

James 2

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Tape #8220
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My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. The Greek word, translated, respect of persons, literally means to lift up the faith. The idea was to show favoritism. We are not to show favoritism. The idea of lifting up the faith is found in the Scriptures as a sign of showing favoritism.

Now in the prayer that the priest put on the people, the Lord bless thee and keep thee, may he lift up His countenance, lift up His face upon you and give you peace. And so the prayer was that God might show favor on you.

But we are not to show favoritism in the church in regard to a person's status in life. We should treat everyone the same. And the Bible tells us that with God, there is no respecter of person. When we stand before God, we all stand on the same level. To show favor to one person over another, just because they are rich or because they are poor, was considered in the Bible, a sin.

It's interesting that they recognized with Jesus, that He didn't show respect of person. When they came to Him, they said, Master, we know that You do not respect or regard a person. That is, He treated everyone alike. It didn't matter to Him if they were rich or poor. In fact, He called the poor to follow Him.

When a rich young ruler came declaring his desire for eternal life, Jesus laid down what he would have to give up in order to obtain eternal life. He was unwilling to do so. He went away sorrowful. Jesus didn't cut any corners for him. He didn't try to make it easier. He didn't think, oh my, he's rich. He's young. How great it would be and so let's give him a little easier path to come by. We don't want to turn him away.

But you see when you come to the Lord you all come on the same level. And there is no respecter of persons as far as the Lord is concerned. That means that all of you are of equal importance to the Lord. It doesn't matter what your background may be. It doesn't matter how much you have in the bank. All of you are equally important to the Lord. And so James tells us that we're not to have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of person.

When Peter was on the housetop in the city of Joppa, and God let down the sheet. And he saw the different types of animals. God said, rise, Peter, kill and eat. The net result of that vision was Peter, recognized that God was no respecter of person. With God it made no difference, if you were a Jew or a Gentile. God loves all! And He want's all to come to Him. And there is only one way by which we all may come to Him, and that is through Jesus Christ!

When Paul was writing to the Ephesians, concerning the relationship of a master to his slave, Paul declared that with God there was no respecter of person. And that the masters were to treat their slaves, not as did the worldly masters, but with respect and dignity, because God was no respecter of person.

Now in those days, when there was a marked difference in the cultural status of people, it was interesting because when they would to church, it might be that the slave would be ministering the word and his master would be in the congregation. And it might be that they would sit side by side in the congregation. And as you sit there before the Lord, you all sit on the same level because God loves all and there is no respecter of persons with God.

God declared when they dispensed the law in the Old Testament, that they should not respect the person of the rich or the poor. Just because they were poor, they shouldn't give deference to them, saying oh well, they are so poor. And in the same token, if they were rich, they weren't to give deference to them, saying oh, they are so rich and so influential. So God wanted the judgment, across the board, to be equal. And so in the church, we are together as equals before the Lord. And that's the way it should be!

We shouldn't have respect of a person, just because of their social status. If say the Governor should come into the church, we shouldn't give him any more special treatment, you know, there shouldn't be, oh the Governor is here! And the ushers, you know, try and to, let's all behave because he's here. But God is

no respecter of person, you see. And so we shouldn't have that kind of respect of person when we're in the church.

Now he gives an illustration of this. ²*For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, (and a diamond on his pinkie.) in goodly apparel, (and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment (dirty rags);* ³*And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:* ⁴*Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?* Now in those days, it just wasn't a ring on the finger, they would wear rings on all of their fingers. And not just one ring, but several rings on each finger, except the middle finger. And even on their thumb. The number of rings indicated how much wealth you had. So in those days they had shops where you could rent rings, when you were wanting to make an impression. It was like you rent a tuxedo. You could go rent rings, so that you could really make an impression when you come in with all these rings all over your fingers.

And so he is making a reference, if someone comes in then, their fingers are covered with rings, obviously the man is a man of wealth, a man of stature. And so you're not to give special treatment. You're not to give a special seat of prominence and at the same token, a man comes in with dirty clothes, obviously, he is poor. He maybe is a street person. And you say to them, well, you know, sit over there.

My father was a very literal person as far as the Bible is concerned. And he happened to be the usher of the church we attended in Ventura. And he had a prison ministry. He would go every Sunday afternoon, to the orphanages and the Ventura County Jail and minister there to the inmates. And often times when the inmates were dismissed, they would come and look up my dad. And being the usher of the church and with this verse in mind, I remember there was one fellow that we dubbed, his name was George, and we dubbed him, George the tramp. He always smelled of the Rescue Mission disinfectant. He wore filthy clothes and was a tramp. But when he first came to church, he came late that first Sunday. And my dad, being an usher, ushered him down to the front row. And sat him right there in the front row, to the chagrin of many of the people, because as he walked down the aisle, you could smell the disinfectant on his body, that they shoot on them at the Rescue Mission. And yet my dad had taken this very literally and in fact, invited the man home for lunch after service. George was there at our house. He was a character. There are a lot of stories that I could tell you about George. And my dad got him a new suit. And you know, he tried to clean him up, but George was George.

But my father was right in following the exhortation of James, not to show favoritism just because a person was rich or not to look with disdain because a person was obviously poor and treat him as a second rate saint. Before God we all stand on one level. That's basically what James is telling us. And if we are guilty of showing partiality, then we become judges of people, judging them by the way they look, rather than by the truth.

So he goes on to say, ⁵*Hearken, my beloved brethren,* He starts out, my brothers, now they become, beloved brothers.

Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, And so often, and when you are poor, you have to be rich in faith. It's takes more faith to be poor, than it takes to be rich. When you are rich, you are prone, and the danger and the temptation, is to trust in the uncertainty of your riches. When you are poor you learn what it is to live by faith.

And so hasn't God chosen the poor of this world, who are rich in faith *and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?* Yes, I may not have much of the worldly goods, but I'm an heir to the Kingdom of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! But by the grace of God, seeking to lay up treasures for heaven, I would rather be rich in the things of the Spirit, than in the material things of this world. Because the material things of this world are going to rust and corrupt and decay, but the Spiritual riches that you have are eternal. And God has chosen the poor of this world who are rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those that love Him.

⁶*But ye have despised the poor.* That's not good!

Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? And in those days, if you owed a

man some money, and there were loan sharks in those days. They would charge exorbitant interest rates. You remember the Scriptures spoke about usury? People would charge usury, interest upon interest. A person could become hopelessly in debt. If you met one of these persons that you were indebted on the street, he could grab you. And by force he could take you to the judge and have you thrown in prison for your debt.

Do not the rich oppress you? That practice is what you are referring to, how that when a person who was poor and owed money to another, how that the person who was rich could actually have them put in prison. Don't they oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats?

⁷*Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?* Now they were called Christians. It was a name that was originally given to them by the press. It wasn't a name that they adopted for themselves, but a name that was given to them in Antioch. And it was because they were so much like Christ.

I think that that's a glorious thing, when you are so much like Christ, that the world begins to call you, Christian. I loved it when the press picked up the phrase, "Jesus people", and started called these young people who had received Jesus Christ, as Jesus people, because they were acting like Jesus. They were loving. They were kind. They were considerate. They were forgiving. They had the characteristics and traits of Jesus. And they were in love with the Lord. And so, they were known as Jesus people. And that's great when that's the name that people of the world, put on you, because of your Christ likeness.

But he is saying that they blasphemed that worthy name by which you are called. But ⁸*If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture*, And what is the royal law? Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. You do well! Jesus was asked by the lawyer, what is the greatest commandment? Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength.

And the second is likened to the first, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well*: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Jesus said, in this is all the law and the prophets. It's all encapsulated in these two.

And so here James calls it the royal law. Now remember, he says, be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself. To be a doer of the Word, I must love my neighbor as myself. And love, as James will go on to show us, is manifested not in my words.

It's not like Lucy in the Peanut's cartoon that said, I love the world, it's people I hate! It's not to be that way! Love manifests itself in its action. And the royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, you do well!

⁹*But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin*, If you have respect to persons, you are actually committing sin!

and are convinced of the law as transgressors. You are convinced of the law as a transgressor. So he is declaring that it is a sin to have respect of persons, judging a person by the clothes they wear or by their social status or things of that nature.

And then if you are a transgressor of the law, he goes on to say. ¹⁰*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend (or transgress) in one point, he is guilty of all*. Now how many laws do you have to break to become a lawbreaker? One law—if you break one law, you are a lawbreaker. Now we've got many laws, so many laws, and we don't even know the law. But there are basic laws. And all you have to do is break one of the laws and you become a lawbreaker. Now there are laws against robbing banks. There are laws against raping someone. There are laws against committing murder. It really doesn't which of these laws, you break, or have broken. Just one of them makes you a lawbreaker. There are ten commandments. And you don't have to break all ten! All you have to do is break one and you become a violator. You are guilty, just as guilty as if you had broken all of them! You are a lawbreaker because you have broken one of the commandments. So if you keep the whole law and yet you violate in one point, you're actually guilty of all! So that is what makes trying to be righteous and to have a righteous standing before God, and seeking to be saved by the works of the law, a futile attempt. Because we've all sinned. We've all come short of the glory of God.

Now, there are many people who see, wrongfully see, a contradiction between the teaching of Paul and the

teaching of James. There really is no contradiction between their teachings. You need to understand what they are teaching.

Paul declares that by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified. You can't be justified by keeping the works of the law.

James is telling you this. If you keep the whole law, yet you violate in one point, you are guilty of all. James is not talking about the matter of being saved. He's talking about, he believes in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. But he is saying if you truly have faith in Jesus Christ, that faith is going to be manifested in the deeds that you do.

And Paul is saying the deeds that you do, as far as the works of the law, will never save you. You are justified by faith. But then Paul goes to say, therefore put off the works of the flesh and put on the Lord Jesus Christ! And Paul said, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. And he gives you that list of the works of the flesh. And he said, we know that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the fruit of Spirit, so true faith that brings salvation, will also bring the fruit of the Spirit, or the works of the Spirit in and through your life. And so Paul says, you are justified by faith. And James shows the kind of faith that justifies you. It's the faith that produces a changed life!

But going on to illustrate. We got ahead of our point here, just a bit, or ahead of ourselves. For whosoever shall keep the law, yet offend in one point is guilty of all. ¹¹*For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.* As we pointed out earlier.

¹²*So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.* Now in Christ Jesus I have been set free. I'm at liberty from the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses could not save me. It did not save me. The keeping of the Law of Moses could not save me and did not save me. I was saved by faith in Jesus Christ. And Christ is the end of the law of works to all that believe! So my faith in Jesus Christ has brought me under a new law, the law of liberty! And in this law of liberty, I now do things not to be saved, but I do things because I am saved. The new law within my heart, it is now God's law, written in the fleshly tablets of my heart. It is God putting His desires in my heart. And my now doing the things that are a blessing for me to do. I delight in doing the things that I do for the Lord. It's the law of liberty. It's not trying to be saved by what I'm doing, but it's because I am saved and I want to please my Lord, that I do these things! There is a big difference between seeking to be saved by doing the works of the law and the works that spring from the new life you have in Christ! Yes, I do good works. I don't look to them to save me. I look to Jesus alone for my salvation. But because I believe in Jesus and I've received Him as my Lord, my belief is manifested in my changed life. And with this, Paul and James would be in total agreement!

¹³*For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* Jesus said, blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. I wrote that on the blackboard of my class in college on the final test date. But if you go around judging people and you show no mercy, then when it comes times for you to be judged, you will be shown no mercy! For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shown no mercy. In whatsoever measure you mete it out, by the standard by which you judge others, by those standards you will be judged!

Paul writing to the Jews, rebuked them because they were setting different standards for the Jews and the Gentiles. And he was saying we're all going to be judged by the same basic standard. And you say, Paul said, thou shalt not steal. But do you steal? And so often it is just a matter of how a person looks at a thing. I may be guilty of judging someone for what they have done. And I may be doing basically the same thing, only with a slight twist. And therefore, feel very justified in what I am doing and how I am judging, but in reality if you just turn it slightly, I'm guilty of the very same thing that I'm judging someone else for!

You remember when the prophet Nathan came to David after his sin with Bathsheeba. He gave him that little story of a very rich man in his kingdom, who had flocks and servants galore, more than he could need or wish! There lived next to him this poor man. He had only one little ewe lamb that was like a child to him. It ate at his table and slept in the room in his little tent at night. And the rich man had company come. He ordered his servants to take by force the one little ewe lamb from his neighbor, to kill it, to barbecue it for his company.

David was angry. He said, that man shall be surely be put to death! Nathan said, David, you are the man!

The story was just slightly changed and here is David now, judging himself. But God was more gracious. When the prophet said you are the man, David said I have sinned. And the prophet said, and God has forgiven your sin. But we have to be careful in this matter of judgment. Judge not lest you be judged. You see, so often, we are judging people with incomplete information. Or sometimes we are judging them with false information.

I received a letter this week, a very castigating letter! Someone had told this fellow that I believed a certain thing and had done a certain thing. I don't believe it. I didn't do it. And here he spends a whole letter, telling me how horrible I am for doing it. Well, I didn't do it! But he's already judged me as having done it. And was just condemning me over and over in the letter for having done something that I didn't do. But someone told him I did. But he makes judgment on false information.

So I wrote him back. And I said, I understand why the Lord said, judge not, lest you be judged. Because people often are guilty of judging on misinformation. And that happens to be your case. You've judged me on misinformation. I've never said the things that this person said, I said. And this person had said that I didn't believe in church boards and we had no board members. I said we have a board that governs our church. I haven't heard back from him yet. I don't know that I will, but this has happened before. It happened the other way around. I have made judgments on misinformation. And so we've got to be careful about that. For if we have no mercy, then we will be shown no mercy when we are judged. Mercy rejoices against judgment.

But ¹⁴*What doth it profit, my brethren,* Now notice he's using the word, brothers, so much. And it is a word of closeness and fellowship.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Yes, faith can save him. But not if it doesn't have works because that is not a genuine faith. A true faith will produce. And this is exactly what James is going to show you here. A true faith will produce works of righteousness, a changed life. If you say that you went forward and received Jesus Christ, and yet there is no change in your life, you are still living in sin as you were living before. There's been no changed life at all. Then the commitment that you made is meaningless. A true commitment to Jesus Christ will bring forth changes in your life.

As John the Baptist said when he was preaching said, bring forth fruit that demonstrates your repentance. You say, well, I've repented from my sin. Well, John said, let's see some fruit that demonstrates that repentance. True faith works!

And so what doth it profit, my brethren, though a man says that he has faith and he has no works. Can that faith save him. No that faith can't save him.

¹⁵*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,* Now, you see, James is great! He gives, first of all sort of a principle, and then he will illustrate the principle. Just like he gave you the principle that we are not to have respect of person. And then he illustrates it by saying, if a guy comes in loaded with rings, and so forth.

And now he gives another principle of this business of faith. And without works, can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶*And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?* Your words are empty. They are meaningless. John in writing his first letter said, if you have of this world's goods and you have a brother that is in need, if you shut up your compassion from this needy brother, how can you say that the love of God dwells in you? Let's not love in word or tongue, but let's love in deed and in truth! Loving in deed and truth is then giving to that person from what you have. Sharing with them, there is the proof of your love. You can say, oh, I love you brother! God bless you! Go be warm! Be full! These are empty words, unless they are backed up by giving to that brother in his need.

¹⁷*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* If it isn't followed by deeds, it's not a true faith!

¹⁸*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will*

shew thee my faith by my works. You say you have faith! Show me! How can you show your faith? You can show your faith in the things that you do. They are a demonstration of your faith. If there is no evidence, if there is not demonstration of faith, then that kind of faith is to be sorely doubted. True faith, will produce a changed life. It will produce works of love, kindness, goodness.

¹⁹*Thou believest that there is one God;* Well, I believe in God! Now James says, great! Give me a break! *thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.* The devils also believe. They go one step further. They tremble! So just to say you believe in God, doesn't save you. Unless there is a changed life, there is no real evidence of salvation. There is no real evidence of faith. True faith will produce in your life, works of righteousness.

Now you are not saved by works of righteousness. People can do the work of righteousness and if they are trusting in those works of righteousness, they'll never be saved! You are saved by your faith in Jesus Christ, but a genuine faith in Jesus Christ, will produce works of righteousness in your life! You are not then looking to those for your salvation, but you're looking to them as the proof of your salvation.

²⁰*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?* It's not faith. It's not a true faith at all, unless there are demonstrable works.

Now it is interesting that Paul uses Abraham as the classic example of a man being accounted righteous by God through his faith. The faith in offering Isaac unto the Lord, when called upon by God to do so. And in Hebrews, it tells us, by faith, Abraham offered up Isaac, whom he had received in a way, from the dead, believing that God would, if necessary, raise him from the dead to fulfill His word. And of course, when God promised to Abraham that through his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed, Abraham believed God. And God accounted his faith for righteousness. So, Paul uses Abraham as the example of a man, whose faith in God's Word was accounted by God to him for righteousness.

Now James looks at the picture of his offering Isaac, from a different standpoint. He is saying this is demonstration of his faith. His faith was not just, I believe the promise of God and I believe the word of God. He demonstrated that faith in offering Isaac, because there was then the practical demonstration that he truly did believe God that through Isaac the seed would be called and his willingness to sacrifice him, He proved the faith that he had with a genuine faith in the promises of God. Now it wasn't in the offering of Isaac in the works that God accounted him righteous. He was accounted righteous by his faith, but because he truly did believe when God called upon him to make the sacrifice, his faith was demonstrated in his willingness to do so, believing God would raise him from the dead to keep His word.

So James looks at it from a different slant. ²¹*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?* ²²*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works,* You see, he joins the faith together. There was an agreement between his faith and his works, because he truly did have faith, it followed that he was obedient unto the command of God.

So faith wrought with his works *and by works was faith made perfect?* (Complete or it was demonstrated.) It was shown and made complete by the works. It shows that the faith was a genuine faith.

²³*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God,* You see, he accepts this. Abraham believed God, but here is the demonstration that he truly believed God.

So the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, *and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.* ²⁴*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* Now by the works, it proves the faith. And thus I'm justified by the faith, but the faith that works.

²⁵*Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works,* Now again in Hebrews, chapter eleven, she is held up as a woman of faith in the Old Testament. And how that it was by faith that she received the spies. And it was by her faith in the believing that God was going to give the land to these people, that she identified with them.

But yet her faith was manifested *when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?* By her delivering the spies that had come into Jericho, it demonstrated her faith.

²⁶*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* No man will ever be moved to action without faith. And no man's faith is genuine unless it moves him to action! Let me give you that one, once more. No man will ever be moved to action without faith! And no man's faith is genuine, unless it moves him to action!

There are two oars in rowing a boat. Only one will lead you in circles. It takes the two oars to get you anyplace. Faith and works are companions. They work together. The faith produces the works. The works demonstrate the genuineness of the faith.

So, again, be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself. If you have faith, it will be demonstrated. And you can demonstrate that faith, and it is demonstrated in the works that do. It demonstrates that that faith is genuine and that you are genuinely saved in because you have the faith to be saved, is demonstrated in the works that you do. Doing the works without faith is invalid! Doing the works in order to save yourself will never make it! Looking to your works to save you, they can never do it!

But the faith that will save you, will bring forth fruit, the fruit of righteousness, in your life. Remember Jesus said, by their fruits, ye shall know them. What kind of fruit is my life producing? Is it the fruit of the flesh? The fruit that demonstrates the flesh is in control? Or is it the fruit of the Spirit, that demonstrates the Spirit is in control of my life?

Paul said, therefore, let a man examine himself, for if will judge ourselves, we will not be judged of God. It's important that our lives bear fruit! It proves your faith is genuine.

Father, we thank You for the practicality of James' teaching. How he puts feet to the faith. And Lord, help us to put feet to our faith. And may the faith that we have, produce in us the works of righteousness, a demonstration of the genuineness of our commitment to Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, Father. Amen.

Tonight, the pastors are down here in the front to minister to you. If you have a need in your life, it may be as the Spirit of God has been speaking to you tonight about the practical aspects of faith. Maybe some questions have been raised. And as you look at yourself, you are void of demonstratable faith and you want to make sure that you are on the right track. I would encourage you to come down and let them pray with you. If you have a need in your life, if you are going through a financial crunch or you're going through a physical problem or maybe an emotional situation—your family is sort of messed up at this time of year. And you're sort of upset over it. Come on down and let them pray with you. The Bible promises that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. May the Lord be with you and bless you. May we enjoy just a wonderful week of fellowship with Him as we give thanks and as we give praise unto Him for His goodness and for His mercy and for the many blessings that He bestows upon us, day by day!