

James 2:1–13
Partiality in the Church?

Thursday, January 4, 2024 • Read James 2:1–13

Questions from the Scripture text: What does he call them in v1? What does he tell them not to hold? Faith belonging to Whom? Of what is Jesus Christ the Lord? With what mustn't they hold this faith? Who might come into the assembly (v2)? With what accessories and clothes? Who else? With what clothes? What might they do to the one in the fine clothes (v3)? What might they say to him? And what might they say to the poor man? What would they have shown (v4)? Among whom? What would they have become? With what sort of thoughts? What does he urge them to do in v5? About Whom does he ask? Whom has God chosen? In/of what are they poor? In what are they rich? Of what are they heirs? To whom has God promised this kingdom? But if they have behaved this way to the poor man, how does their treatment of him correspond to God's treatment of him (v6)? But who actually do mistreat them? In what way? What else do the rich do (v7)? What law should they fulfill (v8)? Where can they find this law? Whom does it say to love? In what way? What might they be showing instead (v9)? What do they commit in this case? What convicts them? What do they call it? What might someone keep (v10)? With what exception? Of what is he guilty then? What has God said (v11)? What does breaking either of these make someone? What two aspects of life do v12 cover? What will the law do to them? What is the law called, here? What doesn't judgment show to whom (v13)? What triumphs over judgment?

Why must believers be kind to all other believers? James 2:1–13 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these thirteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **believers must learn to treat each other according to Christ's own treatment of us and them.**

Partiality and the Lord of glory, v1–7. If the Lord of glory (v1) has stooped down to do us good, then why would we favor any mere man as if he is glorious (v1b), and why would we shrink from reaching down to someone that the world despises, when the Lord did not shrink from humiliating himself for their sake and ours (v2–3)? The judging in verse 4 is a judging of value—and it is most certainly evil to disagree with the Lord Jesus on a believer's value (v4).

v5 reminds us that being poor in this world is no obstacle to God's choosing one to be rich in faith. This verse is probably making the point as 1Cor 1:26–31. God has, in the freedom of His electing unto salvation, chosen to elect a disproportionate number of those whom He also makes poor. 1Cor 2 is still on the same subject, when 1Cor 2:8 calls Jesus "the Lord of glory." In both places, the Spirit uses the same language to make the same points.

Being rich is spiritually difficult. Not only does the Scripture make the observation that comparatively few of them are chosen, but apart from this grace, riches put a man in a position where he feels that he has some power and glory of his own. Of course, the flesh takes advantage of this power and glory by oppressing even believers (v6) and even blaspheming their Lord (v7). Sennacherib and the Rabshakeh (Isa 36) are not alone in this. They are joined by all who feel strong and rich in themselves throughout history. Was this not the issue for the church of Laodicea (Rev 3:14–22)? In the cultural context in which I currently write, is this not a significant issue for us?

Partiality and the Law of the Kingdom, v8–11. Just as the conduct of the Lord of glory in v1 established in the principles of this passage, so now v8 points us to our King and His royal law. When we receive the law from Jesus's lips and Jesus's hands, we are not only receiving the royal law that describes our King's royal requirements (and what we who love the King therefore love to give Him). We are also receiving the royal law that is so-named because its principles are an expression of our King's royal character.

So, v8–9 remind us that the teaching of this passage is not just "best practices for welcoming churches," but the royal law of Christ's kingdom. Those who show partiality are not just in poor taste or clumsy at "doing" church. They are in violation of the laws of the King of the church. v10–11 go on to make the point that this law that they violate is the same law that forbids adultery and murder. So the church member who prefers the rich to the poor, or vice versa (cf. Lev 19:15), is on the same legal footing before King Jesus as the murderer or the adulterer or the profaner of the Lord's Day. He is a transgressor of the law.

Partiality and the Liberty of Mercy, v12–13. Finally, the language of versus 12 to 13 reminds us not of the law's relationship to Jesus, but the law's relationship to those whom Jesus has saved. In our relationship to the law, we see just how much Christ has won our liberty! Not only are we freed from guilt and the sentence of death, but we have also been freed from our flesh.

We have been freed from the dominion of sin. We have been freed from hating the law. We are freed from being in ourselves and brought into Christ Himself. In Him, and in this liberty, we love the law and have been enabled to begin keeping it. The law becomes a sort of judge (v12) that no longer condemns; it even commends (!) what Christ produces in genuine believers: in this case, namely, mercy.

But if we are not those who show mercy, then the law exposes that any idea of ours that we had been saved was actually a delusion. Its judgment will be without mercy to those who do not have Christ, and therefore who have shown no mercy of their own. Faith without works is dead, because if there are no works (in this case, no mercy) there can have been no union with Christ; there was no faith. And the rest of this chapter will be occupied with this subject.

Who in your family are people tempted to esteem little or mistreat? How must you esteem and treat them? Who already has done so? Whose law requires you to do so? Who in your family are people tempted to esteem little or mistreat? How must you esteem and treat them? Who already has done so? Whose law requires you to do so?

Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for how often we have dishonored others whom You have chosen to make rich in faith. We are so easily impressed with earthly impressiveness—treating those who seem to be something better than those who don't. O, forgive us! For, when we do this, we forget the glory of Christ, who has joined all believers to Himself. We make ourselves judges with evil thoughts. Forgive us, and make us merciful like our Lord Jesus, through whom we ask it, AMEN!!!

Suggested songs: ARP15 "Within Your Tent Who Will Reside?" or TPH461 "Blessed Are the Sons of God"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

James 2, versus 1 through 13. These are God's words. My brethren do not hold the faith of our lord. Jesus christ, the lord of glory. With partiality. For if For if there should come into your assembly, a man with gold rings and fine apparel. And there should also come in a poor man and filthy clothes And you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, to him, use it here in a good place.

And say to the poor man, you stand there or sit here at my footstool. If you're not shown partiality among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts, Listen, my beloved brethren as god, not chosen. The poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

Which he promised to those who love him. But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts. Do they not blaspheme the noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law. According to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You do well. But if you show partiality, You commit sin? And are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law. And yet stumble in one point he has guilty of all For he who said do not commit. Adultery also said do not murder. Now, if you do not commit adultery but you do murder.

You become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do. As those who will be judged by the law. Of liberty. For judgment is without mercy. To the one who has shown, no. Mercy. Mercy, triumphs over. Judgment. Amen. So far the Reading of gods inspired and and there aren't worth.

Holy spirit comes now and First, half of chapter 2 and Reminds us of the character. The the lord jesus is producing. In those. Let whom he has brought to faith in himself a character that can't the lord himself and his kingdom. Uh, to be Uh, that which is glorious.

And so even In the middle of the first chapter you remember, he has already written the lowly, let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation. But the rich in his,

Humiliation. And yet we are so far from Following that and so far from Pure and undefiled religion, which is Not only the bridling of our tongue in verse 26 of the previous chapter.

And the keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, at the end of verse 27 of the previous chapter. But To visit orphans and widows in their trouble. Which is to say, How to be like our father of lights in heaven. And to reflect his character to care and attend to.

Uh, those whom he cares about and attends to and see. So he comes directly out of talking about our god and father her god and the father verse 7 and orphans and widows sorry verse 27. And orphans and widows verse 27. And then he addresses them my Brethren. Uh, do not hold the faith of our lord.

Jesus christ, the lord of glory. With partiality. And you see right there the reminder that he who is the lord of glory, he humbled himself for our sakes, he took the form of a bond slave and was found in appearance. As a man and humbled himself even to the point of the death of the cross for our sakes.

And so if the lord of glory has stood down for us, Creatures. Dirt breathing. Or breathing dirt. And not only breathing dirt, but who had sinned against god? And yet, while we were still sinners christ died for us, if the lord did that for us. Then should not, we be willing to be humble.

And, But not. Not shrink back from. Uh, doing good to those whom the world. Uh, thinks of as lowly And if we know the lord jesus, as the lord of glory, Then let us not have a fleshly esteem, a worldliest steam. Uh, for those who seem to be something in this world.

Uh, whether Uh, those who who others idolize in some way in the church, which happens Um, or as in this passage those who have wealth. And with wealth often comes influence. As we remember, In verse,

Six. Where the rich oppressed and drag you into the courts while they're able to do that. Why? Um, because they have influence but we're we must not be impressed. With the so-called greatness of any mere man, if we Um, and if we are really beholding and considering they're greatness of the lord jesus.

The lord of glory. And so, we must Uh, we must have christ in view. When we think about the rich man who is not, In that case, so rich. But In. Some spiritual danger. And christ in view, and we see Uh, the poor man. And in this case, In this case, The.

Uh assumption the judgment of charity of the man who is a member of the assembly in. Um, in verse two is that the direction the poor are both. Brothers. And we must not give preference of place then to the one. Who is rich in the eyes of the world?

As you see? In verse 3. If we show that kind of partiality, A worldly preference. Of. Of one brother over the other. Valuing that which the world values. Then we become. Judges, who differentiate between those whom the lord. Jesus has saved. We do not have the right. To prefer one over another.

Or to give a place of. We do not have the right to give place of preference to one over the other among those whom jesus as Decided to redeem. All of them. And so if our judgment comes into conflict with jesus's judgment, if i were giving preference a place, Comes into conflict.

With those whom jesus has gathered to himself. Then aren't those. Isn't that exactly what we would call evil thoughts? Thoughts that can flicked. With what the lord jesus. Himself has determined and desired. And so, he He uses that language has god not chosen. The poor of the world to be rich in faith.

And airs of the kingdom to, which Which he promised to those who love him. So, in one hand, we know, Uh, where they're believing began. They're believing began outside of time. Not that they began to believe outside of time, but the god chose. Whom he would bring to faith.

And in his providence, he gave many of those whom he chose that he would bring to faith places of lowliness and poverty in this life. Perhaps even as a help to them, to have the sort of mindset that we've just come out. Of hearing that, he's giving all believers and chapter 1.

Um, And perhaps just to glorify himself, So that he who glory is glories, only in the lord, which is how first corinthians 1 ends. And in the latter half of first corinthians 1, you remember He made this very point that there were not many whom the world would consider noble or wise or great in the church.

That, that god has In his. Electing to save. He has chosen. Especially those who are lowly. Not only But especially As the apostle was able to, Uh, to make that point and in first corinthians 1 and And as James's brother of jesus, here, by the spirit makes the same point and james chapter 2.

We're indeed he uses the same language as the apostle is going to go on to use and first Corinthians 2. Where he says, if they had been able to see if the eyes and ears and minds of men worked properly, they would not have crucified jesus. Because they would have been able to recognize the lord of glory.

But sin blinding, the eye is indefensing, the ears and confounding the hearts. Of sinful men. They did not see that he was the lord of glory. We however My dear brothers and sisters and my family. We must not be so. For we must not only have regard for that.

Eternal electing redeeming love. That election. From whence, the faith came, but also that Exaltation, glorific glorification to which that faith is going. Because not only did god choose them beginning in verse 5 but later in verse 5 they are heirs of the kingdom. And so they are not intentionally coming in as a great king, a great prince Of a great kingdom that has not yet arrived.

Addressing themselves up to deceive. They are genuinely poor now. But we must remember that they still are nonetheless. Heirs of a great kingdom that is coming. And if we had known that, About someone with respect to. Earthly inheritance. How much more? With those with heavenly and everlasting. Inheritance. This is how we should see.

And treat. Brothers and sisters. In the church. And so, the lord has. Chosen, especially the poor man and we should Uh, we should Have pity upon the rich man. We saw not too long ago. With the end of first, Timothy the Instruction and first Timothy 6 for the rich man and Uh, the spiritual.

Um, dangers of having Wealth in this world. We saw that again in chapter 1 of Of this letter. Um, let the rich man exalt in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field, you will pass away for no sooner as the sun risen with a burning heat. Then it withers a grass.

It's flower falls and it's beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. And then again here, In. Verse six, do not the rich oppress, you And drag you into courts. They consider themselves something and you nothing in part because the visible tangible riches influence.

Um, This team of this world. Has deceived them. And riches threaten not only to deceive us with regard demand. So that we mistreat and depress them. Look at number seven, Do they not blaspheme that noble name? By which you are called. Then we see this recently in isaiah where sinach rib and has through his messenger, the rhab shaker.

Blasphemed the name of yahweh because they felt very powerful and very able and very wealthy in this world. Do we not see it? With the church of laetia. Who

thought themselves rich, although they were spiritually? Uh, blind and And impoverished. And if we think about the church, Throughout the edges and across the world.

Are we not? In great danger as well. Of being the ones who mistreat other believers. And even do not think highly of god himself. Because we are so comfortable and we feel ourselves to be so able

And so we must follow the royal law, the royal law because it's king jesus's law. He's gonna quote from leviticus. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. A place in which you remember the moral law was summarized and expressed when thinking about the sanctity of believers as we recently have in Leviticus 19 had that very verse and that very context which um we can just kind of remember that and not take the the time to show the context of the whole chapter in the course of the book of Leviticus which is the right way of reading the verse.

And not just cherry picking and saying, oh oh that's ceremonial law. Well, it is the lord jesus's summary of the first table. Of the law and we should understand. Um, Understand how the moral law was being used in that part of the ceremonial law, but let us remember that.

That the decalog that was thundered. Uh, by the voice of god, from the top of sinai, we now know to have to come We now know to have come by the voice of jesus and the decalog. What is that? The decalog syphilia? It's the ten commandments. Right? The ten commandments.

That came by the finger of your way has come as it were then by the finger of jesus, because jesus is your way jesus is the king. He is the god, man. And so, uh, we are not those. Who think that the ten commandments have been set aside? We know them now even not as the law of Moses or the law is sinai, or even the law and the tablets.

Now, we know them as the royal law, the law of the king. And because this is the king who saved us in his love and delivered us. We love to be his subjects. We love his law because it is his, we love to keep it. It is the royal law and even Um, I was gonna say even better but we should probably just say in addition to that.

It's the royal law because it describes the character of the king. And these 13 verses. He is teaching us that we should treat one another with regards to christ who has treated us this way. That the lord of glory himself has given himself for us. And so what a wonderful thing.

Gods royal law is christ's royal law is as ten commandments are for the christian. Well, gain our salvation by it. We don't increase our standing with god by it, but surely we love it because it comes from him, we love it because it describes What? King jesus is like.

And so, yes. We want to fulfill the royal law. But now we've got a problem because partiality in a congregation Showing preference to the rich over the poor. Isn't just. Um, Poor taste of manners or Uh, being unwelcoming as a church. Says, but if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

For whoever shall keep the whole lawn yet stumble. In one point he is guilty of all For he who said do not commit. Adultery also said do not murder. And so, if we show, Partiality in the church. What we are doing is not just in poor taste or poor manners.

Or unwise. It is, it puts us on the wrong side of the law of king jesus. We are in the same place with respect to his law at that point, as the murderer and the adulterer. And the sabbath breaker. And the one who has broken all of the commandments.

So we are to speak and to live verse 12 so speak and so do As those who will be judged by the law of liberty, it's the same law, isn't it? He's been calling it. The royal law. Uh, but now he calls that the law of liberty. But it is the same law.

All right. Now what does it do? And it judges the believer. Well, judges the one he has been freed. Uh from condemnation by the law and sentence by the law to death, but it also judges the one who has been freed from his own sin. From the, from the power.

Uh, from being dominated being a slave. To his sinfulness. And so we think of the law, not only with respect to jesus that it comes from him into describes. It describes what he is like, so that's the royal law. But we also see the law with respect to ourselves That as the life and character of our lord, jesus is worked out more and more by his spirit, in our character.

And our conduct, we are shown more and more to have been freed from the dominion of sin. Then in fact, one day we may be certain that we will be freed from the presence of sin. And so, as john three says, The light, you know, those who are righteous.

Uh, they love the light. Uh, because in the lighter to scene that their deeds are done in god that they have been freed by the grace of god. Uh, to obey. Uh, god and to obey his law. And then, Of course if if the law is not as it shines light on our character and our conduct, if it is not identifying That we are more and more dying to sin and more and more living unto god and righteousness.

Than what that means is that we're not actually saved. We're not actually in christ. We're not actually forgiven. We're not actually heirs of the kingdom. We are actually going to hell. And so, the rest of the chapter is going to deal with that question. How, how can that be?

Well, because jesus through whom we receive forgiveness is also jesus. Who changes us Changing us is the change in us isn't how we receive forgiveness. But they both come by the same jesus. And there's no such thing. As justification without sanctification. There's no such thing as faith. Without works.

There's no such thing as a christ who gives us forgiveness. While, at the same time does not give us. Liberty. And so, the law of liberty. Agrees. With what we have just been hearing. Not too long ago in matthew chapter 5. Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy?

Well, The. The contrast to that in verse 13 is. The judgment is, without mercy. To the one who has shown. No. Mercy. Why? Because if he has shown, no mercy, Than he must have had. No jesus. And so that's very severing. But praise god, for the conclusion, mercy, triumphs over judgment.

It is god's mercy to us in christ. That not only. Um, gives us a triumph over the judgment and which we are already forgiven in. Who paid for our sins. But by god's mercy to us in christ. He is the one. He'll make us merciful. He is the one.

Who make us impartial. He is the one who will. Conform us more and more to his son. And so, When you are a church. And someone in the church is, The. A social outcast. Uh, for reasons that are worldly reasons. Then we must not join in. Trying preference against them, or if someone in the church is Esteemed for world of reasons.

And we must not show partiality that way either. Let us follow christ in his church. And with those whom he, Has loved and gathered. To himself. Man, let's pray. Father, thank you. For loving us, in your son. Choosing us in him, that we would be holy. And Blameless in love.

That he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And we pray that you would. Help us by your spirit to be soft-hearted to this portion of your word, grants to us

the privilege. The honor. Of being made like our redeemer and king the lord jesus. So that we would esteem, All and each of his many brethren.

With a value and Love and respect. That is. As under christ and learned from christ. Granted, we ask in his name. Amen.