

keep
your *heart*
with all diligence;
for out of it are the
issues of life.
Proverbs 4:23



the
Heart
of the matter

James – Chapter 2

Read verses 1-13

Right off the bat James makes it clear that favoritism is NOT acceptable in the Christian's life. Why? Because in God's kingdom everyone is equal – and if He favors anyone, it's those who have not. (Remember verse 27 from Chapter 1 last week? – look after the widows and orphans)

My Life Application Bible had an interesting side note to this passage: Why is it wrong to show favoritism to the wealthy?

- It is inconsistent with Christ's teachings
- It results from evil thoughts
- It insults people made in God's image
- It is a by-product of selfish motives
- It goes against the Biblical definition of love
- It shows a lack of mercy to those less fortunate
- It is hypocritical
- It is sin

Obviously if we favor someone by appearance, we are giving more weight to that than character. One might have been born into money or possibly worked hard for that money, but we can nonetheless favor them just because they have money.

But we do.

It's hard not to, isn't it?

But Christ has called us to treat all people equally – loving them regardless of their social status.

Here's a truth: Just because someone is rich, doesn't mean God's blessed them to gain wealth. But we tend to take it as a sign that anyone who is rich must be receiving all of God's blessings.

That's just not the case every time. There are many Scriptures in the Bible that reference giving up everything to follow after God (Matthew 6:19-21, 19:28-30, Luke 12:14-34; Romans 8:15-21; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

We want to treat others as we would like to be treated – regardless if they are rich or poor.

Verse 10 really can be a “cop out” verse if we're not careful. I don't know about you but my personality is a “do it all well or do none of it” kind of personality. So I could really take this verse and make it mine – “Well if I sin in one area, why even bother? I'm not going to be able to do it all.”

But verse 12 really turns it around, yes? We are saved by Grace and we don't have to live by keeping the rules anymore. BUT we still have a duty to obey God – just in a new way. The law now becomes the law that gives FREEDOM. And if you look at Galatians 5:1 – we find out that it is for FREEDOM Christ set us free – so we no longer are slaves to the law.

The last section of this chapter gets into the meat of what James really hits in this letter . . .
Faith and Deeds

Verses 14 – 26

I think the Life Application Bible says it well here: True faith transforms our conduct as well as our thoughts. True faith always results in a changed life and good deeds. Paul, in Romans 3:28, speaks against those who try to be saved by deeds instead of true faith; James speaks against those who confuse mere intellectual assent with true faith. True faith involves a commitment of your whole self to God. True faith always results in deeds, but the deeds do not justify us. Faith brings us salvation; active obedience demonstrates that our faith is genuine.

Conclusion

So James reiterates 3 main thoughts in this chapter:

- Favoritism is not acceptable in the Christian's life
- We are to show mercy and not judge. Mercy triumphs over judgment
- Faith and Deeds are both important and in the Christian's life, we serve God with our whole self, not just intellectually.