

In the first chapter of James letter, he tells us to joyfully greet trials of various kinds. Then he proceeded to list some of the temptations that test us: doubting, partiality, being too quick to speak, failing to listen, anger, failing to act on what we hear, ignoring the needy, and being polluted by the world. In chapter two, he drills down on partiality. In the first chapter he addressed the issue by saying the poor should boast in exaltation and the rich in their humiliation. He was illustrating how the church is different from the world. A worldly mindset sees the poor as worthless and the rich as being of great importance. The kingdom mindset is opposite that. God gives the poor a sense of worth in Christ and humbles the rich (Proverbs 22:4ⁱ; James 4:6ⁱⁱ). Each social class is being blessed with their need being met. It does not mean one is better than the other, but that each has a different need. The redeemed will see this as a blessing. The world just sees it as strange. Indeed, we do become peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9ⁱⁱⁱ).

ⁱ *My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.* James 2:1 We begin chapter two with James fourth use of “my brothers”, and there will be two more uses in this chapter. He emphasizes that we are all in this together. We are the family of God (Matthew 12:48-50^{iv}). We all struggle, and we all have room to grow. He is not wagging his finger at them from afar as if he has a different nature and cannot understand what they are tempted with. By acknowledging them as family, he is saying that they are doing God’s will, for his half-brother Jesus said that his family are those who does the will of the Father. Yet there are areas in our lives that we need to conform into the likeness of Jesus.

When we see a fault in others in the family of God, we need to remember that they are family. We are in this with them. We want to encourage them with gentleness to let Christ rein/reign in our behavior. Jesus set the example by eating with every class in society from Simon the Pharisee to Zaccheus the tax collector. He humbled Simon and he encouraged Zaccheus (Luke 7:44-47; 19:9^v).

James’ exhortation deals with partiality. He states emphatically that those of us who hold faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, should have no partiality. The expression *Lord of glory* is only used by Paul one time in 1 Corinthians 2:8^{vi}, so James must be pointing us to something by using this title.

Glory is a word we rarely use and need to define if we are to get at his point. Vines definition of the Greek translated as glory tells us *it is used (1) (a) of the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation, i.e., what He essentially is and does, as exhibited in whatever way he reveals Himself in these respects, and particularly in the person of Christ, in whom essentially His "glory" has ever shone forth and ever will do...His "everlasting power and Divinity" are spoken of as His "glory," i.e., His attributes and power as revealed through creation; in Romans 3:23 the word denotes the manifested perfection of His character, especially His righteousness, of which all men fall short;*^{vii}.

By using the title Lord of Glory, we can surmise that James is telling us that partiality is contrary to the nature and attributes of our Lord. If we are to be changed into His image, we need to act in accordance with His attributes. Partiality is contrary to God’s nature that we see exhibited in Jesus’ life.

Partiality would then mean we are not holding to faith in our Lord. God loves mankind, every single person of every culture, ethnicity, and status in life (John 3:16^{viii}). He did not save us because we were smart, or from a certain race, or had a personality of one kind or another. He saved us because He made us in His image and longs for that image to be restored so that we might be the bride of Christ, forever with Him.

If we look at some of the people that God has chosen and used mightily for His kingdom, we can see that they come from every walk of life. Paul was a religious zealot who persecuted Christians (Acts 8:3^{ix}). The judge Jephtha was the son of a prostitute (Judges 11:1^x). Mark who wrote a Gospel by that name abandoned his team on a missionary journey (Acts 15:38^{xi}). Rahab was a harlot (Joshua 2:1^{xii}). Samson had issues with lust (Judges 14:2^{xiii}). David was an adulterer and murderer (2 Samuel 12:9^{xiv}). Peter denied he knew the Lord and compromised with the Judaizers (Galatians 2:12^{xv}). Billy Graham was told that if he never learned to talk to people, he would not become an evangelist.^{xvi} Moody was told he would never become a preacher and should look for some other ministry. God chooses us because He is gracious and wants to show us that it is His life in us that does good works. We all need correction of some kind. We should all welcome it. You can never be too bad for God, only too good. In other words, if you are like a Pharisee who thinks you have it all together, you will not hear that you are a sinner in need of a Savior to grant you grace and forgiveness.

² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," James 2:2,3 James is addressing the churches' tendency to show partiality toward certain types of people who attend. His example is about our preference for the wealthy, finely dressed attendee. James accuses them of telling the poor to go stand somewhere or sit on the floor at his feet so the rich man can use his seat.

You might think that that kind of thing never happens at your church, but let me ask you if you are as eager to greet the young man with dreadlocks and tattoos who does not smell so nice as the nicely dressed couple that is all smiles? Be honest. Do you see them equally as potential family members?

I have witnessed this over the years. We had a man named Bear who was an alcoholic who lived in the woods and had quite an odor. I think my wife was the only one to greet him with a hug. I will shorten the story and just say that God gave us the privilege of seeing him clean and sober before he graduated from this life. Jesus died for him. Jesus died for the rich guest too. Do you think God is influenced by one's status in life? The Lord of glory sees our brokenness and inability to even seek Him. He sees our arrogant pride and ridiculous self-sufficiency that we keep trusting in even though we fail time and time again. He sees our resentment at what He has allowed, and He still reaches out to us in love with those nail scarred hands.

We are all absolute paupers in God's eyes. At the same time, we are all precious in His sight. And if we are clothed in Christ (Romans 13:14^{xvii}), He sees us as His sons and daughters (Romans 8:14-16^{xviii}). So, if we put one family member above another for something so trivial as clothing, are we acting in a way that pleases God? Or do we need

a good lesson in our own spiritual poverty? Because what we are saying with our partiality is, “I am too good for you.” In doing so we prove we are not.

⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? James 2:4 Instead of viewing one another as equals, saved by faith through grace, undeserving of God’s mercy, but blessed beyond comprehension, we make the church a place of class distinction that would rival the Hindu culture. If some people were honest, they would say, “We have the elites, and I will talk with them and have them over for dinner. Then we have the regulars. They are okay to have around because we need volunteers. Finally, there are the untouchables. Do they have to come to our church?” Or else we might take pride in the fact that we help the dregs of society, but just do not want to be expected to get involved in their lives. In other words, we are making “*distinctions among ourselves and become judges with evil thoughts.*”

Some commentators prefer the translation “*are you not inconsistent within yourselves,*” or “*in your hearts.*” In other words, the Lord of glory is the standard sometimes and at other times we revert to the standards of the world. We are like that double minded or two souled man in chapter one (1:8^{xix}).

Did we forget we are sinners saved by grace and if it were not for that grace we could be in their shoes (Ephesians 2:8,9^{xx})? Jesus told a story that surely upset some of his audience, the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man dies and ends up in hell and Lazarus, who was while on earth at the rich man’s gate unable to move hoping for a few crumbs of food and whose sores were licked by dogs, ends up in heaven in Abraham’s bosom (Luke 16:22,23^{xxi}). That was a shock to many Jews because they saw abundance as the sign of a blessed life and poverty and illness as the consequences of sin. Jesus turned that all upside down as He tended to do, to help them realize their way of judging others was outward and not that of the heart (John 7:24^{xxii}).

⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? James 2:5 James starts this verse with what he exhorted us to do in verse 19^{xxiii} of chapter one. Be quick to hear. “Listen!” He follows that with that warm entreaty of family concern, “my beloved brothers.” He asks them to consider who makes up their congregations. At the time, many of the new converts were in poverty or slaves. It is true that the poor can be just as greedy as the wealthy, but poverty can also turn our eyes away from the world to the more valuable things of the Spirit. He points out the richness of their faith, which is true riches (Luke 16:11^{xxiv}).

When I visit the third world where poverty is a part of everyday life, I see that rich faith. I remember being asked to preach in the slums of Mumbai on suffering being a gift based on Philippians 1:29 which states, *²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,* After delivering the message, a local pastor approached me with his wife and baby told me he was going to ask for a few metal sheets to cover his shack, but now realized that living like those he ministered to was experiencing God’s gift. I felt like a pygmy before a spiritual giant. That is rich in faith! I know he was an heir of the kingdom, promised to those who love Jesus. That man loved Jesus and the lost souls in those slums.

Being a lover of God, rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom can be anyone regardless of what they look like, from the disabled Down's Syndrome child to the CEO of a major corporation. That is the wonderful thing about our God. He loves us all, and the good news of what He has done is simple enough for anyone to understand! He invites us all to come as we are and be transformed from the inside out. God looks on the heart, and when it is changed our behavior changes.

James is asking a question. Did you just tell someone to sit on the floor, someone rich in faith, an heir of the kingdom, a lover of God, for a rich man because of what? - the man's ring? His clothes? The hope that he might give a big donation? Do you realize how inconsistent that is with the glory of our Lord?

One of the greatest problems in the church of America is choosing elders based on their status in society rather than the qualifications in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7^{xxv}). It is a preference for appearance. That results in a corporate mentality. The Word is watered down and love is limited. The Spirit departs and eventually the lampstand is removed (Revelation 2:5^{xxvi}). You end up with a religious club. They may help the poor, but not for the love of God, but to boast in their good works.

⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? James 2:6,7 In preferring the wealthy over the poor, we dishonor the poor. We act as if a person's wealth is what gives them their value as a person.

James then asks a series of questions about how they are treated by the rich in the culture of that day. They oppressed the poor and dragged them into court. They have influence over the judges. This was especially true in the Greek world where judges would often rule in favor of the wealthy for favors to be returned to them. In our present culture we are seeing judges rule by their ideology instead of the law, and that is often with a bias against Christians. Thank God for Christian lawyers who voluntarily step in to provide a defense when our rights are violated.

The wealthy were more likely to be the ones to blaspheme the name of Jesus, who Himself was a friend of the poor and who lived in poverty (Matthew 8:20^{xxvii}; Luke 14:13,14^{xxviii}). The wealthy want gods who make you rich and powerful not a God who humbles you and shows His greatness in your weakness, or who expects you to serve others. James asks these questions to have them see that the poor of that day and most cultures are the ones who are open to the good news of Jesus. Their partiality of the rich made no sense. Cozying up to the rich was in most cases trying to get something for oneself. It was not unselfish love but self-love.

In our culture God has called many rich people into the kingdom. Most of us would be considered rich by the people of that day and most of the world today. God looks on the heart. He is impartial. But He expects us to be good stewards over the wealth He has given us and to bless those who through no fault of their own have genuine needs (Ephesians 4:28^{xxix}), especially those laboring to share the gospel where it has not yet been heard.

James, having grown up in Jesus' poor family, seems to have it in for the rich. If you look at the quotes and cross references in this message, you will find that most are

from Luke's Gospel. Luke seems to have a special concern for the poor. James and Luke had most likely crossed paths and appreciated one another's emphasis on the poor. They share God's heart for the needy, as we all should. Yet, James quotes Abraham and Job in this letter, both of whom were very rich. *If it is only the poor who are privileged to receive the divine choice, then the rich brother of 1:10^{xxx} is a considerable embarrassment! So also are Abraham and Job, whom James quotes with approval (2:21-23^{xxxi}; 5:11^{xxxii}) and who were exceedingly wealthy men (Genesis 13:2^{xxxiii}; Job 1:3^{xxxiv}; 42:12^{xxxv}). Furthermore, of course, the evidence of the rest of the Bible is by no means as unqualified as James' words, taken at face value, seem. The wealthy Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57^{xxxvi}), the proconsul, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7-12^{xxxvii}), Levi the tax-collector (Luke 5:27^{xxxviii}) and his colleague Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2^{xxxix}) are sufficient to prove that the Lord has no animus against the rich as such.^{xl}*

Here at Wayside Bible Chapel, we help the poor on weekly basis from our food pantry and Wednesday night homemade meals. We give monthly to two different missions that help the homeless and those in need. We give a good portion of your offerings to overseas missions and local ministries to the poor. We have four missionaries from this church and a ministry for the autistic children that sprang out of this little church. But that does not mean that God will not ask us to personally get involved in the life of someone in need. We all have our gifts and callings, but what James is warning us about is to **be sure that our love for our fellow man is not hindered by outer appearances or prejudices.** We can be just as prejudice against the rich as we can toward the poor. James tells us to listen. The God of glory shows no partiality, and neither should we. Each person we meet was made in God's image and has the potential to become a son or daughter of God, a part of our family. Jesus died to save them. How should we then treat them regardless of their outer appearance or status in life? The only way we can do that is to let the love of Christ for others fill our hearts. It must be His love through us. If we want to be Christlike, we need His indwelling presence. He is waiting for an invitation to be your Lord and Savior and to love others through you. For those of you who have accepted Jesus as Lord, I ask you if you have been letting His love flow through you? He will not force you, but He will empower you if you are willing. Are you willing? If our answer is yes, watch for that opportunity the Lord will surely bring our way.

Questions:

- 1 How does this chapter connect to the previous one?
- 2 What does the frequent use of "my brothers" imply?
- 3 What does "glory" mean? Why might he have used it?
- 4 Give example of God transforming and using the worst of the worst?
- 5 Do you see all people equally as potential family members?
- 6 What parables of Jesus are similar to what James teaches here?
- 7 Why is this teaching so wonderful?
- 8 How is our culture similar? Why?
- 9 Give examples of rich people who are righteous.
- 10 What is God asking you to do?

ⁱ Proverbs 22:4 (ESV)

⁴ The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.

ⁱⁱ James 4:6 (ESV)

⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

^{iv} Matthew 12:48-50 (ESV)

⁴⁸ But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

^v Luke 19:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

^{vi} 1 Corinthians 2:8 (ESV)

⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

^{vii} Doxa -Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words

^{viii} John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

^{ix} Acts 8:3 (ESV)

³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

^x Judges 11:1 (ESV)

¹ Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. Gilead was the father of Jephthah.

^{xi} Acts 15:38 (ESV)

³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

^{xii} Joshua 2:1 (ESV)

¹ And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

^{xiii} Judges 14:2 (ESV)

² Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife."

^{xiv} Judges 14:2 (ESV)

² Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife."

^{xv} Galatians 2:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

^{xvi} Relayed personally to me by a person who attended the church in Chicago where Billy Graham began his ministry.

^{xvii} Romans 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

^{xviii} Romans 8:14-16 (ESV)

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

^{xix} James 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

xx Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

xxi Luke 16:22-23 (ESV)

²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

xxii John 7:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

xxiii James 1:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

xxiv Luke 16:11 (ESV)

¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

xxv 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV)

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

xxvi Revelation 2:5 (ESV)

⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

xxvii Matthew 8:20 (ESV)

²⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

xxviii Luke 14:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

xxix Ephesians 4:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

xxx James 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

xxxi James 2:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God.

xxxii James 5:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

xxxiii Genesis 13:2 (ESV)

² Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

xxxiv Job 1:3 (ESV)

³ He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.

xxxv Job 42:12 (ESV)

¹² And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys.

xxxvi Matthew 27:57 (ESV)

⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.

xxxvii Acts 13:7-12 (ESV)

⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to

turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.” Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

^{xxxviii} **Luke 5:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.”

^{xxxix} **Luke 19:2 (ESV)**

² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

^{xi} J. A. Motyer, *The Message of James, The Tests of Faith*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 87–88.