

Scripture Reading:

Please go ahead and turn in your Bibles to **James 2, James 2** for our scripture reading today... We are in **James 2:1-13** for ...And I will ask you to please stand if you are able to do so for the reading of God's Word...

James 2:1-13

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

Slow Down. Fluctuate Volume and Tempo. Have strategic pauses

Introduction:

Good morning...It is great to be here at Calvary Bible Church...It is an honor to be here with all of you.

I hope all of you had a wonderful Christmas Holiday and all had a wonderful New Years Celebration...2018 has begun....

Several weeks ago I announced the future arrival of another Bradshaw...Bradshaw baby #3...Well, this past Tuesday we found out if it was a boy or girl...(Long Pause) But I plan to tell you at the end of the service...

Just kidding...We are having a girl...I can already see the arguments over the bathroom...

Thank you for being here this morning...We are all excited about what the Lord is doing here at Calvary. I appreciate every one of you for being here and it is an honor to be here with you this morning...

Let Us Pray...

ME:

Today, I'd like to talk to you about Favorites...About Favorites...

And if you step back and think about it.....We love having favorites...Our culture and especially our human nature are consumed with favorites...I mean really think about it...

I mean off the top of your head many of you know your favorites...I imagine many of you know your favorite candy or candy bar...My wife's is peanut butter M&Ms and much to my wife's shugrin my favorite is Whoppers...She still doesn't understand why but it is...

Many of have a favorite sports team, right? ROLL TIDE!! In the state of Alabama you can't be neutral...You MUST choose a favorite team...either Auburn or Alabama...And some people even cheer for a group of volunteers in Tennessee...

Many of us have a favorite restaurant...Most Likely 99% of us would say Little Rosie's...Many of you can list a place off the top of your heads that brings a smile to your face and wonderfully fills your belly...

Many of us here today have a favorite verse or passage, correct? Many of us have a verse that is our anchor...Many of us have a verse in our mind that speaks to us every time we are down in dumps or need a boost...

Yet, having favorites does not just stop at candy bars, restaurants or verses but even appears with people...Many of us here have a favorite friend...or what we call a best friend...Perhaps it is a brother or sister...Perhaps it is friends you met in grade school, in college or in

seminary...Perhaps this friend is elevated to best friends status because of their faithfulness to you even in the dark times of your life...Or They stood by you perhaps when other people did not...

Transition: Now friends, I want you to reach back for just a second...I want you to go back many, many years ago and reach back to your grade school days...I want you to reach back and remember a elementary or high school teacher that had a blatant favorite student...When I was in grade school we called these people the “teacher pet”...

ME:

The one I most vividly remember was Phillip...Phillip was everything many kids wish to be...

He was well behaved...At least in front of adults...He was polite and well-mannered...He was obedient to the commands of the teacher and was not difficult to deal with...

He was very smart...Him and I competed in this math flashcard game called Around the World and He was my arch nemesis...

He was athletic...He competed in national competitions over roller blading and soccer...

But the most vivid part of my memory of him was not his intelligence, giftedness or even athleticism...What I remember most about him was that he was my 5th grade teacher’s pet...

In 5th grade...He was the teacher pet...It seemed like every answer he gave was right...He was always volunteered to lead the line...He was always unfairly rewarded and never seemed to get in trouble...

My 5th grade teacher played favorites and everyone in the class recognize it...

Now Friends, what do you think was the result of the teacher playing favorites? Discord and dysfunction correct? Favoritism from the teacher was so obvious that it caused all other 25 students in the room to begin to despise Phillip and even despise the teacher...

Friends, Playing favorites caused discord, tension and dysfunction...

WE:

Transition: Yet friends, unfortunately, partiality, favorites and distinctions are not just realities in elementary school... But favoritism often invades and sows discord at work, at school, or even at home...Yet friends...There is one more place favoritism likes to exist...Favoritism isn’t just out there but it can also be in here...

Friends, the slow divisive force of favoritism invades sooooo many churches... I have personally known many churches, many Christian leaders and organizations that struggle with playing favorites...

Transition: Yet friends, where the invaders of partiality, favoritism and distinctions the devastation of discord, tension and dysfunction are sure to follow...

Transition:

Transition: But Friends favoritism is not just a modern problem...In fact, favoritism was a root problem 2000 years ago...

In the passage today, James addresses the issue of favoritism in a Christian church 2000 years ago...

And today's passage...James essentially answers the question, "How to...How to overcome favoritism?" "How do we overcome and eradicate favoritism in life and in church...?" In his pursuit to answer this question, James in James Chapter 2 gives us 4 practical steps....4 practical steps to overcome favoritism...

Transition: So please come with me to James 2 and we will be looking at verses 1-13 this morning...

GOD:

Review:

Yet friends, before we exegetically dive in...let us remember the context of the passage...Always remember what Pastor Garry used to say... "Any Bible text taken out of context is a pretext for heresy..."

So what is the context of James 2? The context of James 2 is found in James chapter 1, and in James 1, the author addresses the Jewish Christians in his day in three main ways...

First, in verses 2-12, James addresses a Christian's proper RESPONSE to Trials...
He then addresses in verses 13-18, a Christian's proper RESPONSE to temptations and lies about God that rush in when trials come one's way...

Finally, in last week's passage, in James 1 verses 19-27 James addresses a Christian's proper RESPONSE to the Word of God...That every time we encounter the Word of God...Every time we read it, hear it preached, hear it taught, every time the Lord brings a memory verse to mind...Every time we encounter the Word of God...**We should respond in 4 ways...**

Response #1: Listen- Verse 19, "Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger..."

Then Response #2 and #3 both come in verse 21..."Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains in wickedness...Let us receive the implanted Word which is able to save your souls..."

Response #2: Rid- When we walk into the Bible, it should cause us to look in the mirror and take off any sin

Response #3: Receive: When we walk into the Bible, we should receive it and water the Word of God in our hearts to lead us to grow to maturity...

Response #4: Do: Which comes in verse 22... “But prove yourselves to be doers of the Word and not just hearers who delude (or deceive) themselves...”

Transition: And then James turns the page... James opens the next chapter with the new issue of playing favorites and James essentially answers the question, “As Christians, How do we overcome favoritism?”

Transition: So, Come with me to James 2 and let us begin in verses 1-3 with the overall command and the situation...the overall command and the Situation...

GOD:

Read verse 1-3, “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your ^[a]assembly with a gold ring and dressed in ^[b]fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you ^[c]pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,”...”

Notice with me the overall command for verses 1-13 here... Notice verse 1, “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.”

This very verse is the overall, central command for this section of the text... What is the overall command? “Not to hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with favoritism...”

Literally, the word favoritism is a compound Greek word meaning, “face-taking” which literally means to make judgments on the basis of a person’s status, appearance or other external matters... “(McCartney, James, 136)...

Yet notice something very interesting... Notice what James calls Jesus again...He calls Him “Lord” = kurios- denotes “master”, and Christ “christos” which denotes the Messiah...

But notice what adjective James adds to Jesus’ name... “Glorious”...

But friends, watch this... Listen to the significance of James’ addition of “glorious”...Listen to what one scholar states, “‘Glory’ in Biblical literature refers to a manifestation of attributes, importance, and honor particularly of God...(so James once again is proclaiming Jesus to be fully divine...Fully God)...The scholar continues, “In calling Jesus “glorious Lord” ,James effectively ascribes the divine attributes and importance of Christ...” “By James, pointing out here that Jesus is the object of our faith, James wishes to remind his hearers that faith in Christ requires us to also exhibit Jesus’ divine character, which plays no favorites...” (McCartney, James, 137)

Essentially, James in verse 1 is stating that having favorites amongst ourselves in the church body is wrong because it is inconsistent with the person of Christ which we believe for

our salvation and should seek to become like...In other words, if Jesus didn't play favorites so Christians shouldn't either...

Transitions: **But what is interesting** too about this passage, is that James first gives us the overall command in verse 1 and then provides us the exact favoritism situation in verses 2-3...Look at it again,

Read verses 2-3, “**For if a man comes into your** ^[a]assembly (or more literally “your synagogue...”) with a gold ring and dressed in ^[b]fine (literally bright) clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you ^[c]pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,”

What are the Jewish Christians doing when they gather together?

Action #1: They pay special attention to the rich person and place them in the position of a favored guest...

Action #2: They ignore the one in dirty clothes...They put the poor man at their footstool which is a place of subjugation and honestly a place of embarrassment...

But what are their two action based on? It is based on outward appearance, right...Their favoritism is not even based upon spirituality, authority, nor position...But is merely based upon outward appearance...Fine and Filthy clothes...

But friends, let us all be a bit transparent for a second...We all at times are just like these Jewish Christians...We all at times struggle with favoritism...Every single one of us...You, you, you, you, you, you, you struggle with favoritism...

But let us now ask the deeper question... “Why do we struggle with favoritism? “Why is it natural for us to find a clique or favorite group and stick to it...?”

Transition: I find that there are **two main reasons** we naturally gravitate into favorite groups and “cliques”...

Reason #1: It's comfortable...It's comfortable...Let us all be honest...It is comfortable sitting with the same people every week...It's comfortable talking to the same friends we've had for 30 years **AND IT IS uncomfortable** going up to someone you don't know and introducing yourself...It is uncomfortable...It even uncomfortable for me believe it or not...

It is uncomfortable asking someone for perhaps a second time what their name is...Right? But that's ok...It's ok to get outside our comfort zone...It is okay welcoming someone you don't know...It is okay with asking for the 5th time what someone's name is...

In fact...It isn't just “Okay” but it is actually being more like Christ...Avoiding distinctions, avoiding favoritism is being like Christ...

Yet, the second reason is far more self-centered...Many people struggle with favoritism out of

personal benefit...

Reason #2: Personal benefit...Personal Benefit...

Let us all be honest once again for just a second...Let us take off the self-protective jacket for just a second...I imagine everyone of us have either befriended or avoided someone for its personal benefit...

Perhaps, you befriended your boss's boss not even because you liked him...But maybe perhaps it was to get a promotion...

Or perhaps, you purposefully avoided an employee for the opposite reason...Perhaps there was a co-worker that was the ugly duckling...The rotten egg...That is wildly disliked by the boss's boss and you are afraid that you will have guilt by association...

But ladies and gentlemen...Think about this text...The exact reason the Jews of the first century are playing favorites is because of its personal benefits...They think it personally benefits them to associate with the rich man and avoid the poor man....

Friends, both of reasons for favoritism are against the Bible and against the character of Christ...Friends, we should not be concerned for the opinion of another...Truly, the only opinion that matters is "That Guys" (point to roof)...Right?

After all, we are truly only accountable to Him...He has the final Word...Friends, let us emulate Christ and not make distinctions...Friends, let us not make distinctions amongst ourselves...

Transition: But then in verses 4, James moves beyond the overall command and the situation but begins to provide us with practical instruction to **overcome favoritism and step #1** is found in verse 4...

Let us look at it together...

Read verse 4, "Have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?"

What does James essentially do in verse 4? He points out reality right? He points the fact they ARE making distinctions among themselves...He wants them to realize their reality...

How do we overcome favoritism? Friends, Step #1: Realize Reality...Realize Reality...or another way to say it...**Realize the problem...**James in verses 2-4 is trying to get them to realize the problem...Right? He is pointing out specifics of what they are doing...He is giving them concrete examples...

And he is so detailed that he is pointing out their motives... Their motives are not pure... Their motives are self benefiting and opposite of that of Christ...

Friends...(long pause) it is hard to realize one's own baldness without a mirror...Without a mirror, it is hard to realize one's own wrinkles and imperfections...What I mean by this is that it is difficult to see one's imperfections of playing favorites **without looking into the mirror and realizing reality...**

I imagine...If I went up to my elementary teacher and asked her if she had a favorite...She would probably vehemently deny it...Although everyone else saw it...

Friends the hardest and most essential part to overcoming the issue of favoritism is realizing reality...And I believe that is why I believe James addresses in great detail their reality with verses 2-4...

Transition: So, Step #1 to overcome favoritism is to Realize Reality... Then, James gives us Step #2 in verses 5-7...**Look at Step #2** in verses 5-7

Read verses 5-7, “Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor ^[e]of this world *to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?* ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into ^[e]court? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?”

Step #2 is to Recognize the Truth...Step #2 to overcoming favoritism is to Recognize the Truth...What is the truth that James reveals to them in verses 5-7?

To them: Truth #1: God chose the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom... The reality is that the people they are prejudiced AGAINST are the very ones God plans to reward...

To provide even more clarity...One commentator adds...Listen to this... Watch this... “James expects his readers to know very well that God has chosen the poor in worldly things to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom...There is however, no inherent virtue in poverty that simply translates to faith...However the poor in respect to worldly things have lots of practice relying on God...and thus often have in general a deeper knowledge of God than those not so poor...” (McCartney, James, 141)

And Truth #2: What were the rich doing to them? Truth #2: The rich were the very people that oppress them...The very ones the favor are the very ones destroying their lives...Talk about backward thinking...

Transition: Yet fortunately James does not just stop with Steps #1 and #2 in verses 4-7 but continues with Step #3 in verse 8...

Read verse 8, “If, however, you are fulfilling the ^[i]royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well.”

Verse 8 is very interesting...Because in the midst of their struggle...What does James remind them of? In the midst of their struggle, James commissions them to **Refocus the Great**

Commandment...

Step #3 to overcome favoritism: is to Refocus, Refocus on the Great Commandment

He reminds them the goal of their Christian conduct...He reminds them of their goal for every single synagogue meeting...For every single church meeting they are to “To Love your neighbor as yourself...”

The word for “love” here is a sacrificial love...Agapao...the verbal form of agape...And the word “neighbor” here refers to not the next door neighbor but literally anyone who is physically near you...Anyone you can reach out and physically touch...

In other words...The Great Commandment is essentially that we are to love all those we come in contact with...We must love them as ourselves...Think about it...Who are all the people on a daily basis we can physically reach out and touch? Grocery store clerks, people and workers in the retirement home, and even people right here in this giant room...Friends let us love in here and out there sacrificially...

Friends, can I be frank with you for just a second? As a young man, when I came to church...I made a fundamental mistake...

As a young man...when I came to church, the mistake I made was that I was only concerned for one person... “Point to Yourself”...ME... I even remember asking myself questions...The question... “Why did no one talk to me? Why did no one shake my hand? Why did the preacher not greet me?”

But friends, I specifically remember the exact day my entire outlook on church turned upside down...While I was in college, I distinctly remember visiting another church’s service for college students...I distinctly remember thinking to myself that no one was saying hello...That no one cared if I was even there...That no one was friendly and warm...

But then my world turned upside down with one simple thought and this thought still shapes me today...I distinctly remember feeling like the Lord placed that thought in my mind...“Ya know, Byron, church is not about you...It’s about me and others...Reach out to someone else and welcome them...” THIS WAS THE VERY FIRST TIME I EVER WALKED IN THE DOORS BUT THE LORD COMMISSIONED ME TO WELCOME and LOVE OTHERS...

And Guess what happened? My experience totally changed...When I sought welcome and love others...I then in turn felt loved and welcomed...

But Friends, can I pry a bit? It isn’t someone else’s responsibility to reach across the aisle and bridge the gap...It is your responsibility...It is my responsibility...Let us not place blame for distinctions on someone else not making an effort...We each, individual, must make the effort...

It is our responsibility to avoid favoritism and to reach outside our comfort zone to love others...

Friends...When we gather together...Let us be concerned not for ourselves but let us be concerned for others always and forever...For when you seek to meet the needs of others then your needs will be met...

Transition: So, how do we overcome favoritism and increase unity in the church today?

Step #1: Realize Reality, Step #2: Recognize the Truth, Step #3: Refocus the Great Commandment...- to Love Your neighbor as Yourself..And then James gives us the final step...Step #4 in verses 9-13...

Read verses 9-13, “But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the [j]law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole [k]law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT COMMIT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the [l]law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy [m]triumphs over judgment.”

Step #4 is to Remember Judgment...Remember Judgment...Specifically, remember pending judgment from the law...

What does James say about anyone who shows partiality? I mean look at it...Don’t take my word for it...Look at verse 9...”**But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the [j]law as transgressors”** Anyone who shows favoritism is committing sin...**Ouch...**And if they sin once...The stain of sin tarnishes their soul condemning them as a sinner and a foreigner from God desperately needing redemption...**Even bigger Ouch...**

But friends notice the text with me...Notice that James quotes an Old Testament verse in verse 8 and then again in verse 11...Why? ...Why does James bring up the Great Commandment quoted from Leviticus 19:18 then quote Do not commit adultery and do not commit murder...which are what? They are two of the 10 commandments found in Exodus 20...Why does he do this?

I believe James is trying to prove the sinfulness of partiality...I believe James is saying this...”In the same way you believe adultery and murder is wrong based on Exodus 20...So to is favoritism based on Leviticus 19:18...”

As murder is a clear violation of Old Testament Law so is favoritism...

Notice the final step, Step #4, which he adds in verse 12... “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty...”

Essentially, James is reminding his audience to remember judgment...To remember they will be judged by the Law which denounces favoritism...

Transition: Friends, let us not play favorites...Friends let us rather overcome it by Realizing

Reality...by recognizing the truth, by refocusing on the Great Commandment and by Remembering the pending judgment...

Transition: But friends we must still answer a question...Every Sunday toward the end of the message we enter the Application section...So, we must answer the question “So What?”...”How do I apply this to my life?”

You:

How do we apply Step #1: Realize Reality...

- We must first look in the mirror...Right? Realizing reality requires a Reality Check...It requires a look in the mirror and Realizing Areas of your life that partiality might exist...everyone of us can struggle with favorites, partiality and distinctions...We all can struggle with it even pastors...

How do we apply Step #2 to Recognize the Truth?

#1: We must recognize our motivation...What motivates us to play favorites? Is it to stay comfortable or out of personal benefit?

#2: We must recognize God’s reward...Friends, we are ultimately accountable to Him...not to them...Let us remember God does not care if one is rich...God rewards based on faithfulness and fruit...

Then we come to application for Step #3: to Refocus on the Great Commandment

And Friends, I’d like to make two simple suggestions to implement a refocus on the Great Commandment...

#1: Memorize it...We all should memorize the Great Commandment... It actually quite simple... “You shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind...And you shall Love your Neighbor as yourself...”

#2: Write it down somewhere...Take an Expo marker and it on your bathroom mirror... “Love God; Love others...” Put it in your calendar...

#3: And friends...Let us not just hear it but do it...

Step #4: Remember Judgment...Friends, in the same way that we know judgment and consequences come for committing murder and adultery...In the same way, let us remember that judgment and consequences come from favoritism...

Friends, let us avoid partiality in all areas of our lives and especially in this gathering...

WE:

Friends, as I close...I’d like to make a statement...Friends...allow me to be a bit vulnerable...As I look at scripture and as I look at this church...I realize two things...I LOVE the scripture and I LOVE this church...

I admire the love and respect I receive every time I walk in this door...I love the care you show one another and your steadfast dedication to the **Word of God**...

Yet Friends, I see a future...The vision I see through the lens of scripture is for this church to continue to grow in our love and warmth for one another... That every time we come in this building that **we set ourselves aside and we sincerely love one another**...

Friends, That we embrace people, approach people in friendship, and love people that may be different than us...

Friends, you know what else I see for us in the future? You know what else I hope happens through the preaching and application of God's Word?

I hope that we a first time visitor leaves this building saying... "Man...I can't believe those people...Those people love the Lord, Love the Word, they loved me and they loved one another...I hope our unity and love is intoxicating and irresistible to all that enter this building...

And finally, I hope that every time a non-believer enters this church...that they can look at our LIVES And Say..."Man, I want what they have...I want to believe in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior BECAUSE I SEE HIM IN THEIR LIVES...Because I see their love...

My prayer is that our love for God, our Love for Others and our disdain for favoritism drives non-believers to their knees...

John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, by your love for one another." By OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER...Friends, Our Love is the spotlight of the Gospel to the dark world...

Friends, we are on a mission for unity and love... In order to create a warm environment which non-believers and believers love to be part of we must overcome favoritism, partiality and distinctions...Join as we warmly embrace others, as we set ourselves aside and as we pursue our Savior hand in hand...

Let us Pray...