

Genuine Christian Faith: A Study of the Book of James
Message 4 – Genuine Faith Shows No Favoritism, James 2:1-13
Pastor Roger Ridley, Gretna Baptist Church, May 25, 2008

Can you think of a reason one person might be considered more important than another? It's probably easier than most want to admit. We often rate people by the position they hold, the way they dress, amount of money we think they have, and on and on we go.

Of course, none of these really have anything to do with a person's real value. In fact, when we show that kind of favoritism we hurt the very people God wants us to help.

We have been looking in the book of James at **Evidences of Genuine Christian Faith**. In James 1 the focus was on internal evidences. Genuine Faith *matures* through difficulties, *endures* temptation, and *overcomes* hypocrisy. But in James 2 the focus shifts to external evidences, or what we do with the faith we say we have.

The first external evidence James draws our attention to is our response to people. He tells us Genuine Faith **Shows No Favoritism**. In the King James it is referred to as *having respect of persons, or partiality*; a negative respect that hurts and tears down people.

Four aspects of favoritism are dealt with.

1. In verses 1-4 we are reminded how favoritism works...

These verses begin with a negative command. Our faith in Jesus Christ is not to be associated with favoritism.

Favoritism is to look away from one, to another because of position, rank, popularity, or circumstances.

It does not fit well with the Christian Faith for a very basic reason: God is not a respecter of persons. Romans 2:11 says, "There is no respect of persons with God." He does not choose to treat us with His favor based on our position, rank, popularity, or circumstances! Aren't you glad? I know I sure am!

Can you imagine what it would be like if God's favor was based on how well we were born, or how much money our family had? That would be horrible wouldn't it? There have been times when that seemed to be the case in church history, let's make sure it never seems to be the case with us. I like what it says in John 1:12-13...

Our human bloodline will never be the deciding factor in our relationship with God. It doesn't matter what side of the tracks we were born on. What matters is while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

James gives a clear example of what he had in mind with two visitors at a church service. One very well dressed, and the other very poorly. Not a bad example is it? Many of us have probably seen it happen! The well-dressed receives *the red-carpet treatment*, and the poorly dressed just gets ignored.

I was a victim of this when I first attended church in my early 20's. Not everyone was glad to see me in my ragged blue-jeans and long hair. Some went to the pastor. They were concerned about what people would think about the church with me there. And they were concerned about how I might influence their young people. Both concerns were probably legitimate! **But** I sure am thankful for those who received me without partiality.

When we treat people with partiality it shows something about us no genuine Christian should want. It shows us to be *judges with evil motives*. We're not concerned about the person. We're not concerned about their soul. We're concerned about what they can do for us. Like the unjust judge referred to by Jesus in Luke 18 who helped a widow in need not because he cared, but only so he could get rid of her.

Let's do our best to never make some feel like they are not good enough, and to make others feel like we are just trying to *get into* their pockets.

11. In verses 5-8 we are reminded of what favoritism does...

Favoritism contradicts what God is doing in the world and what He has done for us. God has chosen the poor of this world that they might be made rich by faith. I like what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:9...

Do you remember how Jesus came and died? Born in a manger, a feeding bird, and crucified between two thieves that you and I could be lifted up out of our poverty and seated with Him in heavenly places.

When we show favoritism based on position, rank, popularity, or circumstances we hurt the very people God has chosen to help. In fact we contradict our own past. Few in Christianity have ever come from the ranks of nobility. Most of Christianity has come from **the rank and file** of humanity. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "Not many wise, not many mighty and not many noble are called."

Look around you! Most of us come from humble origins. I have done some research into my ancestry. I didn't find any that were rich or famous. What I found were potato farmers in northern England and dairy farmers in the Appalachians. When we show favoritism we work

against God's plan and our own past, and we place ourselves in league with those who have always persecuted God's people and blasphemed God's name.

Instead, we are to fulfill God's *royal law*. It is Royal because it is His Law. First stated in Leviticus 19:18, it is then repeated throughout the Scriptures: we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus illustrated this law in the story of The Good Samaritan, look with me at Luke 10:25f...

Instead of turning away from those of low esteem, our Christian Faith shows itself to be genuine when we reach out to them remembering God's plan and our own past.

III. In verse 9-11 we are reminded of how favoritism affects us...

James says the moment we show favoritism we commit a sin. I suspect most people aren't too bothered by that. Many would say the advantage of a little favoritism outweighs the disadvantage of a little sin.

We are often in the habit of ranking our sins. Some are in our okay list while others are not. But James points out the fallacy of thinking that way. One sin, just one sin, makes us a lawbreaker, a transgressor of God's Law, which refers to one who goes over the line, one who crosses

a boundary God has set! I'm sure most of you have been out in the countryside and have seen a fence post with a sign which says, "No Trespassing." Maybe at some point you even climbed over one of those fences. A sin is the same as crossing that fence.

God doesn't have a quota with the Ten Commandments by which He decides if we qualify as a lawbreaker. His standard is much more rigid than that. One sin is all it takes!

I have often had people say to me they are not that bad a sinner! I guess that's something like being just a little bit pregnant. They say things like, "I haven't committed adultery, or I haven't killed someone."

For that reason I find the illustration of James to be interesting. He uses the examples of adultery and murder to show it only takes one sin to become a lawbreaker. If we don't commit adultery, but we commit murder then we still have crossed the line. James uses adultery and murder because we recognize them as serious sins, but his point is one sin is enough to make us a lawbreaker, even a sin like favoritism.

If on the one hand we are claiming to be a Genuine Christian, but on the other hand are characterized by sin, then that is a contradiction that should concern us.

IV. James wraps up his discussion on favoritism in verses 12-13 by reminding us how we should live...

According to 1:25, *the law of liberty* is the Word of God. I realize God's Word can seem restrictive to some. They look within its pages and all they see are the boundaries they are not suppose to cross. Not realizing those boundaries are for their protection they try to live beyond them and experience the consequences of doing so.

But the person who has been changed by God's Word in Genuine Christian Faith does not look at the restriction but the freedom. God's Word sets us free from sin and its bondage. So James says live like someone who is going to be judged by the freedom we have in Christ through His Word, not like someone who is going to be judged by the law of sin and death.

James is indicating there is a decision to make. If we believe we have Genuine Christian Faith, then talk like it and behave like it! Let people see what a Genuine Christian says and does!

For some that might mean confessing sin. We know we are a Christian, but we also know we haven't been treating others the way we should. 1 John 1:9 says...

It might be in thinking this through you realize you're not really a Christian. You have never received God's Word and asked Jesus Christ to be your Savior. Then do so today.

Admit you are a sinner. All it takes is one sin!

Believe Jesus died for sin and rose from the dead.

Call upon Jesus to save you from your sins and be your Savior.

That's what it takes to become a Christian. Upon doing so, talk and walk in a way that people can see it!

Let's finish by reading again verse 1...