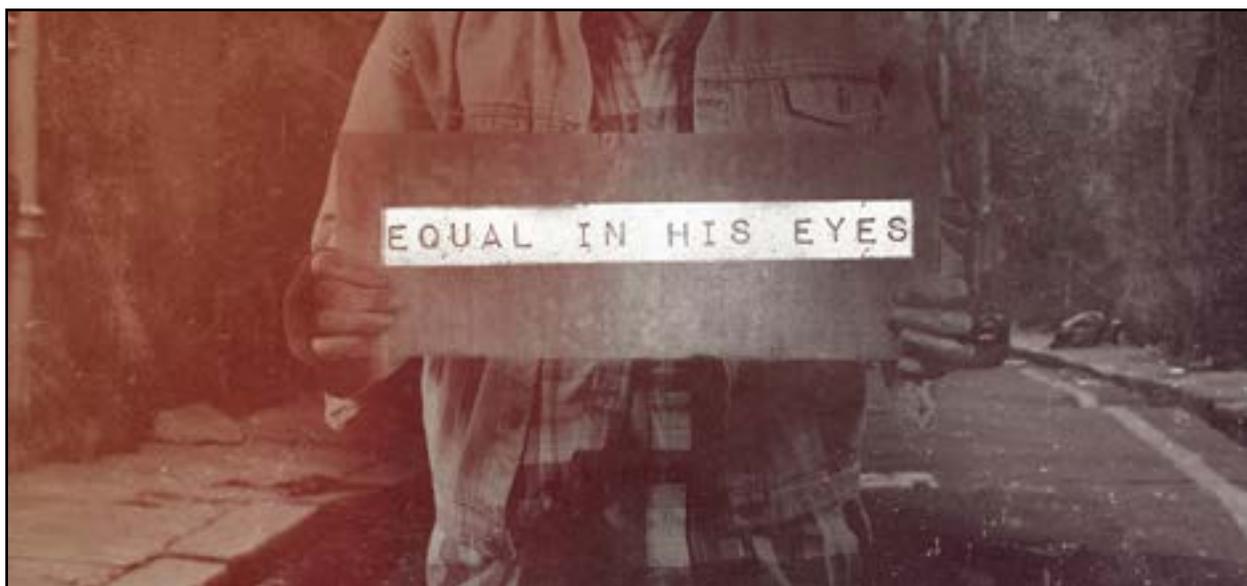




## Leading Families Toward Spiritual Maturity



### This Week's Core Virtue

***Possessions (Luke 16:11-12): I seek to maintain an eternal perspective on money and possessions, realizing God has give me all that I have, and that he expects me to manage it wisely for His glory.***

There's an old say, "It's easy to spot sin...in someone else!" There's truth in that statement. We have a razor sharp eye to spot the slightest hint of sinfulness in everyone else, but we often find ourselves struggling to find even the smallest hint of sinfulness to confess. Sure, we acknowledge the "big sins," but one of James' points in this wee's text is that sin is sin, and if we are guilty of even one sin, we are guilty of sin.

As we read the pages of Scripture, we see that with

the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived a sinless life, the Bible is filled with great men and women who were sinners. Yet, even in the Bible we see great men and women who were blinded to particular sin in their life. Often, these are referred to as prevailing or besetting sins. For Abraham, it was lying. For Moses, it was his temper, For Solomon, it was women.

The trouble with besetting sins is that it is something we are prone to, yet it fall between the cracks in our conscious. It is often an habitual sin we have difficulty identifying. You can usually spot when you are covering for your besetting sin because it is usually something you willingly confess that is sin, usually using the word "struggle" in doing so, yet fall to the same sin over and over. Again, this is something we all must deal with in one form or another.

*Continued on page 2...*

## Step 1 ENCOUNTER—God’s Word to put yourself in touch with him.

James 2:1-13 (ESV)

### The Sin of Partiality

<sup>1</sup> My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. <sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> 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,” <sup>4</sup> have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup> 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? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

<sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup> So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Mark the text to highlight the themes and key points.

#### The Sin of Partiality

**2** My brothers, **1** show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** the Lord of glory. **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, **4** “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, **5** “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” **4** have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? **5** Listen, my beloved brothers, **6** has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, **7** which he has promised to those who love him? **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? **8** If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, **9** “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 but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. **11** For he who said, **11** “Do not commit adultery,” also said, **11** “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. **12** So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. **13** For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

*Continued from page 1...*

Take a person who struggles with lying, for example. When she is caught, she is quick to confess, but it doesn’t change her behavior. Friends and family usually observe, “I don’t know what’s wrong with Suzie! She lies when the truth makes more sense!” That is a besetting sin. Consider the person like Moses who struggles with his temper: he acknowledges it’s a problem, and it’s under control *most of the time*, but when it rears its ugly head, there can be life-long damage done in a two minute outburst. That is a besetting sin.

We are all prone to besetting sin. In fact, the Apostle Paul warns us to be cautious when we self evaluate ourselves and find no hint of sin lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

I believe partiality (or prejudice) is a sin that can be a besetting sin that is both habitual and falls easily into our blind spot. Why? Because we often feel justified in

our prejudice. James wisely uses the economic difference between people to describe the sin of partiality in everyday-terms. This is something we can all relate to when it comes to partiality. Who among us isn’t tempted to be extra nice and be on our best behavior when someone of both wealth and importance is visiting?

If there is an over-arching lesson from this passage of Scripture, it is this: we are all created equal in God’s eyes, and we need to be careful to not judge based on the exteriors, but to see people as God sees us, through eyes of both love and mercy. James ends with a beautiful thought: “mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Ask the Holy Spirit to graciously and mercifully show you your besetting sins this week, including areas where you are prejudiced in your view of others. May we seek to live our lives by the Royal Law and the Law of Liberty, loving God and loving others without prejudice.—Chris Eller

## Step 2 ENQUIRE—the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Use the questions below to guide your reading and to ensure you are grasping the key lessons and themes of the text. This is called *Inductive Bible Study*, in which you ask the questions, *Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *Why?*, *When?*, *How?* as you read the text. (Also known as the “5Ws and an H.”)

1. What practical example did James use to illustrate how favoritism was practiced in the church? (2:1-4)
2. What has God promised to the poor of this world? (2:5)
3. What does the church do to the poor person when it shows favoritism toward the rich? (2:6)
4. What do rich people have a history of doing to people in the church? (2:6-7)
5. What is the royal law found in Scripture? (2:8)
6. What does practicing favoritism do to a person who is trying to keep the law? (2:9)
7. What does a person have to do to be considered a lawbreaker? (2:10-11)
8. By what standards should a person speak and act? (2:12)
9. What promise is made to people who judge without mercy? (2:13)
10. Why should we be merciful? (2:13)

### Summary Notes

*Write a one paragraph summary of this week's text including key areas of interest and significant instruction.*

***Consult the commentary on the text and the notes following this page for additional help.***

#### About The Compass

The Compass is a ministry of First Family Church and is edited by Chris Eller. The purpose of The Compass is to help you better grasp the truth of the biblical text from which the weekend sermon is based.

The Compass also connects readers with the principles of discipleship found in 10 Core Beliefs (doctrine) 10 Core Practices (disciplines), and 10 Core Virtues (spiritual fruit).

If you would like The Compass delivered each week to your email box, you can to to [www.thecompass.life](http://www.thecompass.life) for a free subscription.

## Step 3 EXPLORE—the commentaries to answer the questions.

# The Christian and His Brethren

## A. Partiality: A Sin Against the Lord (2:1-7)

### 1. The Problem Stated (2:1-3)

*An Indication of the Problem (2:1).* My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.”

That is an awkward sentence. It can be rendered, “Stop holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect to persons.” In other words, faith in the Lord Jesus is incompatible with partiality and discrimination. We cannot combine snobbery with faith in Christ. The two do not mix.

Paul used the word for “respect of persons” to remind the Roman church that “there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). God is neither partial nor prejudiced in His dealings with the human race. The color of a person’s skin, the size of his bank balance, the number of degrees he has after his name, or the place he holds in the social hierarchy leaves God completely unimpressed. The Lord Jesus was as polite to the woman at the well (John 4) as He was to Nicodemus (John 5). He was as gracious to the woman who touched the hem of His garment as He was to Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. He was as open to poor, blind Bartimaeus as He was to the rich young ruler. He had no “respect of persons.” He was as honest and forthright with the Syro-Phoenician woman as He was with Pilate. He treated everyone with the same love, the same interest, and the same care and concern. He was not condescending when He was dealing with the publicans and sinners, and He was not cowed or compromising when He was dealing with those who occupied the seat of power. He gave the outcasts and the untouchables the same gentle, loving compassion that He extended to the scribes and the Pharisees. Sometimes the Lord did not approve of peoples’ behavior, but He looked beyond that to the individuals and their deepest needs and treated them with dignity no matter what.

*An Illustration of the Problem (2:2-3).* James parades three people before us. First, he shows us the prosperous man: “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel...” (2:2a). The word for “gold ring” is *chrusodaktulios*. It occurs only here. It means literally “a gold-ringed” person. The implication is that he let everyone see that he has a gold ring. It was on display. He was also wearing “goodly” apparel. The word is *lampros*, meaning “bright,” or “shining.” The word is used of

the “gorgeous robe” that Herod and his soldiers flung in mockery over the shoulders of Christ (Luke 23:11). The word means “resplendent.” Cornelius used the same word in describing the “bright clothing” in which his heavenly visitor was arrayed (Acts 10:30). We get the idea that the man whom James describes was outstandingly well dressed.

Then James show us the poor man: “And there come in also a poor man in vile raiment” (2:2b). The word here means to be destitute or in want. It is used of Lazarus, the beggar, who sat at the gate of the rich man, hoping eagerly that some crumbs from the rich man’s table might fall his way (Luke 16:20). The poor man’s clothes are described as “vile raiment.” The word suggests old, shabby clothing. This man, evidently, was “down at the heels.”

Both of these men arrive at the local church at the same time. (The word used is *sunagoge*, the usual word for a synagogue. At the time James wrote, Jewish Christians possibly were still attending worship at the synagogue to hear the Law of Moses read [Acts 15:21], just as Jewish Christians in Jerusalem still attended the temple.) However, James refers to “your” synagogue, which suggests that, whether in the synagogue or somewhere else, a distinctively Christian gathering is indicated. When Gentiles began to enter the church in large numbers, the active hostility of unbelieving Jews took fire against the entire Christian body. This invasion of the church by Gentiles troubled the Christian Jews too.

In any case, both men arrive at the meeting place simultaneously. The prosperous man appears and, behind him, the pitiful man. The usher apparently had a well-developed “respect of persons”: “And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay [lampros] clothing,” James declares, “and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool” (2:3). Both men, it would seem, are strangers. The preferential treatment in the one case and the punitive treatment in the other case were based solely on the outward appearances of the two men. Regard and attention was lavished on the well-to-do man. He was ushered to his seat as though he were a prince. The poor man, however, was given short shrift and dumped in the most undesirable seat in the meeting place.

And it still happens. Some years ago, I met a woman who liked to put this kind of behavior to the test. She would select a fashionable church and put on old, ill-fitting clothes, shabby shoes, and a dowdy hat. She would arrange her hair in an unsightly bun and present herself at the church. Her main interest was in finding out what kind of treatment she would receive at the door, either

*Continued on page 5 ...*

upon arrival or at the end of the service. Usually, little or no attention was paid to her at all. No one cared if she came or went. Usually, she received a perfunctory handshake at the door; the preachers eyes being busy elsewhere.

The next Sunday, she would present herself at the same church in a different guise, with styled hair, and wearing an expensive suit with a mink fur stole and expensive jewelry. On the way out, the pastor would be effusive.

“We’re so glad to have you with us. This must be your first visit. We do hope you’ll come back. What is your name?”

She would look at him. “Oh, no, this is not my first visit. I was here last Sunday. As a matter of fact, you shook hands with me at the door then too.”

“Surely not!”

“Oh yes. But, you see, last Sunday I dressed in old clothes, and you really didn’t see me at all. You said a perfunctory, ‘Good morning.’ Then you hurried on to the lady behind me, who was much more stylishly dressed than I was. And, no, I shall not be back.”

## 2. The Problem Studied (2:4-7)

*The Christian Perspective Conveyed (2:4-6a).* First, the indictment is recorded: “Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” (2:4). Aren’t you making class distinctions in your mind? Aren’t you setting yourselves up as able to judge the true quality of other people? Aren’t you having evil thoughts?

These are serious indictments. Just because a person is better dressed than another person or has a better vocabulary and more refined manners does not prove him to be a better person.

After C. S. Lewis became a Christian, he decided that it would be appropriate for him to join a local church. There he found himself in the company of that very collection of his neighbors he had formerly sought diligently to avoid. The local grocer came sidling up to him to unctuously present him with a hymnbook. He looked around him and noticed that the man over there had boots that squeaked, the woman in front of him was wearing a ridiculous hat, and the man behind him sang off-key. He found himself drawing the unwarranted conclusion that these peoples’ faith must somehow be ridiculous. Only later did he learn that some of these people were, in fact, devout, well-taught, and valiant Christians—believers whom Satan himself had reason to fear. It is a great mistake to judge people by their appearance.

Next, the indictment is reviewed: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (2:5). Of course, He has. All of the apostles were poor men; so were many

of the prophets. James himself was a poor man. The book of Judges teems with “nobodies” whom God chose to use. A person might be poor financially or socially but “rich in faith.” That condition represents present wealth. A person who is rich in faith holds in his hand the key to the vaults of heaven. The unlimited resources of the Godhead are at his disposal to accomplish the plans and purposes of God. A person might be poor in this world and yet be no less an heir to the kingdom of God! That’s prospective wealth, to be “a joint-heir with Jesus Christ,” as Paul would put it (Rom. 8:17).

Moses was a poor man. Admittedly, he had been raised in a palace on the Nile, but he was the son of a slave, and, when God found him, he was a fugitive with a price on his head, a mere shepherd who was wandering on the back side of the desert. But he was rich in faith. His faith had cost him the throne of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-26), but he was heir to a kingdom just the same—as Pharaoh discovered when Moses reappeared armed with might and miracle.

David was a poor man, the youngest son of an insignificant farmer, with nothing but a song in his heart and a sling in his hand. But he was rich in faith and able to proclaim that faith in the dark valley itself. And he was heir to the kingdom of Israel—something that drove King Saul to frenzy.

Jacob was a poor man. His father was rich, true enough; but he himself was a penniless nobody when he showed up at Padan-Aram. He was so poor that he had to sell himself as an indentured servant to his Uncle Laban to get the wife he wanted. But he was rich in faith and had an eye on the Abrahamic covenant. That was something that Esau so discounted that he sold whatever rights he had to it for a bowl of stew. Jacob, however, became heir to the kingdom, and his sons became the patriarchs of the tribes and of the purposes of God.

We could go through all of the annals of Israel and the church to show how God has “chosen the poor of this world” to accomplish His purposes down here. Martin Luther was a poor man. John Bunyan was a poor man, and so were D. L. Moody and George Müller. Yet, they were all rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom! That is not to say that God cannot and does not use some great and gifted men who are rich in this world’s goods. But they are the exception rather than the rule. It is the height of folly to despise poor people, especially in the church. We ought, rather, to sing with Hattie E. Buell the song of the Christian poor, “A Child of the King”:

*I once was an outcast stranger on earth,  
A sinner by choice, and an alien by birth!  
But I’ve been adopted, my name’s written down,  
An heir to a mansion, a robe and a crown.*

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Finally, the indictment is repeated: “But ye have despised the poor” (2:6a). James cannot seem to let the matter rest. The word for “despised” here suggests that the people in the church were insulting the poor and shaming them. The same word is used to describe the Jerusalem apostles after the authorities had imprisoned them, beaten them, and threatened them. They “departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame [to be dishonored] for his name” (Acts 5:41).

The Lord used the same word in the parable of the faithless husbandmen, a parable that depicts the attitude of the nation toward God’s prophets in the past and toward God’s Son in the present. The Lord says that one of God’s messengers they treated “shamefully” and sent him away empty (Luke 20:11). The Lord also used the word when the Jews accused Him of being a Samaritan and having a demon. He said, “I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me” (John 8:49). Snobbery seems to have reached epidemic proportions in the Jerusalem church. Evidently, James thought it necessary to hammer home the fact that such behavior was reprehensible in a believer. No room existed in the church for racial discrimination, class distinction, or economic differences.

***The Christian Perspective Confirmed (2:6b-7).*** James adds a practical note. Some rich people, he says, bully Christians: “Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?” (2:6b). Something about great wealth is corrosive to character. Money can buy most things in this world. People who can command large sums of money often become arrogant. People whom they cannot buy, they bully. Those whom they cannot bully, they belittle. Those whom they cannot belittle, they try to bury. The word that James uses here for “oppress” means literally “to exercise power” over someone. The word is used to describe the Lord’s healing of “all that were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38). The Bible gives many and varied examples of this oppression of the enemy (Luke 13:16; 2 Cor. 12:7; Rev. 2:10). In James’s experience, rich men often enough were willing to do Satan’s work for him. It was not only silly but also sinful, then, to give preferential treatment to a person just because he was rich.

Some people not only bully Christians by “exercising power” over them and oppressing them but also blaspheme Christ: “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?” James says (2:7). Because rich people often become intoxicated with their power to manipulate their fellowman, some of them go on to blaspheme the Lord Himself. In the days of the early church, when James lived, the rich and powerful Sadducees were the ones who persecuted the church, dragging Christians into court and saying the most terrible things about the Lord Jesus.

So, then, partiality is a sin against the Lord.

## **B. Partiality: A Sin Against the Law (2:8-13)**

### **1. The Royal Law Defined (2:8)**

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.” This is a direct quotation from the Law of Moses: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:17-18).

Doubtless, James had often heard the various commandments of the law discussed at home and had heard much of the Lord’s teaching on the question of the law. It is not necessary for us simply to imagine that the Lord’s teachings and parables were spontaneously thought up and delivered on the spur of the moment. He had spent His whole life pondering the Word of God and formulating His doctrine and beliefs. In His public teaching, He drew on a vast storehouse of knowledge. That He had not discussed His thoughts and conclusions at home and at work, around the supper table and at the carpenter’s bench would be most unlikely. Although James might have heard from the apostles the Lord’s precepts, parables, and principles, doubtless he would have been familiar with many of them from many years of his personal and intimate relationship with Jesus as a member of the same family.

There is, of course, the Lord’s famous parable of the Good Samaritan. He delivered it in response to the challenge of “a certain lawyer.” It was a parable against racial and religious prejudice. The lawyer had put Christ to the test, asking Him what he should do to inherit eternal life. The Lord threw the ball back to him: “What is written in the law?” He asked.

The lawyer knew his Bible: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind,” he said, giving the commandment (Deut. 6:4-5) that summarizes man’s duty to God. He added, “and thy neighbour as thyself,” giving the commandment that summarizes our duty to each other.

The Lord bluntly replied, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:25-28).

If we are going to get to heaven by doing something, that is heaven’s minimum requirement. The astute lawyer knew that he could keep neither of these commandments, so he looked for a loophole. “Who is my neighbour?” he demanded.

The Lord replied with a parable that showed the utter hypocrisy of both priest and Levite (the lawyer who was challenging Jesus was a Levite) when confronted with

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a man in desperate need. Then along came a Samaritan who might have been motivated understandably, by both racial and religious prejudices, to pass by the unfortunate man. Instead, he helped him fully and freely.

The Lord then challenged the lawyer. “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him?”

Grudgingly, and refusing to acknowledge the fact that the benefactor was a detested Samaritan, the lawyer mumbled, “He that shewed mercy on him.”

Then came the final thrust: “Go, and do thou likewise.”

James heartily agreed: “Fulfil the royal law,” he said. The royal law was not the one that gave commandment concerning circumcision; it was not the law sanctifying the Sabbath; it was not the law enforcing dietary discrimination—as dear as these laws were to the Jews, even Christian Jews. The royal law commands believers to love other people without regard to class, condition, country, or creed.

Paul would agree with James. “Love one another,” he said, “for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:8-10).

The spirit of this “royal law” runs very deep. Here you are, coming home from work one day when, on alighting from the bus, you notice that the sky ahead is black with smoke. “Hello!” you say. “It looks as though there is a house on fire.” Just then, with sirens blaring, the fire truck roars by. You hurry your steps and turn a corner. Now you can see a crowd of people up ahead, and the fire truck is unloading its men and equipment. “It’s on my block!” you say, as you break into a run. Then you notice that it is your house that’s on fire. “Praise the Lord!” you exclaim. “I’m so glad it’s not my neighbor’s house.”

So a person would react if he were motivated by the royal law. That is a rare person indeed.

## 2. The Royal Law Defied (2:9-13)

### *A Very Great Principle (2:9-11).*

#### *(1) an Example (2:9)*

“But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced [convicted] of the law as transgressors.” So, there it is, out in the open. To discriminate against people is sin. The word here for “transgressors” means literally “one who oversteps.” A transgressor breaks through a boundary. He goes too far. He breaks God’s law. God does not want cliques in His church. Those who belong to cliques go too far.

This is one advantage that the church had over the synagogue: it was able to start with a clean slate. In his

book *The Source*, James Michener tells of a Jewish boy who grew up ostracized by society because he was an illegitimate child. The Law of Moses was explicit: “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord” (Deut. 23:2). It was a law that was intended to secure the sanctity of sex and the strength of family life.

The rabbis went to work on this prohibition, expounded it, amplified it, and probed all of its nuances and ramifications. They came up with a thousand ways to make life intolerable for the victim and invented extraordinary measures for getting around them.

As long as the young man in Michener’s story was small, it was not so bad, although the stigma of his birth clung to him. But as he grew older, he was forced to shoulder an increasingly intolerable burden. The full horror of his situation dawned upon him when he faced the fact that, as a bastard and a social outlaw, he could not marry a respectable Jewish girl. The parents of the girl, the rabbis, and the community as a whole militated against any such unthinkable arrangement. Then, in the midst of his grief and bitterness, he found the church! Here was a group of people, emancipated from the law, both able and willing to receive even a person such as him heartily and without reservation into its fellowship. It opened up a new life.

James is at pains, through thirteen verses of his epistle, to see that the church remained that way—free from prejudice, discrimination, and partiality. Such attitudes are sinful in the sight of God.

#### *(2) an Explanation (2:10-11)*

James now confronts his readers with a revealing fact. First, the fact is declared: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (2:10). He becomes a lawbreaker. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Then the fact is demonstrated: “For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law” (2:11).

Indeed, a weak point exists in all of our efforts to live the kind of life that God demands. Each of us has our “besetting” (prevailing) sin. Solomon had a prevailing sin. In his case, it was women. He never did show any sense in the women he married. Moses had a prevailing sin, although it rarely showed—his temper. Ultimately, it kept him out of the Promised Land. Shimei had a prevailing sin—his foul mouth. Demas had a prevailing sin—his love for this present, evil world. Ananias and Sapphira had a deadly sin—the desire to keep up appearances. Judas had a fatal weakness—love of money. Pilate had an Achilles’ heel—his love of power. Achan had a fatal flaw—covetousness. Even James had his weak spot—his infatuation with the

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Mosaic Law and his inability to get beyond it. We would do well to find the chink in our armor, the weak link in our own chain of morality and spirituality.

Our weak spot! James put his finger right on the problem. A person might not be tempted along a dozen different lines. But just let him succumb to his weakness, and he is an instant sinner and a lawbreaker.

The apostle Paul confessed as much. He could run his eye down the Decalogue. Commandment after commandment passed before his conscience. Thou shalt have no other gods but God. Thou shalt have nothing to do with idolatry. Thou shalt not take God's name in vain. Thou shalt keep the Sabbath holy. Thou shalt honor thy father and mother. Thou shalt not kill or commit adultery or steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Paul could look complaisantly at each of them. In his mind, he thought that he had kept all of these commandments. Then came the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet," that is "Thou shalt have no evil desire," and Paul collapsed. "I had not known lust," he confessed, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." That was the one weak link in his chain of morality and religion, the rock upon which he made shipwreck. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," he said (Rom. 7:7-9).

It was the same with the rich young ruler. He wanted to know what to do to inherit eternal life. "Keep the commandments," Jesus said, putting the answer on the same ground as the question: "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and [summarizing them all], Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He quoted just the commandments that had to do with man's duty to man.

The young man said that he had kept all of those commandments from his youth up, but still he sensed that something was lacking in his life.

Jesus understood. He said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." That answer confronted the young man with a practical way to prove that he loved his neighbor as himself. "And come and follow me," Jesus added, confronting him with a practical way to show that he loved God with all of his heart. The rich young ruler backed off at once (Matt. 19:16-22).

We have the same problem. Certain sins do not tempt us at all. But we all have at least one area where we are vulnerable. To break just one of God's commandments, just one time, is all that it takes to constitute one a sinner and a transgressor. That is why God puts salvation on a different basis altogether than personal merit, law keeping, and good works. We just cannot make it that way. And God knows it. Our failure to keep all of the commandments makes us guilty of breaking all of the commandments. It takes only one blot on a page to ruin the copy. It takes only

one sour note to spoil the tune. It takes only one mistake in working out a mathematical problem to ruin the whole calculation. It takes only one sin to make a person guilty.

**A Very Good Policy (2:12-13).** James points now to God's magnanimity: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (2:12). That is, we should speak and act as those who will be judged by the law of liberty, by the fact that God has set us free from sin and free from the legalism that so many people embrace.

In the Gospels, we read of the occasion when the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Three facts are connected with that little animal. First, it had to be redeemed. The Law of Moses commanded that the firstborn of an ass had to be redeemed by a lamb, or its neck had to be broken. So, this little donkey was born under the sentence of death. Either the donkey had to die or a lamb had to die in its stead (Exod. 13:13).

It was redeemed, it had life, but it was tied to a post. It had life, but it did not have liberty. It needed to be released (Matt. 21:1-9). That is the condition that James has in mind. We are set free.

But, then, that donkey had to be ruled. It was not set free so that it could kick its heels in the air and gallop off wherever it pleased, over the hills and far away. It was brought to Christ and put under His authority and restraint. That illustrates the perfect law of liberty.

Jesus said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). "Take my yoke upon you," He said, "and learn of me.... for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29-30). Once that donkey was brought into obedience to Christ, it was able to serve Him. All it had to do was to lift Christ up where people could see Him. The little donkey thus carried the Christ of God into the city amid the hosannas of the multitude. It had learned the true meaning of liberty.

We are now free. Free from servitude of the law! Free to serve the Lord! Free to be under His authority! Free to lift Him up before men! Thus shall we anticipate with joyful expectation the day when we shall be judged by the law of liberty. What have we done with that liberty? That will be the question.

James concludes this section by pointing to God's mercy: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (2:13).

Mercy! What a tremendous word! It reminds us of the person who had his photograph taken and was not satisfied with the result. He complained to the photographer, "This picture doesn't do me justice."

The photographer replied, "Sir, what you need is not justice but mercy!"

That is what we all need all of the time. God offers us a choice between a fair trial or a free pardon. We would be wise to settle for His mercy.

*Continued on page 9 ...*

Mercy! It is the word of a guilty and suffering man. It is the word of someone who is in the hands of another, one who has the power to do what is requested—provide mercy.

God's mercy was what opened first the eyes and then the mouth of Balaam's donkey. Had that little creature not seen the threatening angel and acted accordingly, Balaam would have ridden on to judgment.

Mercy was what twice held back the hand of David from slaying the foul-mouthed Shimei who cursed him with such venom. Abishai, one of David's mighty men, had his sword out in a flash as soon as he heard Shimei's words.

"Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?" he asked. "Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" (2 Sam. 16:9; 19:21). David restrained Abishai. Little did Shimei know that nothing but David's mercy and grace saved him from immediate execution. David was all too aware of how much he himself owed to God's mercy.

Mercy was what moved the heart of the Lord Jesus to take up the cause of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). The scribes and the Pharisees were implacable. Had it been up to them, they would have executed the woman as the law decreed. But Jesus read their hearts. He knew their secret sins. He extended mercy—to them. He could have slain them where they stood. Then, without condoning or condemning her sin, He extended His mercy to the woman as well.

Without mercy! What a terrible thing! In the end, Shimei died without mercy (1 Kings 2:36-46). So did Joab, David's former brilliant but murderous general (1 Kings 2:28-35). What must it be to face the Great White Throne judgment, knowing that, when all of the facts are bared, there can be no mercy? "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28-29). It is a terrible prospect indeed.

So James sets the alternatives before us—mercy or no mercy. Judgment or mercy smiling in the very face of judgment. If we want to have mercy, we must show mercy.

The Lord said so Himself. He told the story of the king who demanded an accounting from his stewards. One man was arraigned before him who owed him ten thousand talents, an enormous sum. The king commanded that the man's property be liquidated and the man and all of his family be sold into slavery to pay off his debt. The servant pleaded for mercy and begged for time to pay off his debt. He received mercy. The king, moved to compassion, canceled the man's entire indebtedness.

The steward left the palace and sought out one of his fellow servants who owed him an insignificant sum. He

seized the man violently and demanded instant payment. He brushed aside the man's pleas for mercy and time and threw him into a debtors' prison. This action was reported to the king, who immediately summoned the steward and passed a fresh sentence upon him: "Oh thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" The king immediately withdrew his pardon and delivered the man to the jailers until he should pay all that he owed (Matt. 18:21-35).

If God's mercy does not touch our hearts and transform our lives, then His mercy and forgiveness might very well be withdrawn. The principle, as set forth by James, is that the person who makes no allowances for others will find that no allowance will be made for him either. God expects that recipients of His mercy will have a change of heart toward others. Such is James's final offering on the altar of truth regarding prejudice and partiality among God's people. Forgiveness is not the same as justification. A justified person is declared righteous. Justification is unconditional. It is based on justice, not mercy. It is the great theme of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

John Phillips, The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring the Epistle of James: An Expository Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 68-79.

# Daily Bible Reading Plan

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2/7	2/8	2/9	2/10	2/11	2/12	2/13
Ex. 26:1-27:21	Exodus 28:1-43	Exodus 29:1-30:10	Ex. 30:11-31:18	Ex. 32:1-33:23	Exodus 34:1-35:9	Ex. 35:10-36:38
Matthew 25:1-30	Matt. 25:31-26:13	Matthew 26:14-46	Matthew 26:47-68	Matt. 26:69-27:14	Matthew 27:15-31	Matthew 27:32-66
Psalms 31:1-8	Psalms 31:9-18	Psalms 31:19-24	Psalms 32:1-11	Psalms 33:1-11	Psalms 33:12-22	Psalms 34:1-10
Proverbs 8:1-11	Proverbs 8:12-13	Proverbs 8:14-26	Proverbs 8:27-32	Proverbs 8:33-36	Proverbs 9:1-6	Proverbs 9:7-8

For complete details on First Family’s Daily Bible Reading Plan, visit our website at [www.fcgrow.com/biblereading](http://www.fcgrow.com/biblereading).

## WORDSEARCH—all the words come from this week’s text or lesson.

### The Problem of Partiality

James 2:1-13  
February 7, 2016

O	R	D	E	R	O	N	O	H	S	I	D	H	S	T	K	S	E	G	D	U	J	P	L	F
P	O	F	Z	C	E	J	L	L	L	G	N	I	R	D	L	O	G	M	O	E	U	X	U	H
P	Y	S	S	B	S	Y	O	F	V	G	S	Y	T	R	E	B	I	L	F	O	W	A	L	O
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X	J	W	S	J	T	P	N	H	Z	S	R	I	E	H	I	E	U	G	P	U	P	K	R	S
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Z	D	C	N	M	O	D	G	N	I	K	W	U	L	P	O	O	R	M	A	N	V	P	P	D
H	K	T	O	I	M	S	I	T	I	R	O	V	A	F	L	A	N	O	S	R	E	P	H	A
C	X	X	F	P	S	Q	E	X	G	M	K	D	Q	G	F	K	S	D	O	P	G	E	S	W

Glorious  
Fine Clothes  
Judges  
Rich in Faith  
Blaspheme  
Sin  
Law of Liberty

Lord Jesus Christ  
Poor Man  
Evil Motives  
Dishonored  
Royal Law  
Transgressors  
Mercy Triumphs

Personal Favoritism  
Footstool  
Heirs  
Oppose  
Scripture  
Adultery

Gold Ring  
Distinctions  
Kingdom  
Court  
Partiality  
Murder

To see the answers to the puzzle, go to [www.thecompass.life/316](http://www.thecompass.life/316)

# Connecting the Family



## "A Child of the King"

Harriett E. Buell, 1834–1910

We are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory. (Romans 8:16, 17)

As children of the heavenly kingdom, we should learn to enjoy and possess the rich spiritual blessings that belong to us as heirs of God's riches.

- We have been justified and made acceptable to God—Romans 5:1
- We have been adopted into God's royal family—Romans 8:16, 17
- We have been given a citizenship in heaven—Philippians 3:20
- We possess the indwelling Holy Spirit—1 Corinthians 6:19
- We have been placed into the kingdom of the Son of God's love—Colossians 1:13
- We have the promise that the best is yet to come—a heavenly home—1 Corinthians 2:9

Whether you are great or small in God's kingdom, you are still God's child. An infant is as truly a child of its parents as is a full-grown person. You are as dear to your heavenly Father as the most prominent member in His family.

Harriett Buell wrote the words for "A Child of the King" one Sunday morning while walking home from her Methodist church service. She sent her text to the Northern Christian Advocate, and it was printed in the February 1, 1877 issue of the magazine. John Sumner, a singing school music teacher, saw the words and composed the music without Harriett Buell's knowledge. The hymn has been widely used since then to remind believers who they really are—bearers of God's image (Genesis 1:26) and children of the King of kings.

*My Father is rich in houses and lands; He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands! Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold, His coffers are full—He has riches untold.*

*My Father's own Son, the Savior of men, once wandered o'er earth as the poorest of them; but now He is reigning forever on high, and will give me a home in heav'n by and by.*

*I once was an outcast stranger on earth, a sinner by choice and an alien by birth; but I've been adopted; my name's written down—an heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.*

*A tent or a cottage, why should I care? They're building a palace for me over there! Tho' exiled from home, yet still I may sing: All glory to God, I'm a child of the King.*

*Chorus: I'm a child of the King! With Jesus, my Savior, I'm a child of the King!*

As an heir of God and a citizen of heaven, strive to make your walk and actions consistent with this high calling. Sing as you go—

Kenneth W. Osbeck

## Memory Time

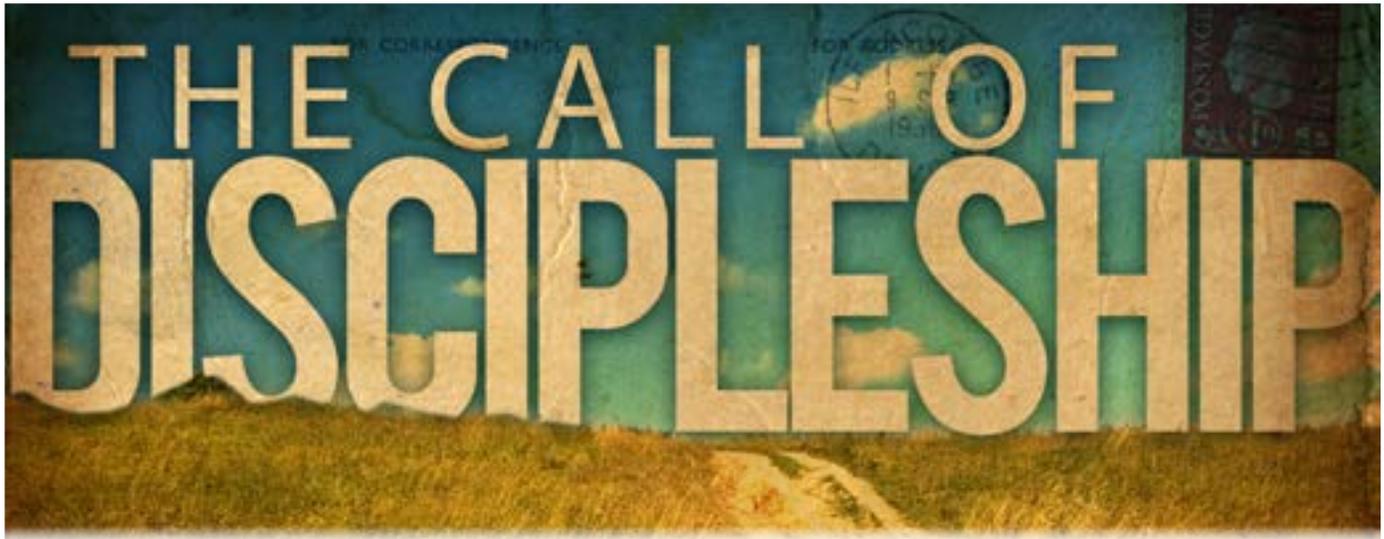
### Memory Verse

*If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.—*

*James 2:8-9 (ESV)*

### Key Practice

***Possessions** (Luke 16:11–12): I seek to maintain an eternal perspective on money and possessions, realizing God has give me all that I have, and that he expects me to manage it wisely for His glory.*



## 10 Core Beliefs

**The Bible** (*2 Timothy 3:16–17*): We believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God, and the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

**God the Father** (*Psalms 121:1–2*): We believe God is personally involved in and cares about the daily lives of His children.

**Jesus Christ** (*John 1:12*): We believe in Jesus Christ, His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, vicarious death, burial and bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His personal future return in power and glory. We are significant only because of our position as children of God.

**The Holy Spirit** (*2 Corinthians 13:14*): We believe the God of the Bible is the only true God and is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Humanity** (*John 3:16*): We believe all people are born separated from God by sin, but God in his love sent his Son Jesus Christ as their savior.

**Eternity** (*John 14:1–4*): We believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish his kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the dead: the believer to life everlasting and the unbeliever to the resurrection of judgment.

**The Church** (*1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Ephesians 4:15–16*): We believe in the church as the body of Christ, which is composed of all believers who have accepted Christ as Savior. We believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

**Stewardship** (*1 Timothy 6:17–19*): We believe that everything we have, including our very life, belongs to God.

**Salvation by Grace** (*Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 3:23–25; 8:38–39*): We believe a person has a right relationship with God only by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. This makes believers eternally secure in Jesus Christ.

**Compassion** (*Psalms 82:3–4*): We believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need. ■

## 10 Core Practices

**Worship** (*Psalms 95:1–7*): I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

**Bible Study** (*Hebrews 4:12*): I study the Bible diligently to know God, to become like Christ, and to discern His will for my life.

**Service** (*Colossians 3:17*): I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

**Witness** (*Matthew 28:18–20*): I live to tell the story of Jesus and to make disciples of Him even to the ends of the earth, knowing he is with me always.

**Biblical Community** (*Acts 2:44–47*): I fellowship with other believers in a small group to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

**Prayer** (*Psalms 66:16–20*): I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

**Spiritual Gifts** (*Romans 12:4–6*): I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

**Authenticity** (*John 13:33–34*): I know and understand biblical truths and transfer these truths into everyday life. Who I am

on the inside and outside is a pure reflection of Christ and His Word.

**Simplicity** (*Matthew 6:33*): I seek to live a simple life focused on God and his priorities for my life.

**Possessions** (*Luke 16:11–12*): I seek to maintain an eternal perspective on money and possessions, realizing God has given me all that I have, and that he expects me to manage it wisely for His glory. ■

## 10 Core Virtues

**Gentleness** (*Philippians 4:5*): I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

**Faithfulness** (*Proverbs 3:3–4*): I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

**Hope** (*Hebrews 6:19–20*): I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

**Joy** (*John 15:11*): I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

**Love** (*1 John 4:10–12*): I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

**Peace** (*Philippians 4:6–7*): I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

**Self-Control** (*Titus 2:11–13*): I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

**Humility** (*Philippians 2:3–4*): I choose to esteem others above myself.

**Patience** (*Proverbs 14:29*): I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

**Kindness/Goodness** (*1 Thessalonians 5:15*): I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others. ■