

## IMPARTIAL LOVE

Bible Background – JAMES 2

Printed Text – JAMES 2:1-13

### A Warning against Prejudice

**2** My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

<sup>2</sup> For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes.

<sup>3</sup> If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”—well,

<sup>4</sup> doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

<sup>5</sup> Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him?

<sup>6</sup> But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?

<sup>7</sup> Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

<sup>8</sup> Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

<sup>9</sup> But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

<sup>10</sup> For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

<sup>11</sup> For the same God who said, “You must not commit adultery,” also said, “You must not murder.” So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

<sup>12</sup> So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free.

<sup>13</sup> There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

-----New Living Translation

### Lesson Introduction

In the days of the early church, society favored the rich and powerful over the poor. Therefore the body of Christ was admonished to resist judging people by these abhorrent worldly standards within the Christian community. In today's society, that preference for the status and influence of the wealthy and connected is likewise, quite prevalent. Do today's Christians need to heed the same warning?

**Background:** James' epistle explains the love Christians are to show others in the world. His tone is direct and reflects the wisdom of a seasoned Christian. Although James does not directly quote Jesus, he uses phrases and ideas that originated with Jesus. In fact, much of what James has written shows a direct relationship to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The letter

from James was written to people under pressure. Christians were suffering from economic persecution and oppression, and the Church was struggling under the strain. In response to the difficulties they faced, James admonished believers to pull together and help one another. Otherwise, they would compromise with the world and become divided. Helping one another would have been the ideal choice, but these believers were more focused on the struggle to get ahead in the world. James has just informed his readers what pure religion was all about: serving those who are less fortunate—the orphans and the widows (James 1:27). The early Christians must not forget a primary function of the Church’s ministry—to help the poor. Now James looks at some situations where professing Christians might not be living out their faith, beginning here with the rich and the poor.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 149

### **Exhortation against Favoritism**

**James 2:1-7:** James makes it plain, that those who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, must follow God’s Word: showing favoritism is sin. To defer to the wealthy over the poor is breaking God’s law and is against all that Jesus taught, about loving your neighbor. Those who discriminate against the poor are guilty of conforming to the world’s standards of favoring the powerful out of wicked and evil motives.

James also points out that God has given the ability to be rich in faith to those who are considered “the least of these.” These poor have the ability to please God and He has decreed that they will inherit His Kingdom. How, then, could believers despise those whom God has honored? The rich were certainly guilty of dishonoring the poor. After all, these were the same ones who were oppressing the believers and dragging them into court. So what sense did it make to emulate them in this regard? The irony—they would be treating the poor the same way the rich and powerful were treating them.

◆ *How inclusive are today’s church’s?*

### **Encouragement to Love**

**James 2:8-13:** Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God with all that you have and to love others as you love yourself. This represents the whole law of God. Fulfillment of this law is pleasing to God. But if one fails to fulfill this “royal law” that person is a transgressor (Gk. *parabates*) or breaker of the law. Showing favoritism based on race, gender, position, power, or wealth, is sinning against God. God commands that we be faithful to the whole law or the law is violated.

In verses, 12 and 13, James reminds the reader that by accepting the standard set by the Lord Jesus, believers operate under the law of God’s grace and mercy. Likewise, we are called to show mercy to others. Our actions and words should reflect the faith that we profess. God’s love is given without respect to persons, so the love we show others should not be flavored with preferential treatment. We are called to help those who are in need, not to despise the poor. And consider this, if we cannot show mercy can we expect mercy from God?

◆ *Why can’t a Christian just focus on loving God? Why is loving our neighbor/brother needed?*

## Conclusion

We live in a society where a person's social status matters, and favoring the rich while ignoring the poor is the status quo. And, because of systemic racism in this country, African American communities disproportionately suffer from the effects of poverty. As Christians, we must solemnly consider what we can do to help improve economic conditions in poor communities and make this a priority. More personally, what can we do to meet a critical need for a family or individual person in this season?

## Sources:

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Love For One Another. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Fall Quarter), 145-154. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.  
*Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation, Carol Stream, Illinois.

## This Sunday is the first Sunday of the Advent Season – Hope (or Promise)



The season of Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. At that time, the new Christian year begins with the twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, which lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6. Advent begins on Sunday that falls between November 27th and December 3rd each year) **Advent 2020 begins on Sunday, November 29th, and ends on Thursday, December 24.**

**The Advent Wreath** consists of four Advent candles with the white Christ Candle in the center. One candle is lit each Sunday before Christmas and the Christ Candle is lit on Christmas Day—First Hope, then Peace, Joy and Love.

### Advent Week 1 - Prayer for Hope

Father God, every word in scripture points to the gift of hope that we have because of Christ Jesus. The Christmas story wasn't the beginning of that message of hope because the old testament is full of glimpses of your plan to redeem your people and restore them into a relationship with you, but we are able to truly begin to see and understand just how great your love for us is when we read the story of Jesus' birth in scripture. Help us to see that you are with us. Nothing is too difficult, too messy, or too dirty for you. Jesus came to give us the gift of eternal life through the [salvation](#) that only you, our Heavenly Father, can give when we believe on your Son, repent of our sins, and confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior. That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen

---Hope Bollinger

November 29, 2020 – Study Guide 13

**Lesson for Next Week – December 6, 2020 – Study Guide 1**

## **CALLED THROUGH HERITAGE**

Bible Background ♦ MATTHEW 1:1-17; HEBREWS 1  
Printed Text ♦ MATTHEW 1:1-6, 17-17; HEBREWS 1:1-5  
Devotional Reading ♦ PSALM 102:12-22

### **Daily Bible Readings**

#### **MONDAY**

God's Anointed Ruler of All Nations  
(Psalm 2)

#### **TUESDAY**

Blessed and Chosen in Christ  
(Ephesians 1:1-14)

#### **WEDNESDAY**

Christ, Head Over All People/Things  
(Ephesians 1:15-23)

#### **THURSDAY**

In the Family Line of David  
(Matthew 1:6-15)

#### **FRIDAY**

God Anoints Jesus King  
(Hebrews 1:6-9)

#### **SATURDAY**

Jesus, Creator and Eternal Ruler  
(Hebrews 1:10-14)

#### **SUNDAY**

Expectations of Jesus before His Birth  
(Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17; Hebrews 1:1-5)