

Garrison. Elder Candidate. James 1:26. **Pray.**

Let me give you a few Hypothetical scenarios:

A friend who you've known for years asks to get breakfast. You show up and the whole time they just talk about themselves. How difficult their job is, how rewarding their hobbies are, the shows they really like right now. Never once asking about you. Any time you tell them about what you like they point out like 6 flaws with everything you like. They even leave early and forget to pay their bill, you're stuck with it! How do you feel? What do you do?

You're driving home from work and you stop at a stoplight. You look over to your left and you see a man who is homeless holding up a sign asking for help. You make eye contact. How do you feel? What do you do?

A Christian in your group has a sin pattern with anger outbursts. And they're really bad about confessing it. But somehow your group pulls it out of them every week. Time and again they justify and minimize it, saying it's not really that bad or a big deal. When you try to point out a blind spot, they get angry and tell you that you don't understand, that you're not hearing them and you don't care. How do you feel? What do you do?

Every week James has said that real, living faith will result in us doing something. That our faith in Jesus will translate into real actions.

Week 1 he showed us that living faith matures through trials, week 2 living faith receives and obeys God's word.. Week 3:

Living Faith Welcomes. So if you've got a Bible open up to where Tim left us last week. We'll see what James has to say about how we're to welcome others.

26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: V27 to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Okay pause. James is talking about religion. Not religiosity. Where our priorities get mixed up and we start to think that all the religious stuff we do is the point instead of having a real relationship with God. No. Religion means real genuine faith. Genuine, real faith. And not just 'what' real faith is but 'how' to gauge if it's legit or not.

We ended last week by saying James gives us 3 tests. He asks:

- **How's your speech?**
- **Do you serve the poor and needy?**
- **Do you consistently say no to sin?**

The Key one for tonight: Do you serve the poor and needy?

Real and genuine faith will translate to genuine love and desire to serve the poor.

In the rest of the book he's going to revisit each of these themes. Tonight - poor and needy. that's what he's doing in 2:1-13. It's a fleshing out of 1:27a. James 2:

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,"

If Living Faith Welcomes—>Dead Faith Shows Partiality

What is Partiality?: Commonly, you could say partiality is favoritism. You play favorites. According to what we'll see in this text, those favorites are predicated upon the wealth of a man or a woman.

Now if we speak about it in the way this text is speaking about it, it's not only favoritism, but also discrimination. Where honor and respect are shown towards those with money and the opposite is shown to the poor.

Assemblies in ancient cultures that there was a different seat assigned to those of different status. Usually those who were wealthy or the elite got to sit at the places of honor which is what James is talking here as 'a good place.' Essentially, seats would be assigned from greatest to least importance. Those with less status or wealth would have to sit towards the back of the room or even stand.

A lot of this was totally based on wealth. So someone walks in with nice clothes and a gold ring walks in the room and everyone perks up to treat them really well. But when the poor man comes in, not so much. You don't even get a seat. Or even worse, come sit here at my feet like a servant.

James says this can't fly in the church. That we're to be a people that don't discriminate or show favoritism based on wealth. We do not withhold or give glory, love, affection, hospitality, friendship, mercy, kindness, or service to people based on what they have or don't have.

Now, the sin of partiality might seem pretty straightforward. Especially in the context of these verses.

I would assume no one here today is thinking, ya know I'm wearing my very cool J Crew jeans, I'll be sitting at the front thank you, you in the Target jeans, at my feet, will you! That would be ridiculous! We're all pretty nice people right. We would never! But there are actually other ways that partiality can show up.

It's way sneakier than that. I want to show HOW it shows up in our context. **How:**

Moment of Honesty: Now look, if we're honest, don't we drift towards, don't we find there's a group of people that it's just easier to do life with? Then there are people that's it's harder. It takes more work. So the drift is towards those just like us. And stay away from others. Don't we kind of look for 'my kind of people' in new situations?

I would argue this shows that we have our own categories of poor or poverty.

- For some of us it is the financially poor. We get uncomfortable around those who are needy financially. When we find ourselves near to those in homeless situations, we're tempted to think to ourselves 'please don't talk to me.' 'Don't make eye contact.'
- Poor in life stage. We get totally separated by life stages. We tend to be a little condescending and self righteous towards those in life stages we've been in. And we tend to be a little envious and self righteous towards those ahead of us. So we're sort of stuck in this space where we're kinda separated. The singles. The married people. The parents. The retired.

- Poor in maturity. We look down on those who we view as behind us right? Oh I remember when I was there. I was doing way better. Maybe a baby Christian. How do they not get it yet right? They don't have anything to offer me-- believing that they can't help me mature/contribute to my growth so I disassociate.
 - I'm pretty guilty of this one. Idk if you see it in yourself too but there's something in me that when I see someone struggling with something I think I've figured out, which by the way most of the time I have not, I think of myself way past them. Which is gross since I'm overvaluing my own maturity and undervaluing theirs.
- Poor in mind or body. Those who look worse than us. The overweight. The elderly. The uneducated or those who are slow processors. We're tempted to think we're better. Or we get unfairly frustrated and impatient with those we view as poor in mind or body.
- Or even the poor in personality. People that are hard to hang out with. They're dull. They complain about everything. Their interests are lame and we can look down on them for it. Maybe you categorize them as 'draining'.

If I could I'd love to talk about one way we need to resist the pull.

Serving. We as a church organization try to make it a priority to have partnerships with different non profits/mercy organizations in our city. The goal is we want to be a blessing. We put on different events throughout the year, Serve Saturdays and such. I've kind of noticed a pattern and I'm worried about it. Frankly, I think we've got about the same 20 people give or take that serve at every single event.

And we're very thankful if you've been a part of any of the events we put on! But as a church, I don't want us to be there. And I don't think it starts with our leadership putting on more events or communicating it differently.

Ultimately we all have personal responsibility to do this. Our serve events are actually just the starting point. We should absolutely all make it a priority to be there when our church serves together. And we need to be doing this ourselves. Let me give you a quick example of someone doing this well:

Woman in our church. Homeless bags. We need more of that! That's us resisting and repenting of our partiality.

Partiality does in fact show up. It can be towards the poor. It can be towards the wealthy actually. It can be towards anyone that you physically, emotionally, relationally and spiritually distance yourself from.

But why does it matter? Like why does it matter if I gravitate towards wealthy, beautiful, helpful people? Isn't that what networking is? Hanging out with people that help me get better/improve in life? Let's hop back and see why partiality is actually a problem.

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? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. 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?

1. Partiality is against God's heart.

The first problem of partiality is it flies in the face of how God operates. Think back to the way the ancient assemblies worked. Everyone gets assigned seats with the greatest at the front and the least at the back. That's not how the Kingdom of God works. Jesus reverses the order.

Jesus takes the low place. He comes to serve. He reverses the order. In the Kingdom of God, the least will be the greatest. The apostle Paul would say it like this. It's 1 Corinthians 1, starting in verse 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."

Our adoption into a family of God is not built on family history/or lineage, not built on works that we have earned or any work others have done for us, but entirely provided by the work of God. Unifying us and equalizing us as family.

When you show partiality, when you show favoritism, when you discriminate, you dishonor God because you step out from under his saving grace, and you become your own mini-god, judging others with evil intentions.

You were not saved because of your awesomeness. So the demand that someone meet your criteria of awesomeness is anti-gospel. It's outside of how God saves. It's outside of how God works. It's outside of the mercy you've been shown.

At the heart of partiality is a belief that people are only valuable if they can contribute to my life/provide me with something. It's a selfish posture towards relationships and anti-gospel.

So the level of hypocrisy and darkness that occurs when you show partiality: When you don't like to get around people who aren't in your socioeconomic status or when you show favoritism to people who you're more at ease around, you're actually working against the heart of God that says, "You've rebelled. You've sinned. You're this guy. I'm going to save you. I'm going to step into your mess, rescue you. I'm going to show you mercy. I'm going to honor you. I'm going to rescue you. I'm going to bring you into my kingdom."

We are against the heart of God when we show partiality. It dishonors God. It contradicts His way. But there's another problem.

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 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 guilty of all of it. 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. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

2. Partiality is against God's Law.

So here's what he's saying. Partiality isn't just some small thing. Like a little sin. Don't we all kinda do this. Like yeah I know I do it, but come on it's not that big of a deal. I got way bigger stuff I need to be working on. That's not how sin works though. It's just sin. And when we sin by showing partiality, we're convicted as the same as someone who murdered.

That may come across as shocking. Like no that's not true. Come on, I only sometimes get annoyed with people who look different, are less mature. That can't be the same. We're wrong. We're wrong because we view sin wrongly. We view sin with varying degrees of badness. But that's not how God views sin.

When we sin we break the law. All sin separates us from God and is worthy of condemnation. Why? Because He's perfect and holy. When we view certain sins as small we're completely wrong. When you break God's law in any way, you are guilty. James is correcting our view of the law.

And he's saying we are to live as those who will be judged. His words in v 13 are almost identical to Jesus' words in Matthew 6:14-15:

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

We will be judged by how we speak and act.

We will. And if you don't have mercy for the poor you will be shown no mercy. If you show favoritism, you will be shown no favor. So act as those who are to be judged.

It's very sobering. But we have hope.

Finish up in v 13.

Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Remember the mercy of Jesus.

We could do nothing to earn God's love and kindness, but He gave it to us in Christ. When we sin by showing partiality we've gotten the Gospel twisted. Instead of our hearts pouring out to the needy because of our own need, we begin to think that we're good on our own, which directly translates to apathy towards the needy.

Tim Keller talks about the dangers of a lack of love for our neighbor this way: *"A merely religious person, who believes God will favor him because of his morality and respectability, will ordinarily have contempt for the outcast. 'I worked hard to get where I am, and so can anyone else!' That is the language of the moralist's heart. 'I am only where I am by the sheer and unmerited mercy of God. I am completely equal with all other people.' That is the language of the Christian's heart. A sensitive social conscience and a life poured out in deeds of mercy to the needy is the inevitable sign of a person who has grasped the doctrine of God's grace."*

When we show partiality we show our pride. We show that we're the standard and the judge. This is what Keller calls moralism. It's works based righteousness. I'm righteous, I'm good before God because of what I do. Therefore if anyone isn't doing what I do, they're beneath me. The heart of the Christian has been completely humbled by the Gospel. We could have never earned God's love or affection. We could have never worked hard enough.

See, works do not save us. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone, but those of us who are saved see the world differently. We live differently and we treat others differently.

We welcome bc Christ welcomed us. We show mercy to all because of the mercy given to us in Christ.

So James concludes: "Mercy triumphs over judgment." He says, "Remember the triumph of God's mercy in your own life and be merciful. Put to death the sinful judgments of your hearts that you're making. Take off and put away the filthiness and wickedness of favoritism and discrimination, and in light of God's incredible mercy to you, let mercy reign among us." So here's his command.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. So remember the mercy that was shown to you. Remember where you were when Christ found you. Remember he rescued you, remember he ransomed you, and in your remembrance of God's forgiving grace and mercy, extend it to others.

If Christ showed any partiality, none of us would experience His salvation. Living Faith welcomes. Living Faith shows mercy and kindness because of what Christ has done for us. When we actually all do this, we not only show that we get the Gospel, but it's powerful and beautiful. When people walk into our building they will see and feel that something is different. Our groups will be more of a family. Our city will be blessed because of the living faith that we have in Christ.

Pray.

Communion.