

# James 2

## Day 1

The Hypocrisy of Favoritism. Read James 2:1-7

1. What focus prevents favoritism? 2:1

**FYI:** "**Paritality** translates a Greek word that means, literally, 'receiving the face'...To receive the face is to make judgments and distinctions based on external considerations...A favoritism based on external considerations is inconsistent with faith in the One who came to break down the barrier of nationality, race, class, gender and religion. (see Col 3:11)"  
- Douglas Moo (87,88)

"**The faith of our Lord Jesus** Christ includes the fact that God loves the world and that Christ died for it. If God and Christ show grace and mercy without favoritism, so should believers (v.8,13)" - The Nelson Study Bible (2106)

"You can't show favoritism when you know this Christ, when you are captivated by the Lord of glory who gave His everything so that you might be rich in Him. You don't attribute too much to the wealthy, and the last thing you do is look down on the poor because this is exactly who Christ came for—you in all your poverty." - David Pratt

2. Underline the reasons that we should not show favoritism:

- Proverbs 14:31 Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God. NIV
- Proverbs 22:2 Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all. NIV
- Deuteronomy 10:17,18 For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe. 18 He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the stranger by giving him food and clothing. NASB

3. What was the difference between the two men in the example in 2:2?

- How was favoritism shown? 2:3

4. What things were people doing by these actions? 2:4 (Compare Deuteronomy 16:19)

- What "*evil motives/thoughts*" might someone have for treating people this way?

### **Digging Deeper**

What does Isaiah 58:6-10 say about the Lord's desires?

**FYI:** "It's *not* about the rich or poor man. There's nothing necessarily wrong with being rich, and there's nothing necessarily wrong with being poor. The problem James is addressing is the *motive* that affects the *behavior*."  
- Charles Swindoll (53)

"Favoritism is an indication of a heart that at best is in need of spiritual help and at worst is a heart without grace."  
- R. Kent Hughes (91)

"In the ancient world people were routinely and permanently categorized because they were Jew or Gentile, slave or free, rich or poor, Greek or barbarian, or whatever."  
- David Guzik

5. What argument did James give for honoring the poor? 2:5

- How does God evaluate people? 1 Samuel 16:7

**Digging Deeper**

See the honor Jesus gave a poor person. Mark 12:41-44 (See also 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.)

**FYI:** "All social distinctions are null and void in the church...Both rich and poor are to be received equally. Notice that the rich are not condemned here, per se. They are welcome in the church. What is condemned is the insult to the poor person (v. 6)." - Lyman Coleman (30)

6. What did showing favoritism do to the poor? 2:6a

**FYI: Dishonored/insulted** NT:818 *atimazo*; to render infamous, i.e. (by implication) condemn or maltreat "To dishonor, to treat with indignity, to abuse" - The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

7. Ironically, list what the rich had been doing to the poor. 2:6b

**FYI: "Exploiting you..."** In a day of abject poverty the poor were often forced to borrow money at exorbitant rates of interest just to survive. The rich profited from their need...**Dragging you into court...**This was probably over the issue of a debt. 'If a creditor met a debtor on the streets, he could seize him by the neck of his robe, nearly throttling him and literally drag him to the law courts.' (Barclay)" - Lyman Coleman (31)

"James is not saying that **all** the rich oppressed them, for some did not, but this was the general *historic* experience of the Jews, as well as their *present* experience in the Jewish-Christian dispersion. The Jewish Christians of James' day were disenfranchised by both Jews and Gentiles. And being debtor-poor, they were further exploited by those rich entrepreneurial classes." - R. Kent Hughes (94) [See Micah 6:11-12]

8. By these behaviors, what were the rich doing? 2:7

- Contrast what the Lord said about serving the needy. Matthew 25:37-40

**Digging Deeper**

For examples of **wealthy** men of faith, see: Genesis 13:2

Job 1:3

Matthew 27:57-60

**FYI: Blaspheme** "Judicial proceedings against Christians on financial grounds may have been motivated by and combined with scorn for their faith." - Douglas Moo (92)

**Applying the Word:** What helps you to avoid being tripped up by someone's position or power or possessions?

## Day 2

### The Sin of Favoritism. Read James 2:8-13

9. What principle from scripture did James give to combat favoritism? 2:8 (See Lev. 19:15)

- How does this compare to what Jesus said about love and favoritism? Matt. 5:46-48

10. Underline how the “royal”(sovereign/preeminent) law relates to all the law.

- Matthew 7:12 “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” NIV
- Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”
- Mark 12:30,31 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: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” NIV
- Galatians 5:14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” NIV
- Romans 13:9,10 The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. NIV

11. What two words that describe what someone is doing when they show favoritism. 2:9 (Cross-ref. 2:4b)

- How guilty are we by law? 2:10 (See Galatians 3:10,11)

**FYI: offend in one point.** “The divine law...is an expression of God’s will for His people. The violation of even one commandment separates an individual from God and His purposes.” - The Nelson Study Bible (2107)

“James’ point here is that if you practice discrimination against those made in the image of God, you’re guilty of sin no matter how many rules you follow.” - The Tony Evan Study Bible (1473)

“We have it from the lips of Jesus that if we love God and our neighbor, we fulfill the whole Law. The problem is, no one has ever perfectly fulfilled this except Jesus! Thus we understand that the Law is meant to bring us to the end of ourselves, to prepare us to humbly receive the gift of Christ’s righteousness by faith. Then, as Christians indwelt by the Spirit, we can begin to love God and love people as we ought and thus fulfill the Law of God.”

- R. Kent Hughes (99)

“James no doubt realized that his Jewish readers, accustomed as they had been to trusting in the law for salvation, needed to realize fully that they could never be justified before God by keeping the law, since no one could ever keep it perfectly. Not only Jews, however, but all men need to realize that they can never be saved by their good works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:5; Galatians 2:16).”

- Henry Morris

12. What is the problem with picking and choosing which laws are important? 2:11

**Digging Deeper**

How does 1 John 3:15 define murder?

**FYI:** "Although God's law has many facets, it is essentially one, being the expression of the character and will of God himself. To violate the law at any one point is not to violate one commandment only; it is to violate the will of God and to contradict the character of God. The same God who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said 'Do not murder.' It is also the same God who gave the royal law of love for one's neighbor. The person who breaks just one of these laws has 'become a lawbreaker.' Although but one commandment is broken, the entire law of God has been flouted. When viewed like this, an act of favoritism is far from insignificant."

- Expositor's Bible Commentary

13. In the following verses, underline the answer.

- What is true about everyone's condition?  
*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*  
*Romans 3:10, 23 NKJ*
- How are we made free?  
*...through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.*  
*Acts 13:38,39 NASB*  
*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*  
*Romans 3:24 NKJ*
- Underlinewhat are we freed from and what controls us? (Cross-ref. 1:25)  
*But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.... 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death..*  
*Romans 7:6; 8:2 NIV*
- How does this new life manifest itself?  
*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.... 22 the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*  
*Galatians 5:16,22,23 NIV*
- How are we made righteous?  
*And be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*  
*Philippians 3:9 NIV*

14. What should govern our actions and words? 2:12 (Cross-ref. 1:25)

**FYI: law of liberty:** "We know the law James had in mind – the liberating, royal law that excludes all prejudice and puts away all partiality: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" - Charles Swindoll (55)

"Liberty is not license, but is freedom in Christ, under grace and the law of Christian love." - Henry Morris

"The perfect law of liberty is the law of love. It is Christ's love (Eph 3:17-19) which frees us from our sins to truly love others."

- The Nelson Study Bible (2106)

"God has both 'liberated' us from the penalty of sin and given us, in His Spirit, the power to obey His will... this law is an 'implanted word', 'written on the heart', that has the power to save us (James 1:21)." - D. Moo (98)

15. What should motivate our heart? James 2:13 (See Matthew 5:7)

**FYI:** "You could never do enough to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and so you subsequently realize that you need Christ's mercy ...The message of the gospel is that we all need mercy. We need mercy that 'triumphs over judgment' (2:13). Praise God that He brings justice and mercy together in the cross, and you and I can be declared right before God based on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. James is saying that when you have experienced that kind of mercy, you clearly know how to show mercy to others." - David Platt

"**Mercy triumphs over judgment.** The death of Christ on the cross makes this possible." - Irving Jensen (21)

16. Underline what should motivate us:

- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. NAS
- 2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ compels us, having concluded this, that One has died for all, therefore all have died.
- 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.ESV
- Ephesians 5:1,2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ESV
- John 13: 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ESV

**Applying the Word:** *It's been said, "We are what we believe." What do your actions reveal what you believe about God and His estimate of you? Can you think of a time when remembering God's love for you had a major impact on your ability to show love to another person?*

## Day 3

Faith without Deeds. Read James 2:14-19

17. What claim did James make about faith in 2:14?

### **Digging Deeper**

What illustrations did Jesus give about works and faith?

Matthew 7:15-17

Matthew 13:23

**FYI:** "James is not saying that faith does not save: he is saying that the faith this person claim to have, a faith that has not works, cannot save...in 2:14-26 'faith' often refers to 'bogus' faith that neither Paul nor James would regard as genuine Christian faith." - Douglas Moo (100)

"Every one has faith of some kind—even atheists. However, the object of faith, and the results of that faith, measure its validity." - Henry Morris

18. What did James' example demonstrate? 2:15,16 (*Consider: What does using the words "brother/sister" add to this? How deep is the need?*)

- What did he conclude about that kind of faith? 2:17 (See 1 John 3:17-19)

**FYI:** "James always speaks of deeds as fruit produced by faith in Christ...Acts of mercy are not the *means* of salvation; they are the necessary *evidence*...the gospel motivates us to care for the poor. We provide for the poor because we are compelled by the mercy of God that has radically transformed our hearts, and His mercy overflows from our lives."  
- David Platt

19. What possible objection did James address? 2:18 How did he refute it? 2:18b

**FYI:** "You have faith. I have deeds. The false claim is that there are 'faith' Christians and 'deed' Christians, i.e. that faith and deeds can exist independently of each other."  
- The NIV Study Bible (1883)

**2:18 "faith by my works.** Genuine faith in Christ for salvation inevitably produces works that demonstrate its reality (note Ephesians 2:8-10). James never says that works produce salvation, nor even that faith plus works can save, but that good works always accompany true saving faith."  
- Henry Morris

*"But someone will say, 'One person has faith, another has actions.' "* James 2:18a (Good New Translation)

20. How did James refute a belief in God's existence but without deeds? 2:19

- How is this different than faith? (See Romans 10:9,10)

**FYI:** "Even the demons know that there is one God (Deut. 6:4) but they do not love Him (Deut. 6:5). Their kind of belief does not lead to love, submission, and obedience; instead it leads to hatred, rebellion, and disobedience."  
- The Nelson Study Bible (2107)

"Genuine faith must go beyond the intellect to the will; it must affect our attitudes and actions as well as our 'beliefs.' As Mitton says, 'It is a good thing to possess an accurate theology but it is unsatisfactory unless that good theology also possesses us.'"  
- Douglas J. Moo (107)

21. Underline how we are justified/saved.

- Romans 3:24,28 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. NIV
- Galatians 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. ESV
- Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

## 22. Underline how Paul connected works and faith.

- Romans 1:5 Through Him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. NIV
- Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.
- 1 Thessalonians 1:3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. NIV
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. NIV

23. Why can't we be saved by grace + works? Romans 11:6 (*Works = "anything done that is in obedience to God and in the service of God" - Douglas Moo*)

- How are even our works a result of grace? 1 Corinthians 12:6; Philippians 2:13

**Food for Thought** "But what about works we may ask. The answer was given by Christ to some good-deeds Jews: 'Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"' Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'" (John 6:28,29) The unregenerate heart thinks of works first as it desires salvation. But Jesus says the first 'work' is to believe."  
- R. Kent Hughes (112)

"**Faith** is trust. It is surrender. It is the realization that you can do nothing but trust in what has been done for you. And through faith you are united to Jesus, being clothed and credited with His righteousness... Justification happens in an instant, but the faith by which we are justified changes everything about us, and this is the point of James's letter...These realities are only possible by the **grace of God**. God's grace not only draws us to faith while we are dead in our sins, but even after this our obedience is fueled by God's grace. Both our faith and our works are made possible by God. All is of grace."  
- David Platt

**Applying the Word:** *It has been said that, "Whatever you do to **get love** you will ultimately resent. But whatever you do as a **response to love** you will never regret."* Where do you see your "works" as an effort to try to earn God's love? How do you think things would be different if you always saw yourself as perfectly loved and responded to it?

## Day 4

## Evidence of Faith. Read James 2:20-26

24. What adjective did James use to describe an imaginary person who was advocating faith without works? 2:20a (See Matthew 7:26)

**FYI:** *Foolish/vain/shallow* Strong's NT:2756; *kenos*, **empty** (literally or figuratively)

25. What did James conclude about faith without deeds in:

- 2:14
- 2:17
- 2:20

**FYI: Dead/useless/barren** Strong's NT:3498; *nekros*; **dead** (literally or figuratively)

"Metaphorically, in opposition to the life of the gospel...Of things dead, i.e., inactive, inoperative."

- The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"**barren** – literally, 'not-working' or 'idle'...James' choice of the word here creates a pointed play on words: 'faith that has no works does not work!'"

- Douglas Moo (107)

26. What example did James give of faith accompanied by works? 2:21 (See Genesis 22:1-18 for the account of these events.)

27. What had happened 30 years earlier? Genesis 15:1-6 How was Abraham made righteous? (See Romans 4:1-5)

**FYI: Justify** (*dikaioo*) "Depending on context, the word can mean either 'to **declare** righteous' as in a legal proceeding; or 'to **demonstrate** as righteous' ...In the second case, a person demonstrates his or her rightness by actions observable to everybody."

- Charles Swindoll (62)

"*Justified* in [James 2:21] cannot mean 'declare to be righteous,' because that happened in Abraham's life 30 years before! The passage uses justify in the...sense [shown to be right]."

- Ben Stuart (73,82)

**Righteousness** "When you trust in Christ for salvation, by God's grace you are made right before God. Christ imputes, grants, and clothes you in His righteousness at the moment of your salvation (2 Cor 5:21)...But then Scripture also gives a picture of practical righteousness, which refers to how we live before God. We demonstrate and grow in righteousness in the way we live...So at times in Scripture, righteousness refers to how we **stand** before God, and at other times it refers to how we **live** before God."

- David Pratt

28. What did Abraham's continuing obedience produce? 2:22 (Compare 1:4)

**FYI: Complete/perfect** Strong's NT:5048 *teleioo*; to complete, i.e. accomplish, or consummate (in character): to make perfect, complete; to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end

"To make perfect by reaching the intended goal."

- The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"Abraham's faith proved to be an animating power behind his acts...declaring by his actions that he believed that God is worth trusting in any circumstance...True faith in God works itself out as love for God! **It trusts God's heart** and honors God with its actions."

- Ben Stuart (82)

"Faith leads you to obedience, and obedience matures faith."

- David Platt

"Abraham was justified by faith long before he offered Isaac (Genesis 15:6). But his obedience in offering Isaac *demonstrated* that he really did trust God...his faith was proven true – was completed, **was made perfect** – by his obedient works."

- David Guzik



29. What was the result of Abraham's faith in action? 2:23

- How does Abraham's actions and the title "*Friend of God*" (2:23) compare to the stance of demons? (2:19)

#### ***Digging Deeper***

What enabled Abraham to do what God asked? Hebrew 11:19

How *unwavering* (James 1:6) was Abraham's faith? Romans 4:18-21

**FYI:** "Abraham was 'justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar' for his righteousness was **demonstrated** for all to see. His work in offering Isaac gave immortal **testimony** to the reality of the faith and righteousness which had infused his life for over thirty years...his faith was made complete by what he did' – not because his faith had been defective or imperfect, but because it was completed by the successive 'tests' which it underwent. In time, Abraham's faith reached its intended maturity...James' point is that where there is real faith, there will be an ineluctable outworking of it in life. **Genuine faith results in works.**" - R Kent Hughes (119)

30. What conclusion did James give? 2:24

- How does that compare to Paul's statement in Romans 3:28? What different perspectives were they giving? (See the chart at the end of this lesson.)

**FYI:** "Paul was fighting against tradition which promoted a flesh works salvation. James was fighting against a 'lite' faith which minimized the necessity of works after coming to Christ..." - R. Kent Hughes (108)

"James certainly taught that the works of the law could not save (James 2:10; 4:17), and Paul taught clearly that genuine faith would produce good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). It is...a matter of emphasis. Salvation must be of grace, accepted by faith, since no one can earn it, but only God can know the heart and the reality of a profession of faith. But the reality of that faith can only be demonstrated to others by good works." - Henry Morris

"James was taking aim at...those who claimed to have no need for good deeds since they had faith (2:18)...Paul had the opposite problem in view when he wrote Romans. His letter targeted those who placed their faith in the Law of Moses. Their trust was in their own good works, and not in God...Faith is the cause; works are the effect. James believed it, and so did Paul." - The Nelson Study Bible (2107)

31. What deed revealed Rahab's faith? 2:25

- What major contrasts would you give between Rahab and Abraham? *e.g. a great leader/ a prostitute*

#### ***Digging Deeper***

See Rahab's story in Joshua 2 ( esp. vv. 9-11). (See also Hebrews 11:31 and Matthew 1:1,5.)

- What did they share about their beliefs in the character and power of God?

**Food for Thought:** "Rahab's faith produced legendary works as she not only hid the spies, assisted in their escape, and brilliantly advised their path on the hill country, but put her life in great danger. Her faith produced astounding action!" - R. Kent Hughes (122)

"What kind of family tree is this? God—the holy God of the universe—took a prostitute and brought her into His family, into the line that would lead to His Son. This is scandalous grace, and I don't mean in an immoral way, but grace that shocks by reaching down into the least likely of lives and pouring out mercy." - David Platt (1216)

32. How did James illustrate his point? 2:26

**Applying the Word:** Consider the examples given in James 2. Where and how do you feel your faith needs to be stretched and put into action?

Suggested memory verses:

James 2:1 My brothers and sisters,  
believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. NIV

James 2:26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead,  
so also faith without works is dead. NASB

### Paul

"For we maintain that a man is **justified by faith** apart from the works of the Law." Romans 3:28

Uses "justified" to mean "pronounced righteous in the sight of God."

Shows how an unbeliever becomes a Christian.

Emphasizes the root of salvation.

Stresses inward disposition.

Demonstrates God's part with human participation.

### James

"You see that a man is **justified by works** and not by faith alone." James 2:24

Uses "justified" to mean "proved righteous in the sight of others."

Shows how a believer lives as a Christian.

Emphasizes the fruit of salvation.

Stresses outward actions.

Demonstrates human part with God's help.

*"Swindoll's New Testament Insights" pg 63*

**FYI:** "Whenever people rely on their religious activities for salvation, Paul's powerful plea for a radical commitment of the whole person to Christ must be vigorously proclaimed. But when 'faith' has been turned into nothing more than a verbal commitment to certain doctrines, James' understanding of faith as an active, vigorous obedience must be forcefully reasserted."  
- Douglas Moo (116)

"James and Paul do not contradict each other, but rather supplement each other. James approaches faith subjectively – in the sense of trust or confidence in the Lord, while Paul explains it objectively – as the instrument by which a believer is justified before God."  
- R. Kent Hughes (15)