

# James

Fulfilling The Royal Law

September 25, 2011

## I. Introduction

A. **James 2:1-13** . . . My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. [2] For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, [3] and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," [4] have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? [5] Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? [6] But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? [7] Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? [8] If, however, you are fulfilling 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 and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. [11] For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. [12] So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. [13] For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

## B. Prayer

## II. There Is To Be No Impartiality, Prejudice, Discrimination In The Church

A. Last Sunday we ended with verse 4 of **James 2**. And to remind you what we were talking about, let me summarize it this way: Judging the worth of any Christian by their outward appearance or popularity or position or riches or charisma, and using that judgment to determine how we will treat him, is not only wrong, it reveals a heart of evil reasonings and a life built on ungodly principles. Such thinking and reasonings, and the resulting discrimination is to have no place in us or in the church.

B. **James 2:5-7** . . . Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He

promised to those who love Him? [6] But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? [7] Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

1. There are four important truths here. Two apply to the poor man and two apply to the rich man.
2. Two important truths related to the poor:
  - a. **First truth:** Among those who are truly poor (*those who are poor because they cannot be anything else based on their circumstances*) there are those who are humbled by their circumstances (*rather than angry or bitter*). And in their humbleness, they trust in God to be their provider and protector. It is this humble response to their circumstances and their dependence on God for their well-being that makes them rich in faith, and therefore heirs of the kingdom (eternal life) which God promises to all who love Him.
  - b. **Second truth:** Generally speaking, the poor are despised by the rich, not just for their outward appearance, but for their supposed lack of character, lack of initiative, poor choices, and other such qualities that the rich believe they have and believe they have put to good use in becoming rich.
3. Yet it is the truly poor in our world who God choose to be rich in faith and heirs of His kingdom. Why? Because, generally speaking, the truly poor display the qualities of humility and faith far more often and to a much greater degree than the rich. And of course, humility and faith are two qualities that are dear to God's heart. Consider this small smattering of truths from scripture that support this:
  - a. God chose to have Jesus born and raised in an impoverished setting. And during his years of ministry, his earthly possessions and riches were the clothes on his back. The first message of Christ's birth came to shepherds. And most of the disciples Jesus chose were either poor working class men or men in positions generally despised by the rest of society.
  - b. **I Corinthians 1:26-29** . . . For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; [27] but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, [28] and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, [29] so that no man may boast before God.
4. In regard to the rich, there are also two truths to consider:

- a. **First truth:** Generally speaking, the rich are not rich in faith, but rich in self – self-interest, self-provision, self-protection, self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-glory. They rise each day confident they can do what it takes to provide for themselves and those they love. They accumulate, and some even hoard what they do not need. And they are willing to bend the rules, act unjustly, and mistreat others to gain or maintain their riches.
  - b. **Second truth:** In spite of how enviable the lives of the rich look, their accumulated and hoarded riches are all the reward they are going to receive for how they lived in this life.
- 5. One common weakness of the rich is that they tend to overlook the ungodly thinking and methods they sometimes use to increase their riches. But God does not overlook those things, because He examines the outward appearance plus the heart, the thoughts, the intentions, the choices, and the affect of our behavior on others.
- 6. Listen to these words from scripture concerning the rich:
  - a. **Jeremiah 9:23-24** . . . Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; [24] but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; **for I delight** in these things," declares the LORD.
  - b. **Matthew 19:23-24** . . . And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. [24] Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
  - c. **Luke 6:24** . . . But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.
  - d. **I Timothy 6:17-19** . . . Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. [18] Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, [19] storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.
  - e. **James 5:1-6** . . . Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. [2] Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. [3] Your gold and

your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! [4] Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. [5] You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. [6] You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

- C. What is the point of all this? When brothers and sisters in Christ come into our church and we decide how to treat them based on their outward appearance, such as being rich or poor, we are acting out of pride, we are basing our behavior on a foundation of evil reasonings, we are choosing against God rather than for God, we are disrespecting the person we deem inferior without just cause, and we are lifting up those whose choices and behavior – generally speaking – are not only against God, but against the common working man and his family as well.

### III. Fulfilling the Royal Law

- A. **James 2:8** . . . If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.
  - 1. It is possible that the previous warning does not apply to you. Maybe you are loving your brothers and sisters in Christ as you want to be loved, and therefore treating them as you want to be treated. If this is the case, then what you are doing is not only praiseworthy, it is a demonstration of willful submission on your part to the authority and Law of God. This is good!
  - 2. Why is loving our neighbor as ourselves called the royal law?
    - a. **First**, it is the Law of the Kingdom of God given by the King of kings himself to His subjects, or to His people. If we are the people of God, then we are His subjects and therefore subject to His laws.
      - (1) This Law, in its written form, goes all the back to the time when God gave His law through Moses: "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. [18] 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge

against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD" (**Leviticus 19:17-18**).

(2) And Jesus affirmed this truth when dealing with a question from a Religious Lawyer. **Luke 10:25-28** . . . And a lawyer stood up and put Jesus to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" [26] And Jesus said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" [27] And the lawyer answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." [28] And Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

b. **Second**, this law of loving our neighbor as ourselves is the law that governs all other laws regarding human relationships. For example:

(1) Jesus said: "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (**Matthew 7:12**).

(2) And the Apostle Paul wrote: "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. [9] For this, "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [10] Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (**Romans 13:8-10**).

3. The Royal Law of loving our neighbor as ourselves is a high and noble calling. But it does not stand alone. It is inseparably joined to the first and great commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (**Mark 12:30**).

a. The apostle John affirms this truth when he says: "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also" (**I John 4:20-21**).

b. May we be Christians who are committed and serious minded about fulfilling both these laws of love.

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. If the temptation comes your way to show partiality, run away from it. If you are not tempted by this that is good. But let us look for the godly qualities in each other. Let us affirm those things. And may we forget who is popular, who is rich, or who is this or that.
- B. I would much rather hear among us, "Have you met this person? He really knows the Lord!" verses someone saying, "Have you met this person? He is the president of Ford Motor!"
- C. We will be much better off as God's people when we are impressed with what people are on the inside rather than on the outside. May we be these kinds of believers.