

22S27 James 2:1-13 (Part 4) Beware

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. Today we are beginning our study of James with James 2:1-13. Beware!

Before we start, we need to understand a little about this amazing short letter from James. Who was James? Historians are not sure. Many believe this is James the half-brother of Jesus or even another early Church leader. Most believe this is the same James that appears in the book of Acts and was the leader of the Jerusalem Council in Acts Chapter 15. We don't know the exact date it was written but there are indications that this was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, but we really don't know. The best guess is 50-60AD. Which would make this one of the earliest New Testament letters. James was writing to Hebrew believers scattered among the nations who are facing many trials and persecution. The main theme in this letter is patient perseverance in the midst of the trouble of life. James is encouraging his readers to actively live what they have learned in Christ. He has strong messages about various sins but includes pride, hypocrisy, favoritism, and slander.

I'm reading from the New American Standard version (NAS) today. But of course, you can use whatever translation you choose.

Let's read James 2:1-13 (NAS) *¹My brothers and sisters, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. ²For 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, ³and 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," ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵Listen, 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? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called? ⁸If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the Law as violators. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole Law, yet stumbles in one point, has become guilty of all. ¹¹For 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. ¹²So speak, and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. ¹³For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.*

Let's pray. Dear heavenly father, guide our discussion today such that your message is clear to each of us. As we read your word from James, help us see what James wants his readers to understand and why. I pray that you help me stay out of the way so your hope and peace can be shared with us. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

So okay. Before we get started, I want us to understand a couple of things. First favoritism is bad. God loves each of us equally. Or status in this life does not reflect what our status will be in heaven someday or how much God cares for each of us. Second, James is not telling us all rich people are bad and all poor people are good. Quite the contrary, James is telling us not to judge others based on what we see on the outside or what we think might benefit us.

Let's take a closer look at these verses, James 2:1 (NAS) *¹My brothers and sisters, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.* This word favoritism is also translated as partiality. It is this idea that we treat people different depending on their outward appearance. This one hurts me a little bit. I'm guilty of this sometimes, but this is wrong and James is right to point this out. The Greek word translated as favoritism is complicated word προσωπολημψίας prosōpolēmpsiais (pros-o-pol-ape-see'-ah-is) meaning respect of persons or partiality or favoritism.

Let's read on, James 2:2-4 (NAS) *²For 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, ³and 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," ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?* Let me read that last verse again *have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?* When we do this, we have made distinction among our selves with evil motives. The word translated as distinction is from the Greek word διεκρίθητε diekrithēte (dee-ak-ree'-thee-te) literally meaning to separate, distinguish, or judge. And evil is translated from the Greek word πονηρῶν ponērōn (pon-ay-ron) meaning evil, bad, wicked, malicious. So we are making this distinction between people for wicked reason. Selfish reasons.

Then James says in James 2:5 (NAS) *⁵Listen, 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?* I think we need to hear this. God chooses not us. God has chosen every Christian to be a son and daughter of God. Who are we to put them down or think we are better than a son or daughter of the King? We should be very careful with this.

Then James says in James 2:6-7 (NAS) *⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?* This is not saying every rich person is bad. What James is trying to say is, why do you honor those who oppress you. Those that look down at you. You look down on the poor person, well that rich person probably looks down on you.

But hear what James says next in James 2:8-9 (NAS) *⁸If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and*

are convicted by the Law as violators. James is quoting what Jesus told us, love others as you wish to be loved. But remember Jesus also holds us to higher standard of loving others the way He loves them. James says, if we show favoritism then we are violators of the royal law. We can't love others the way Jesus loves them and show favoritism. Ouch.

James continues with James 2:10-13 (NAS) *¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole Law, yet stumbles in one point, has become guilty of all. ¹¹For 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. ¹²So speak, and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. ¹³For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.* We are all guilty of violating the law. But thankfully, Jesus made a way for us through what James refers to as the law of freedom. We need to be very very careful about the standard we use to judge others. Each of us will face judgement by Jesus which will be merciless to those who have not shown others mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

Let's review.

- 1) Favoritism? I don't know about you, but I am guilty of this sometimes. We naturally give those we think are better off in this life a higher position. Rich, famous we give them special attention. We ignore or put down those, we suppose are worse than us. This is just wrong. This is not how a Christ follower should act.
- 2) Motives? Our motives matter to God. God cares about our character. When we make decisions or treat certain people better than others because of what we think we might get. Well this is just wrong. James says this is evil or wicked. I know that seems harsh but he's right. If we do this, we hurt others and we hurt ourselves.
- 3) Violators? Violators of the law. Did you know favoritism is a sin to God? This is a behavior which is against God. James uses the phrase against the "law of freedom". This is the freedom is Jesus and it is for everyone. We better act like it.

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father thank you for this letter from James. Help us to read and meditate on this letter so we can hear the message you have for us. Help us to remember who you are Lord. You are our king, king of kings. You are our Lord, Lord over everyone. We can trust you, Lord. Help us to ask you for wisdom when we don't understand. I pray this in your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

Let me leave you with this, James was stressing the importance of treating everyone fairly. Fairly is defined by God not us. Love others the way Jesus loves them. We have to fight our natural tendency to show favoritism. Favoritism is always destructive. This does not mean we treat everyone the same or equal. That is simply impossible. People are different, so we have to treat them different. People need different things. What God wants us to do is love them. Love is not partial. Love like Jesus. This means doing what needs to be done, saying what God wants you to say.

Thank you for joining me for our study of James. Please email me comments or feedback. And if you liked the message, please share the link with your friends. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.