

DCF:

He had flown down to Texas to try and sell some high priced drilling equipment to a Fortune 500 company. He made sure he had his best suit on. He made sure he had all the facts, figures and benefits of the equipment printed out nicely in his briefcase. He walked in to the construction trailer at the latest drill site, and waited for the owner. While he was waiting, a man came in dressed in field clothes. His boots were muddy from the slurry that the well was putting out. His hands were covered with grease and his clothes showed the wear and tear of hard physical labor.

The salesman basically ignored him, thinking that the owner would arrive soon. The so-called laborer tried to strike up a conversation with him, but he kept brushing him off, giving short and dismissive answers to his questions. In fact, he was kind of rude! Finally the salesman asked the laborer if he had seen the owner, since “I have a very important meeting with him.” With a smile, the laborer said “That’s me, and I don’t think we’re going to do business with you. Good day, and good bye.”

How you treat others says a lot about yourself. How we treat others shows the world our faith in Christ, doesn’t it? **“HOW ARE YOU TREATING OTHERS?”** in your walk with Christ? Are we showing favoritism or are we showing our faith in love towards others? Come with me today to the book of James and see what the Holy Spirit has written down for our education on life.

### ***Part One: By showing favoritism, or***

The author of this book of the Bible was a prominent leader in the early Christian church. James was writing to the Christian churches outside of the land of Israel. He takes it for granted that his listeners are Christians and want to show their faith by how they live. So, he pens this letter. Since he’s writing to so many different congregations he covers a lot of topics.

In our text for today, James addresses favoritism. It’s something that we’re all too familiar with today. We choose to associate with people that share the same preferences that we have. We shape our friendships around shared beliefs and likes. Packer fans like to be with Packer fans, not Bear fans. Democrats like to be with Democrats. Republicans are the same. Harley riders like to be with other Harley riders, not Honda riders. Factory workers have mostly factory worker friends. We like to be with people that are like us, socially and economically. In our personal lives, we do show a bit of favoritism, but often call it personal preference. In our personal daily lives, that’s ok. When we have things in common, we can have easy conversations.

But favoritism can so easily move from our personal lives into our congregational life. That’s the problem that James was addressing. <sup>2</sup> ***Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup> If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” <sup>4</sup> have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*** In James letter, he is warning about showing favoritism based on wealth or the lack of it.

Why would we be tempted to show favoritism? Well, to gain something for ourselves. We’re tempted to play favorites to gain prestige. We spend time with someone, hoping their popularity will rub off on us. Or, we show favoritism to gain influence in a decision making process. Or we do it just for personal pride. “See who my friends are? He went to Harvard. She owns her own business. I must be pretty special to have such successful friends.”

Is there a place in God’s family to show favoritism, considering some people more worthy of my time and attention simply because they are well off? James makes it very clear that the answer is no. Your bank account has no bearing on how God views you. <sup>5</sup> ***Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*** Poor people often have a stronger faith because they aren’t tempted to rely on their money to get them through life. From experience they know it’s only by God’s grace and power that they make it to the start of another day. Rich people face the temptation to rely on themselves and minimize God. We remember the story of the rich man who planned to build bigger barns for his crop and then eat, drink and be merry for the rest of his life. That very night God took his life from him. Favoritism has no place in God’s family.

Here, in God's house, as members of God's family, He reminds us that we are all equal in His sight. We are all equally sinful. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We are also all equally forgiven. Jesus died for all of our sins while on the cross. Not just rich believers. Not just those of high standing. Everyone. We are equally loved and valued. All of us have been given the gift of eternal life with Him in heaven. We are brothers and sisters in the faith, equal members of God's family even though we have different roles in His kingdom.

Living our faith doesn't begin and end with words. Christians will show their faith in love.

### ***Part Two: By showing your faith in love***

Evidently there was a disconnect in the lives of some of James' listeners. It seems that some felt just having faith in Jesus was enough. They said they believed, but never showed it by how they lived. Oh, they attended worship service, but if there was a fellow believer who was in difficulty, hey, not my problem. Now remember, back then there was no such thing as welfare, or stimulus checks from the government. No section 8 housing vouchers or homeless shelters. If you were destitute, that's it. Life was tough.

Christians care about their brothers and sisters in the faith. Christians want to follow God's command to love your neighbor as yourself. If we believe in Jesus and all He has done for us, it will show in what we do in life. A lack of deeds show a lack of faith. Listen again to James:

***<sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? <sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.***

A true, saving and living faith always expresses itself in love for God and love for others. The Gospel produces the desire to say thanks to God by how we live. The Gospel produces a desire to love our neighbors as ourselves, to do things for them, to help them just because God helped us. We love others, we want to help others, because God first loved us.

And oh, how hard that is at times! Our sinful nature nags us with the idea that if we help someone else we won't have enough for ourselves. We only have enough time or money for me and my family. If I give some of that away, I might not have enough for me. Or, our sinful nature reminds us of the time we did something for someone else and they didn't thank us. They wasted what we gave them. We felt rejected and thought "Well, I'm never helping them again." And then there's our world, enticing us to keep it all for ourselves. Pay yourself first, financial advisors say. Spend time on yourself, focus on making yourself as comfortable as possible. As one commercial said "You're worth it." It's the me me me, focus on the individual drum beat of our world. It's your money and your time. Don't give it away.

God says "Do it." Show your faith by what you do. We show our faith in two main areas. First, there's the private part of our lives. We show our faith when we read the Word, when we pray, when we give thanks to God and are aware of His presence at all times. That's part of the Christian life. That's putting our faith into practice. The second area is our public life. We show the world our faith when we do church, when we give of our wealth to missions, to disaster relief, to a fellow church member who is struggling with their rent or school supplies or clothing for their kids. We show the world our faith when we give of our time to volunteer at a food bank, or donate clothing to the less fortunate. You see, our faith and our actions go together. You can't have one without the other. And the stronger our faith, the stronger our actions will be.

**"HOW ARE YOU TREATING OTHERS?"** Don't worry about what others are doing or not doing in their faith life. Don't complain that you're doing more than your fair share. Just remember that your deeds are a reflection of your faith, not theirs. And everything you do as a thank you to God is pleasing to the One who loved you enough to die for you. Show them your faith by your actions. Treat them the same way God treats you - with kindness, grace and love.

AMEN