

***James 2:1 (NIV)***

***Favoritism Forbidden***

<sup>1</sup> My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.

***James 2:1–7 (NASB 2020)***

<sup>2</sup> For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring *and is dressed* in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, <sup>3</sup> and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright 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,” <sup>4</sup> have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? <sup>5</sup> Listen, my beloved brothers *and sisters*: did God not choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?

- 1) We ended last time discussing what James meant by “become judges with evil motives”
- 2) Next, he points out clearly that by offering the poor man a less than honorable position we will dishonor him.
- 3) And, on the other hand, perhaps the very person who is going to cause you massive amounts of grief, because of his wealth, you have favored him.
  - a) He may even be one who blasphemes the name of our Lord.

***Do you think James is telling us to treat all wealthy folks with suspicion and perhaps even disdain?***

- 4) I personally do not think so.
  - a) I think what he is trying to impress on us here is that the person’s status in life should not make any difference in our treatment of that individual.
    - i) Not to the good or to the bad – not showing favorites or treating with suspicion.
  - b) We may find later that either the poor or the rich may not be truly worthy of our “undying love” so to speak.
    - i) We must begin with the love of Christ in our hearts and show that love to them.
    - ii) What is returned is really up to them.
  - c) It is really not up to us to judge the state of these folk’s hearts.
  - d) Again, that may become apparent further on down the road but our first impression and their appearance is not what our response should be based upon.

## **James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025**

- 5) Continuing, James uses the topic we just discussed to springboard into another situation concerning equality.
- 6) This time however, it is not equality of people or our actions toward them but equality of sins. That seems to be the beginning thrust of his message in this passage.
- 7) Verses 12 and 13 are connected but we will read 8-11 first then spend some time looking specifically at the last two verses, 12 and 13.

### **James 2:8-11 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>8</sup> If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the Law as violators. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole Law, yet stumbles in one *point*, has become guilty of all. <sup>11</sup> For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do murder, you have become a violator of the Law.

- 8) There is a subtility here that we may need to look at.
  - a) What is happening in vs. 8 and 9 is the person may convince himself that he is “Loving his neighbor as himself” BUT if in truth, he is simply showing partiality (motives enter in here) then he is sinning.
- 9) My personal take on what James is telling them and us here in this entire passage is truly two things:
  - a) The first is that **we must** consider all sins equally serious.
  - b) The second is that when we sin, our guilt in **God’s eyes** whether we are telling a “little white lie” or “killing someone” **may be the same!**
    - i) There is an issue when we look at this regarding God’s punishments of various sins.
      - (1) Uza was killed for touching the Arch.
      - (2) Moses’ punishment for smiting the rock was not being able to enter the promised land.
      - (3) Ananias and Sapphira were killed for deception.
    - ii) This issue can be resolved by considering all sin equal in God’s eyes and in our eyes.

**Our first question is a simple yes or no – can we all agree that that is what James is saying?**

**If not then what is that alternative?**

**The second question is also a yes or no – do we agree with this by the way we live out our everyday lives?**

**If not then why not?**

- 10) I know James’ premises are very BLACK vs. WHITE but I think we need to answer the next question for ourselves if not for anyone else.

**The final question is how important is it for us to see things as James does here?**

## **James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025**

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11) I personally feel that we should try to get our thinking in line with what James is saying for at least two major reasons.

- a) **First** if we do not agree that all sins are equal and important we may not feel the need to repent of the “lesser sin” thereby putting our salvation in jeopardy.
- b) **Second** if we work at leveling this playing field (sin A to sin B etc.) we will be more likely to look at things more realistically and become less complacent about minor problems we encounter in our daily walk.

### **Can anyone think of a possible downside to this kind of leveling?**

12) One that I can think of is letting our own sense of right and wrong drive us instead of God’s.

- a) In other words, elevating our traditions to the level of sin and all that goes along with that.

13) One other important point in these past few verses.

- a) If, we were living under the “unfulfilled Law” and without Christ’s coming it would be crushing!
  - i) In essence there is no way to win – if we sin in any way – we are guilty of the whole law and therefore have no way out.
  - ii) This was the situation for the Jew who would not accept Christ as the Messiah!