

Personal Study

**JAMES PART 4
JUDGMENT / MERCY**

"WE SIN WHEN WE SHOW PARTIALITY TO SOME OVER OTHERS, WHETHER THEY ARE RICH OR POOR OR DIFFERENT IN ANY OTHER WAY. BELIEVERS SHOULD EXTEND MERCY RATHER THAN HARSH JUDGMENT TO OTHERS."

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@FamilyLifeofPennsValley

This week's text: James 2:1-13

Introduction:

Think of a time when you had some great “seats” – perhaps this was a sporting event, concert, play, movie, airplane, etc. Typically, when you spend more money on a ticket, you purchase a better experience.

Imagine for a moment if your church experience functioned in a similar way. The more you donate, serve, or make yourself available, the better the experience that you received. For example, let's pretend that you gave a sizable donation and as a result you were able to pick the seat that you wanted to sit in, hear the songs that you prefer, hear from your favorite communicator, and serve as much or as little as you wanted. In other words, the more money you give determines the experience that you receive.

Does this feel...wrong? If so, why?

Here is why: When we as Christians allow those who “benefit” us the most to experience favoritism and preferential treatment over others, we are determining in our hearts that those people are more valuable than others. This is completely anti-gospel.

Take a moment and read James 2:1-13

This is what James teaches us: The grace that flows *TO* us must flow *THROUGH* us.

At the foot of the cross of Jesus, the ground is level. There is not a person on this earth that is more deserving of grace, forgiveness, and mercy than others. In fact, we do not deserve any of these things. The Bible tells us in the book of Romans that “no one loves God, no not one”. In other words, there is not a single person who is naturally compelled to love and follow Jesus. Our very nature is dead in sin. We need re-birth; new life; a fresh start.

That is why the Gospel is such good news. Jesus offers forgiveness of sin – past, present, and future. This is not something that we can ever earn; this is a gift that we receive. Not because we are good, but because Jesus was good on our behalf.

Here is the bottom line: If no one is deserving of grace, and salvation is something that only Jesus can offer, then we have no authority to show partiality toward some people over others. We are all equal image bearers of Jesus. Our value, worth, and purpose is not something determined by the opinions or preferences of people, but rather by our creator and Lord, Jesus.

Let's examine:

Do you show partiality to some people over others?

Here are some questions to consider as you reflect:

- Do you prefer to only be around people who are just like you?
- Do you find yourself regularly hanging around people who boost your status/image?
- When was the last time that you purposely spent time with someone of a different economic, ethnic, or social status than you?
- If you truly examine your heart, do you believe that people of different races or ethnicities are somehow lesser than you?
- Do you ever find yourself experiencing anger or frustration toward a specific people group or social class?

After careful examination, you likely concluded in your heart that you are guilty of showing partiality. You are not alone. Every person is guilty of this sin whether they admit it or not. In our sinfulness, we naturally find ourselves treating people who benefit us socially, financially, etc. in a way that is often better than others.

So, what do we do from here?

Here are some practical steps forward:

- Begin each day this week by reading James 2:1-13
- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to your heart the various ways in which we show partiality or favoritism.
- Ask for the grace to repent – and actively repent!
- Preach the gospel to yourself & extend grace toward others: Outside of the grace of Jesus, you were dead in your sin, deserving of death, hell, and the wrath of God. But Jesus in His mercy poured out His grace and forgiveness over you. Because of Jesus, He now sees Himself when He looks at you. Extend this same good news toward all people.
- Ask the Lord to give opportunity for you to exercise your faith by genuinely being with and extending grace toward people who are very different than you.

When we show partiality to some people over others, we are making an idol out of ourselves. We are placing ourselves in the seat that only Jesus can occupy. This week be active in repentance and intentional in showing grace. We are all equal image bearers of Jesus. This week be active in extending love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness to all people.