus is approached by a young wealthy man who express interest in following him Matthew 19 16 through 22 say and behold a man came up to him saying teacher what good deed must I do to have eternal life and he said to him why do you ask me about what is good there is only one who is good if you would enter life keep the commandments and he said to him which ones and Jesus said you shall not murder you shall not commit adultery you shall not steal you shall not bear false witness honor your father and mother you shall love your neighbor as yourself and the young man said to him all these I have kept what do

I still lack and Jesus said to him if you would be perfect go sell all that you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come and follow me when the young man heard this he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions so again imagine being one of Jesus disciples overhearing this conversation between Jesus and the rich young man I think you would probably see the rich young man and you would be thinking well here's a great prospect this guy is young this guy has energy this guy is wealthy this guy has good morals here's someone who would be a great addition to our group but unlike men

[ 29 : 39 ] Jesus sees past the external and he knew that internally this man truly worshipped his wealth and that was his true God now it should be noted that although the rich are subject to special kinds of temptations and appetites as we'll get into next week in James chapter two verses six through seven wealth itself is not sinful as long as it's acquired justly and used wisely and generously as faithful stewards of the Lord likewise it isn't a sin to be poor unless a person becomes poor as result of squandering what they have received foolishly or making the choice not to work when they could and taking advantage of others generosity but rich and poor are equal in God's sight impartiality must not be shown to either now there's another application from this text that I see and though it's not the main point that

James is making I think it's important for us to take a minute to consider it James' point is to expose the sinfulness of showing favoritism but are there times when you are the person who expects to be shown favoritism by others and by God for whatever it is you've done Jesus tells a parable in Matthew chapter 20 verses 1 through 16 let's read that together he said for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard after agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day he sent them into his vineyard and going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace and to them he said you go into the vineyard too and whatever is right I will give you so they went going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour he did the same and about the eleventh hour he went out and found others

standing and he said to them why do you stand here idle all day they said to him because no one has hired us he said to them you go into the vineyard too and when evening came the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman call the laborers and pay them their wages beginning with the last up to the first and when those hired about the eleventh hour came each of them received a denarius so if you were one of those people who were there first what are you thinking more now when those hired first came they thought they would receive more but each of them also received a denarius and on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house saying these last worked only one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat but he replied to one of them friend

I am doing you no wrong did you not agree with me for a denarius take what belongs to you and go I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me or do you begrudge my generosity Jesus points so the last will be first and the first last no matter how long each worked how hard they worked they received the same wage at the end of the day the first group of workers in the vineyard resented receiving the same wage as the last group that arrived why they expected to be shown some kind of favoritism didn't they their attitudes characterized the Pharisees of Jesus day they were incensed by Jesus offering the kingdom of heaven to sinners that he would not uphold and maintain the distinctions that they had worked hard to establish between themselves and those other people the rest of the workers received their wages without complaining or being envious of others and in the same way as Christians we should rejoice when others come to know Christ we should rejoice in the service others have rendered to Jesus Christ he is faithful to reward us for our service as he has promised and how he rewards others for their service should be of no consequence to us nor should it affect our devotion to him and his church you know we should never expect to be shown favoritism in the church based upon what title the church has given us to serve in or how long we've been at work in the church because in the end who do we truly do it for we do it for the Lord and the reward that we've received by graciously receiving eternal life through Jesus Christ is enough and it will be the kingdom given to all and equally to those whom he's been gracious to to save them and so we can never forget who we are and who

God is years ago at my previous church we had a prison ministry in town that we were involved with as a church and these guys I've gotten to meet them in prison and they were brothers in Christ they were saved they had made mistakes they were paying for their crime but they were believers they knew Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and so what they got to do is they got to be taken out of prison now they were in minimum security they got to leave prison and go to churches to not only worship with them but lead in worship and so we had them come and do that because you know one of their main leaders was a member of our church and

[ 36 : 44 ] I don't think I've seen a church so uncomfortable as our church was on that Sunday and man the worship service was powerful it was awesome to hear their testimonies to see their passion for the Lord and I knew it was unsettling for a lot of our people but everything went fine nobody was killed nobody was kidnapped!

Nothing was broken or taken but the next Sunday one of our our deacons at the time who had been a prison guard for most of his life in the military and afterwards made this comment to a few of us gathered around and he said you know I know I'm sure that the Lord has saved many of them but let them worship someplace else and I just got up and left I just I couldn't let them worship with us let them worship with us them worship somewhere else let them worship with us they're going to for all eternity let them worship with us and I think in this case for this man who I did end up being able to talk to later, it was just a moment where he forgot who he was and the kind of Lord that he serves.

And so I want to read some passages of scripture before we get to our main point of application. And I pray that the Lord will use these to just wash us and cleanse us of whatever favoritism we have been guilty of showing or distinctions that we want to make.

1 Corinthians 1, 26 through 29. 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 this 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 may boast in the presence of God.

[ 39 : 07 ] None of us can say, of course, I was saved. Of course God would choose me. No. Philippians 2, 3. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Poor or rich, young or old, man or woman or child. Whatever their race or ethnicity, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but treat others as being more significant than you.

In Romans 15, 5 through 7. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may be with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. And may that be the case for our church always, that we welcome one another.

And we do so with appreciation for the fact that the Lord has brought you here to be a part of this church, and he has been gracious to save them as he was gracious to save you.

[ 40 : 19 ] So the main point of application is this. See people and treat people like Jesus. See people and treat people like Jesus.

Jesus, maybe this morning you are a visitor with us. Like in James' illustration, whether you're wealthy or poor, it doesn't matter. The Lord is calling to you today.

He's saying, be my child. Come to me. And I will forgive you of all your sins. I will wipe the slate clean. It's not about you cleaning yourself up in order to get right with me.

You can never do enough of that. It'll never be enough. If you trust in Jesus Christ, his son, that he came and lived the sinless life that you could never live, that I could never live, that he died on the cross to atone for the sins that you've committed against a God who is holy, holy, holy, and that on the third day he rose again as we've sung all this morning.

Proof that the sacrifice was sufficient. Proof that there is life eternally in him, that he reigns now and will reign forevermore. And he's got you here for a reason to hear this message, to hear this gospel, that you would believe it and be saved.

[ 41 : 34 ] If today is the day of salvation for you, I hope that you'll find me either during our time of invitation or sometime after church because I want to celebrate what God has done in your life with you. We all do.

Three questions of application for us to go over in our community groups tonight. And I encourage you to look at them today and even later this week. Question number one, what does it mean to show partiality?

Why are faith in Christ and favoritism incompatible? What does it mean to show partiality? Why are faith in Christ and favoritism incompatible?

Question number two, what are some ways you have shown favoritism, maybe even unintentionally, to those in your circle of influence? How have you seen favoritism play out in the church?

And then finally, read Matthew 9, 10 through 13. What does this passage reveal about Jesus in showing favoritism? What are some other examples where Jesus demonstrated impartiality?

[ 42 : 43 ] And there are many. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray that we would never forget who we are and who you are.

That God, as your word says, we are all sinners who fall woefully short of your glory, of your standard. Lord, we could never be wealthy enough.

We could never be moral enough. We could never do enough good things to ever put you in our debt, to ever make us worthy of the grace that you have extended to us. God, may we never forget that.

May we not forget it as we interact with other people in the church that you've called us to be a part of. Not treating some with favor based upon the external judgments we make of them, but seeing people the way that you see them and loving them in the way that you've commanded us to.

And Lord, with unbelievers, may we never be of the mind that there's a certain group that's a good fit for our church and there are others who are not. May that never be the case for us. And God, may we be the kind of church that reflects what the church is going to look like eternally when all people from all tribes and tongues and languages and nations will gather around you in worship.

[ 44 : 02 ] And Lord, may our church look like that here, reflecting that here in this world. God, we thank you for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Lord, if any of us ever thinks that we have deserved the salvation that we've received, may you remind us of the cross and the price that was

paid willingly to save us from our sins, give us hope to give us life.

And so, Lord, may we be eager to share that with everyone whom you placed in our paths, that anybody who comes through our doors would be received by us as you have received us, as you have commanded us.

Lord, we need your help in this and we believe that you will help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.