

- ***Read James 2:1-9*** In this inspired book, James focuses on those things that would allow a believer to grow toward a faith that is perfect and complete and lacking nothing. (**James 1:4**) A wide range of topics are covered in this letter, and one of the most important is seen in our text here in the first few verses of chapter 2. Anytime anyone mentions **James 2**, our minds almost automatically go to the latter half of the chapter because it discusses the important issue of our works and the role they play in our obedience to God. However, we would be unwise to ignore these first few verses because they play a big part in our works and service of other people.
- One of the greatest hindrances to our service of others can be our prejudices that cause us to be partial towards certain groups of people or individuals. It seems as if there might have been a problem within the group of believers that James is writing to with some showing partiality to different people because of different personal characteristics. James takes a few verses to admonish them for their possible sin (**v.9**) and to encourage them to be a people who ought to be serving without partiality. This morning, I would like for us to consider 4 things that we can learn from James's writings that can help us to serve all people without partiality.

4 Things I Can Do To Not Serve Partially.

I. Create within myself a pure heart.

- A. Notice that this section begins with the demand that our faith not be accompanied with an attitude of personal favoritism. (**v.1**) Certainly our attitude plays a major role in the strength of our faith, and, here, James points out one such attitude that can greatly hinder our faith. So what must we do in order to make sure that we have the proper attitude(s) to accompany our faith?
- B. Let me suggest that we begin by making sure that the source of our attitudes are first pure if we want to possess pure attitudes and mindsets. Where do our attitudes and mindsets originate? According to **Proverbs 4:23**, the heart is the source of all things in life. Notice the wise advice that is given in Proverbs. The writer says that we should not just simply guard our heart, but that we ought to do so with diligence. We ought to give great effort to keep our hearts pure because the life we live is a reflection of the heart that we possess.
- C. If we possess a heart that has been tainted with prejudices then there is no way that we will be able to serve all other people in the correct manner. Some would argue that partiality and prejudices are hereditary, but this is foolishness. Go to a playground and observe small children as they interact, play, and have fun together. They don't treat each other with partiality because they don't recognize gender, racial, cultural, clothing, etc differences. They just simply recognize other kids as other kids.
- D. Maybe this is one reason that Jesus says that we must become like little children if we want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (**Matt. 18:2-4**) Our Lord does specifically mention the humility of little children and a lack of humility and excess of pride can certainly taint our hearts to be partial to those we deem as lower than we are. If we want to avoid this issue then we must create within ourselves pure hearts of humility and love.

II. Treat all people with equal love and respect.

- A. With the good start of a pure heart we are able to give to all people what we ought to give...equal love and respect. Sadly it didn't seem as if love and respect was being given to all people who came into their assemblies. James says that the poor man in dirty clothes was dishonored by their actions of giving him the bad seat. (**v.3**) That type of action isn't a result of a pure heart, but it is the result of a heart that houses partialities.
- B. When Jesus told the multitudes that the greatest commandments are to first love God and secondly to love your neighbor as yourself (**Mark 12:30-31**), He did not give any sort of qualification as to which neighbors He meant. He didn't say that we were only to love those neighbors who look like us. He didn't say that we were only to come from the same places we are from. He doesn't say that we are only to love and respect those who wear clothes like we wear. Jesus says that we are to love our neighbor, no matter who they are.
- C. When it comes to our actions towards others and serving of others, we ought not even take into consideration those external characteristics that are far too often seen before anything else. Regardless of the color of their skin, the clothes they wear, or anything of this nature, we must be a people who treat all others with equal love and respect.

- D. This issue that James is addressing was pertinent to the time of its writing, and it's just a needed today. During a time where cultures were mixing into this huge movement of Christianity, it was necessary for letters like **The Letter to the Romans** to be written by the Apostle Paul. The same kind of teaching is needed, today. We need to continually be reminded that differences between us do not keep us from showing love and respect to one another. This can be done if we prepare our hearts to see others as people with souls and not different from others because of various characteristics.

III. Don't take God's place of judgment.

- A. As James writes to these brethren teaching against this sinful mindset of partiality, one of the reasons he says this type of thing must be avoided is because it causes us to elevate ourselves to the position of judges with evil motives. For these individuals, they could've been thinking that this dirty person would make them look bad so let's put him somewhere where he hopefully isn't seen too much. They were wrong for having this kind of mindset. **(v.4)**
- B. It can be easy for us to think that we can accurately judge someone right off the bat and know whether or not they are deserving of us serving them in any sort of particular way. Obviously, we must make judgements in some situations, and we can't always serve others if we are not given the opportunity and have the means to serve, but when we have opportunity and means we need to take advantage and seek to good to all people not just those of the faith. **(Gal. 6:9,10)**
- C. Think about the different times when some of the great stories of Scripture could've never happened if someone had decided that another person wasn't worthy of being served. Ananias tried to avoid having to go to Paul and teach him, but thankfully he was persuaded. **(Acts 9:10-19)** Phillip could've found the Ethiopian Eunuch and decided he wasn't someone he'd like to share the Gospel with because he was from a completely different place and culture. **(Acts 8:26-39)** The Samaritan could've done like the men before him just crossed on the other side when he saw a man in desperate need, but he didn't. He helped the man who he had be taught growing up to dislike. **(Luke 10:25-37)**
- D. There are times when we might take it upon ourselves to judge whether or not someone is worthy of our service or if they will appreciate or take full advantage of our serving of them. Our judgments might lead us to decide that this person isn't worth our time or that they might simply reject our serving them, especially when it comes to the sharing of the Gospel. "This person will never obey Jesus and commit his/her life to Him." We might think this, but who are we to make such judgments?? We must leave those judgements to God and simply make sure that we fulfill our role of service to our fellow man.

IV. Be willing to give everyone a chance.

- A. So what does all of this mean? What is the conclusion of this discussion concerning our serving of others without partiality? It concludes with this point that we simply must be willing to give everyone a chance. We wonder if it was that the people in James didn't even give the poor man a chance. If they didn't then James made it clear that they needed to do better. However, if they had...if they had loved their neighbor as themselves then they were commended by James for doing well. **(v.8)**
- B. As Christians, as the ones who bear the name of Christ, we must be like our Master in regards to His attitude and mindset of being willing to help anyone who was willing to come to Him. How many people came to Jesus begging that He would serve them in some way? From the poor to the sick to the sinner to the Gentile to the Jewish leader...Jesus was willing to help any and every person. The sick and sinners were not the people that the people of the day would seek to serve, but these were exactly the people that Jesus was willing to serve. **(Mark 2:16,17)**
- C. Jesus recognized that all people are worth saving. He recognized that all people are worth serving. If we are to be like our Lord then we must seek to have these same recognitions of others. We must see people as Jesus saw people. We must see them as souls in need of a Savior, in need of respect, and in need of love. We need to be the people who point them to a Savior and who give them respect and love.

If James was writing to this group of people, would he give us words of admonition or commendation? Would he say that we have done well in our serving and treatment of others, or would he say that we have become judges with evil motives? If we are to be strong servants of Jesus then we must be a people who are willing to practice these four points that we have discussed this morning. May we live according to the will of Jesus and serve our neighbor well regardless of the differences that might be between them and us. May God be glorified in our service, and may much good be done as we faithful fulfill the great command of loving our neighbors as ourselves.