

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JAMES

STUDY NUMBER 4 – JAMES 2:1-13

LEARN TO LOVE THE UNLOVELY

We are studying the book of James and we are in study #4 today in this series of twelve messages from the book of James.

James is ministering to a disbursed group of people and it's personal persecution of the Christian church in the city of Jerusalem that has caused them to be scattered everywhere.

James has a passion for them. That they might not get discouraged but that they would be faithful to grow in their relationship to Christ. We learned in the first study that we grow taller through testing and God uses tests to provide spiritual progress in the impetus to become more like Christ.

Two weeks ago we talked about growth as stunted by sin. Satan uses temptation to distract us and ultimately to discourage us and destroy us. Then last week we talked about a daily intake of the Word of God. Bringing the Word into our live on a daily basis.

A daily intake o the Word will provide a base for victory in the test and in the temptation. That's the relationship between it and the Word.

We end chapter 1. We're getting ready to start chapter 2. Now in chapter 2 we're going to see another phenomenon come on the scene. We're going to move from the test, the temptation, and the intake of the Word to this whole business of showing love, unconditional love to others.

Listen to this statement from Mohandas Gandhi.

You Christians look after a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilizations to pieces, turn the world upside down, and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of good literature.

We're taking the same Word and we're going to have it daily in our lives so that the Spirit of God is free to produce unconditional love for others. And I've called this study "Learning to Love the Unlovely." Our key verse is verse 9 of the thirteen verses. We're going to have a principle, an illustration, and then he's going to apply it. It will be a real simple outline for us to see in the passage.

How can I tell if I'm growing in my relationship to Christ?

1. The capacity to submit to the test—I don't question God's dealings with me. When difficult times come, I know He's got something up His sleeve. He has some purpose. I can trust Him completely for that.
2. I'm experiencing victory over temptation on a daily basis because I'm trusting God that His strength is made perfect in my weakness and that I can daily appropriate what's available of His resources to say no to temptation and to sin and yes to the joy of the Lord in my response.
3. Then to be a person disciplined to have everyday an intake of the Word of God. For I am truly a student of the Scriptures.
4. The capacity to love to love without partiality.

That's the way the study is going to fall together. Now let's look at verse 1.

v. 1 My brethren, be not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, while showing partiality.

Obviously he's writing to Christians. "My brethren." He's saying something about the Lord here that just moved me very deeply. "Be not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." Remember James? He's the oldest brother, oldest son of Mary and Joseph. He lived his whole life with Jesus growing up. To be anybody who would be suspicious about the claims of Jesus it would be James.

In our very first study in the book of James in chapter 1 he said he was a bonds slave of Jesus Christ. Boy that touched me. But he recognized his half-brother as God come in human flesh, that's what this means. "The Lord of glory."

"The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth" is what John says. Now James says exactly the same thing.

There are little statements in Scripture sometime that just move you so deeply because you recognize how hard it was for them to get from point A to point B. And for James to say this this morning, he's saying "Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. He did come to die for your sins. He did come not only to die for your sins, but to give you eternal salvation which resides in the Lord Himself." But he says: "Don't be holding your faith—be not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . while showing partiality."

You see, if you're going to be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer only, then you're going to have to listen to some of these very careful commands of Scripture. He says, you can't have faith in Jesus Christ and conditional love. In other words, there are certain people that you like to be with and there's certain people you don't like to be with and you perpetrate or you live this kind of conditional life. You gravitate, you move away from certain people because you don't like

them or you move closer to others because they're so loving and they understand you. You know how it goes. He's saying to the early church, you can't say that you have faith in the Lord of Glory and hold an attitude of partiality at the same time.

I would put Romans 2:11 right there and then we'll jump right into the next verse.

Romans 2:11

There is no respect of persons with God, and since there is no respect of persons with God, there ought not be respect of persons or partiality shown on the part of those who love and follow Him and are members of His family.

Now I know some of you are going think, "James has quit preaching and gone to meddling" and you're right. He really gets specific. This is a painful message, I'll tell you that. Just knowing that I know you're not going to like it because it's going to be convicting but that's OK. It's a hard truth to receive, that you can be a person sitting here today, you've never committed adultery, you've never committed murder, you've never done anything real bad like stealing something. But then you see, you can't have partiality either and that's equated to the other because sin is sin to God. To realize that fact today makes us very sensitive about what kind of a relationship we really do have with the Lord Jesus and I hope there's going to be an overwhelming sense that all is well with your soul.

v. 2 For [now he's going to give you an illustration, why you shouldn't hold partiality] if there comes into your synagogue [or your church] a man with gold rings on his fingers in brightly shining clothing and there comes in also a poor man in filthy rags,

Well, here you've got a flashy dude that comes in. He's got rings on his fingers and bells on his toes and wearing Gucci. He's got a fabulous looking suit. He's just a cool dude. It's flashing all over. You can see his big Rolex there just shining bright. He comes walking in and this usher has a tendency toward partiality and he's impressed by success as you're going to see in just a minute. Well then here comes this poor guy that's been eking out a living on the range, he's still got his bib overalls on but thank God he's come to church and he wants to fellowship with the saints, be there with them. He comes in and the illustration that he's picking here, you've got these two guys that come in.

v. 3 and you look upon the one wearing the clothing which is brightly shining, and you say, "You be seated here in a good place," and to the poor man you say, "Stand in that place or be sitting down [here] beside my foot stool";

We're really having a problem with seating sir. You can either stand over there or if you need a place a sit, you can sit here on the floor right beside me. That'd be fine.

What do you got? You've got the same mentality that oftentimes pervades the church. I will run the risk of preaching this message for the sake of seeing that it never pervades this church. I don't sense a semblance of this sort of an attitude. I thank God that we can face the text together and examine our own hearts to be sure we're not perpetrators of this kind of partiality.

But get the guy in your mind. I mean, everybody's impressed when he comes in. Well you know, he's the CEO of this big company. Man, what he couldn't do for our church! And you know we've got all those budget problems. Man, he can solve those with one check.

That's like the one pastor put a little sign over his baptistery "Put a tither in your tank." You get these folks that can give the money and solve all the budget problems and they're all thinking "Man, this guy's good!" So what do we got to do? We've got to put him on the board. We've got to get him elected in leadership. We've got to get him on these committees so that he can, and his family can, really make an impact on our church." That's our mentality.

What about this poor guy in the bib overalls? "Well we can endure him. We don't mind him coming around even if he smells bad. You know, he can come sit down and listen to Scriptures and go on his way." But there's not that loving, affectionate, compassion. Walking up to that man and saying "I love you and I love you in Jesus and I'm so thankful you're here today. You're a

very special person in God's sight and I just wanted to tell you that today."

This is the attitude that James want to pervade as you're going to see a little bit later in the passage.

In verse 4 he asks a pretty tough question.

v. 4 are you not divided in your own mind and have become judges with evil thoughts?

You are making distinctions where there are no distinctions to be made. These are brothers in Christ. How you treat them is so critical.

One of the most refreshing experiences I think in our contemporary generation is the movement of Promise Keepers that started in Boulder, Colorado with Coach Bill McCartney and the crew that gathered there. That made an impact in our men all across the country. It was a phenomenal movement. One of the things that was a joy of Promise Keepers was that you'd see ever kind of lineage and race in their meetings. I mean, there were blacks and whites and Hispanics and the whole nine yards. The pervading love of Christ just filled the place. In fact on their platform in Detroit, Michigan they had an African-American minister Raleigh Washington who said:

“When I was born I was black. When I grew up I was still black. When I got out in the cold, I’m still black. When I got out in the sun, I got more black. When I’m sick I’m black, and when I die, I’m sure I am going to still be black.”

Then he says:

“But I found out that white folks are born, they’re born pink. When you grow up they become white. When you go out in the cold you turn blue. When you stay out in the sun you turn red. When you’re sick they say you look green, and when you die you turn purple. Now, what I want to know is why do they call blacks, colored people?”

(PreachingToday.com)

I found this little piece the other day. This dear pastor has since gone home to be with the Lord. He was a pastor at First Baptist Church in Naples, Florida. And he was getting ready to teach on the Good Samaritan from Luke 10 he just said this:

“Let me start my message this way. Remember last year when the Browns came forward to join the church?” he asked. Everyone nodded; the Browns were a very influential family. “Well, the same day a young man came forward and gave his life to Christ. I could tell he needed help and we counseled him.” No one nodded; no one even remembered.

“We worked with the Browns, we got them into our committees. They’ve been wonderful folks,” Cadenhead said to muffled amens. “The young man, well, we lost track.”

“Until yesterday, that is, as I was preparing today’s message on the Good Samaritan. I picked up the paper, and there was the young man’s picture. He had shot and killed an elderly woman.”

Chins dropped throughout the congregation, mine included, as the pastor continued. “I never followed up on that young man, so I’m the priest who saw the man in trouble and crossed to the other side of the road. I am a hypocrite.”

**More of that kind of sober honesty in the church would be very healthy. For God’s kingdom is just the opposite of ours. We go after the rich or the influential, thinking if we can just bag this one or that one, we’ll have a real catch for the kingdom. Like the folks profiled by the apostle James, we offer our head tables to the wealthy and well-dressed and reserve the back seats for those we consider unimportant.
(PreachingToday.com)**

May God help us to see that James is addressing a very contemporary issue with us when we’re honest with each other today.

v. 5 Listen, my brethren, beloved ones, did not God choose out for Himself those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

You see, James is referring to the fisherman who joined in the twelve. He's referring to the dominate framework of those who were part of the early church. They were poor people. Paul when he's writing to the Corinthians says it very graphically in:

1 Corinthians 1:26

Notice among ourselves, dear brothers, that few of us who follow Christ have big names or power or wealth. Instead, God has deliberately chosen to save those whom the world considers foolish and of little worth in order to shame those whom the world considers wise and great. He has chosen the little people, those despised by the world who just don't count for anything at all, and use them to bring down to nothing those the world considers so great.

What he's saying is, these people that you reject in this kind of situation are people who are rich in faith and they're heirs of the kingdom. Which reminds us that the Cross at the ground level is always level. And there at that point we meet, from all different kinds of backgrounds, out of a deep love for the Lord Jesus Christ we receive Him as Savior. And our lives are changed and we become brothers and sisters in the

body. We are there rich in faith and heirs for the kingdom so don't allow this kind of outward show of partiality to prevail among you.

Now he concludes that verse with the same phrase that he used back in chapter 1:12: "when he promised to those who love Him."

Back in chapter 1:12 he said: "the crown of life will be given to those who love him."

The focus is on a love relationship with Jesus. And out of that love relationship with Jesus we're freed to love everybody. And I just hope and pray that we will never experience the condemnation of the Savior for the church at Ephesus, you have left your first love.

Oh that we'll hang onto that and we will be personal ambassadors to one another. To love each other with the love of the Lord Jesus even though we have differences of opinions. Even though we come from all kinds of diverse backgrounds. But people when they see us and they know as a part of the flock at this church, we are people who really know how to love in the power of the Spirit.

v. 6 But you dishonored the poor man. Are not those who are wealthy exploiting you and they themselves drag you into court?

In other words, the people you're impressed with are the ones who by nature are exploiting you. Why not demonstrate love to everybody?

v. 7 Are they not the ones who are defaming the good (beautiful) name [which is Jesus] by which you are called? [as Christians]

You see, they are people who are teaching us how to use people and love things instead of loving people and using things.

v. 8 If indeed you are carrying out the demands of the royal law according to the Scriptures, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing what is right (splendidly).

Remember the royal law? There in the Good Samaritan that young lawyer came and asked the Lord about a relationship. And the Lord gave him the opportunity to answer his own question. And he said "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself."

You got it! That's the kind of attitude we have when we receive the love of God for us personally we become those who perpetrate that love on others.

Listen to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, He said this wonderful truth: “. . . the soul visited by the blessed Spirit, abounds in love to God, in love to the brethren, and in love to sinners; and above all, in love to Jesus.”

(*Morning & Evening* by Charles Haddon Spurgeon. p. 127)

Oh, he just said the whole thing in just a couple of sentences. My life is to be characterized by a love because I’ve been visited by the blessed Holy Spirit who produces it, a love for God, a love for the brethren, a love for sinners, above all, the love of the Lord Jesus.

Let me have just a personal word with you, quit to preaching and talking with you for just a second. The capacity and the level of your maturity is going to be revealed by your capacity to love. A level of your maturity, let’s put it this way, is going to be seen in your capacity to love. How do you feel about that? Are you truly a person who’s passionate today? Don’t think about others for a minute, ok. How much do you love Jesus? How much do you really love Jesus?

Oh yes, I know the longer You serve Him the sweeter He grows.

The level of your maturity is seen by your capacity to love.

You see your habits of communion are also revealed by your capacity of love.

v. 9 But if you are showing partiality, you are committing a sin, being convicted by the law as a transgressor.

There's your key verse. Whoa that's strong isn't it! Now let's take our medicine. If to this point you can sit there and say "I don't show any partiality. I don't pick and choose the ones I'm going to get close to and the ones I'm going to stay at a distance from because there are just people I don't like." And you're showing partiality.

Now what he's saying here, if you're doing that, "you are committing sin." Did you know that? To live with that kind of an attitude is you are committing a sin and on top of that, one sin gets it all done. You're being convicted by the law as a transgressor.

Oh man, you look at that. And then:

v.10 For whoever pays attention to the whole law and yet sins in one respect, he has become guilty of all.

God doesn't grade on the curve. And if you're thinking you're going to be accepted by you've got a pretty good

record with a few ups and downs, I've got to give you the news, you aren't going to make it.

The tragedy of this generation is to think that they are impressive enough and have enough righteousness and holiness and good works to be accepted in a holy God's presence Who also recognized the fact that there was no hope for us, therefore the dramatic move to send His Son to die for our broken law. God doesn't grade sin. Sin is sin. And you're saying "What about adultery? And murder? Certainly partiality's not as bad as that?" Well James has been reading your mail. Just look what he says in the next verse.

v.11 For He who said: "Do not commit adultery," also said: "Do not commit murder." Now if you are not committing adultery but you are committing murder, you have become a transgressor of the law

It just takes one. Is there anyone sitting here today, myself included, that can say "I've never committed one"? How ridiculous. One will get it done.

The law is like a giant chain. One link is broken and the anchor plunges to the depths. Sin is sin and is a serious matter.

Remember in the Sermon on the Mount everybody kind of bowed their neck when Jesus gave that great statement? "The law says thou shalt not commit

adultery but I'm telling you if you're looking at a woman with lust you've already done it." Then he says: "The law says thou shalt not kill but I'm telling you if you've got angry with your brother you've done it."

So a holy God really means business when He wants perfection and it's only provided through a beautiful relationship with His Son.

v.12 So [application] be speaking and so be doing as those who are about to be judged by a law of liberty.

What you speak and what you do in anticipation that apart from receiving the Christ, you'll face the judgment of the law. What James is suggesting here is that our speech and our actions should be saturated by love. What we say and what we do are the final proof of what is really in our hearts. So with that summary in verse 12 he gives the command in verse 13.

v.13 For the judgment is merciless to the one who did not show mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Please realize how serious it is to be a person who shows partiality. I admire greatly Bill Hybels and the way God has used him at Willow Creek, Illinois over the years. He tells a very, very self-condemning story and I

love his vulnerability and transparency in this story. It's called "But I'm an Exception."

One evening I stopped by the church just to encourage those who were there rehearsing for the spring musical. I didn't intend to stay long, so I parked my car next to the entrance. After a few minutes, I ran back to my car and drove home.

The next morning I found a note in my office mailbox. it read: "A small thing, but Tuesday night when you came to rehearsal, you parked in the 'No Parking' area. A reaction from one of my crew (who did not recognize you until after you got out of the car) was, 'There's another jerk parking in the "No Parking" area!' We try hard not to allow people—even workers—to park anywhere other than the parking lots. I would appreciate your cooperation, too." It was signed by a member of our maintenance staff.

I'm sorry to report this staff member is no longer with us. He was late coming back from lunch the next day, and we had to let him go. You have to draw the line somewhere . . .

No, I'm kidding. [And I want you to get the message.] Actually he's still very much with us, and his stock went up in my book because he had the courage to write me about what could have been a slippage in my character.

And he was right on the mark. As I drove up that night, I had thought, “I shouldn’t park here, but after all, I am the pastor.” That translates: I’m an exception to the rules. But that employee wouldn’t allow me to sneak down that road labeled “I’m an exception.”

I’m not the exception to church rules, nor am I the exception to sexual rules or financial rules or any of God’s rules. As a leader, I am not an exception; I’m to be the example. According to Scripture, I am to live in such a way that I can say, “Follow me. Park where I park. Live as I live.”

That’s why we all need people like my staff member to hold us accountable in even the small matters. Because when we keep the minor matters in line, we don’t stumble over the larger ones.

Just when I was starting to think, “I’m an exception,” somebody on our staff cared enough to say, “Don’t do it, Bill, not even in one small area.” That’s love. (PreachingToday.com)

Maybe God is saying that to you today. You’ve got some relationships that need to be dealt with but you’re the problem because you resisted. You’ve got excuses, you’ve got rationale, you’ve got reasons for why this has come about. Could it be possible that the Holy Spirit led me to the book of James many, many months ago to speak this particular Sunday morning on showing partiality so that you’d be here and you’d hear

this message? I believe enough in my Sovereign God that the answer is absolutely right. Yes! And what is He trying to say to you?

In *The Daily Bread* there was a great little story and it reminded me of the passage.

Pastor Stuart Silvester told me of a conversation he had with an acquaintance who frequently flew his small private plane in and out of Toronto International Airport. He asked the pilot if he ever encountered problems taking off and landing a small craft at an airport that was dominated by so many large jets. His friend responded, “My plane may be small, but I have the same rights, the same privileges, and the same access to that airport as anyone else—even the jumbo jets!”

(February 28, 2006 *Our Daily Bread*)

And I'd like to put that in our doctrinal statement at our church. That the small planes can fly at the same level as the jumbo jets around here. We're not impressed. We're brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, longing to fall more deeply in love with Jesus but be challenged by each other when we think we're exceptions.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: My capacity to love without partiality is an evidence of God's presence in my life.

LESSON #2: Unconditional and impartial love is a fruit of the Spirit.

LESSON #3: God is not a Respector of persona.

LESSON #4: It is not the outward show but the inward spirituality.

LESSON #5: I reveal a selfish heart when I am partial with my love.

LESSON #6: Showing partiality is a sin.

LESSON #7: God does not grade on the curve.

LESSON #8: Love always wins.

STUDY NUMBER FOUR - LEARN TO LOVE THE UNLOVELY —

JAMES 2:1-13

KEY VERSE 2:9

v. 1 My brethren, be not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, while showing partiality.

v. 2 For if there comes into your synagogue a man with gold rings on his fingers in brightly shining clothing and there comes in also a poor man in filthy rags,

v. 3 and you look upon the one wearing the clothing which is brightly shining, and you say, “You be seated here in a good place,” and to the poor man you say, “Stand in that place or be sitting down beside my foot stool”;

v. 4 are you not divided in your own mind and have become judges with evil thoughts?

v. 5 Listen, my brethren, beloved ones, did not God choose out for Himself those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

v. 6 But you dishonored the poor man. Are not those who are wealthy exploiting you and they themselves drag you into court?

v. 7 Are they not the ones who are defaming the good (beautiful) name by which you are called?

v. 8 If indeed you are carrying out the demands of the royal law according to the Scriptures, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing what is right (splendidly).

v. 9 But if you are showing partiality, you are committing a sin, being convicted by the law as a transgressor.

v.10 For whoever pays attention to the whole law and yet sins in one respect, he has become guilty of all.

v.11 For He who said: “Do not commit adultery,” also said: “Do not commit murder.” Now if you are not committing adultery but you are committing murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

v.12 So be speaking and so be doing as those who are about to be judged by a law of liberty.

v.13 For the judgment is merciless to the one who did not show mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

NOTES

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QUESTIONS:

1. Read James 2:1-13 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What do you think James means by “respect of persons” or “partiality” in verse 1?

3. Describe how James illustrates this in verses 2 & 3.

4. Describe the future for the “poor in this world” in verse 5.

5. What is the “royal law,” according to verse 8?

6. How much of the law must you break to be guilty, according to verse 10?

7. How are we supposed to act, according to verse 12?

8. Have you ever loved the unlovely? When? Give a personal illustration.

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: My capacity to love without partiality is an evidence of God's presence in my life.

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LESSON #6: Showing partiality is a sin.

LESSON #7: God does not grade on the curve.

LESSON #8: Love always wins.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
