

Book and Cover
Don't Allow Selfish Favoritism
Discovering Practical Christianity (James) Series - Pt. 3
Sept 3/4
James 2:1-13

Introduction

- **The Christian Standard of Treatment Toward Others** – A lot of the New Testament is letters from pastors telling their people how to think about God and how to treat each other. Christianity is a new paradigm and reality. It has different rules and allowances. There's a learning curve. Sometimes we struggle, as long-term Christians with doing what we KNOW, but for a lot of newbies, they are learning it for the FIRST TIME. **The standard for a Christian is Christ Himself.** That's a high bar. So, the New Testament fleshes out not just expectations but also the ways to do it successfully.
- **Treating Others from a Place of Health or Lack Thereof** – Just because we are Christians doesn't mean we are healthy individuals. Just because Jesus died for our sins, doesn't mean the trauma of our past doesn't need to be dealt with. Just because the Holy Spirit is working overtime to sanctify us doesn't mean we are mature people. A lot of the dysfunction of any given church is that the people that comprise that church are operating from the wrong identity and from brokenness. **We are all still in process and we need to cut each other some slack, but on the other hand we need to take our personal responsibility seriously to use the tools that God has given us to be as healthy as possible.** Someone that doesn't have Jesus in their life has to scratch and claw their way to health, but for a child of God, we have an internal Helper who is driving us toward health and victory. We need to utilize that help.
- **Following the Example of Christ** – Jesus Christ was our human, tangible example of what a surrendered life looks like. Jesus was so full of the **affirmation** of the Father that He didn't have to cave to the demands of the religious leaders. Jesus was so full of **Grace** that He was able to say on the cross, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing. Jesus was so **dedicated to a heavenly agenda** that He was able to walk away from things that most other people would have to hang on to, because they believed it to be their identity. We can live like that too.
- **Operating from Fullness** – I've cited time and again that **Christianity is designed from an overflow perspective.** God has so filled us with good things that we can pour them out to others. God never demands that we dredge up something good out of our own nature. He knows we aren't working with a whole lot. **He pours it in and holds us accountable to operate off that fullness.** We minister to others because we ourselves have been ministered to by God. We forgive others because we have been forgiven much. We are patient with others because we have seen God's infinite patience with us. **If we are not feeling full inside, that is where we must begin.** Why not? God's pouring it in, where's it going? Have we not let Him heal us sufficiently so we are too porous? Too broken still? Too dysfunctional? God gives us tools to heal up in that regard as well.
- **The dangers of operating from scarcity, insecurity and dysfunction** – When we operate from our dysfunction, our insecurity, our brokenness, our scarcity, we hurt the people

around us. **When we live from our woundedness, people around us can become a commodity to consume to feel better. We are looking at people for what we can get out of them.** It's like the old **Looney Tunes** cartoons where they would look at the other character and it was a big pork chop or steak instead of another person, when they were too hungry. We only see them through a lens of what we can get from them. We seek the beautiful to affirm our value. We seek the rich in hopes that the crumbs from their table fall to us, we seek the powerful for our own possible opportunities. We seek the popular to believe that we matter. We seek sex to feel powerful or loved.

- **Jesus Did None of That** – the problem with all of that is, that's how the world works. That's all they have. But we aren't of the world. We are of Christ. Jesus did none of that. He didn't need the affirmation from a broken world. He didn't need to hurt people to feel better. He loved because He was so full of the Father's love. He cared because He had more to give. He healed because the wounds of others agitated His heart. It was all others-centered, not self-centered. And He's our role model.

Our LOVE Cannot Be DETERMINED by Self-Benefit

Lesson

- **People Eaters**
 - **The Human Desire to Consume One Another**
 - **James 2:1-4** - *"My brothers [and sisters], **show¹ no partiality** [favoritism] **as you hold the faith** [live as Christians] **in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.**² **For if a man wearing a gold ring³ and fine clothing comes into your assembly⁴** [church], **and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in,**³ **and if you⁵ pay attention⁶ 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,"**⁴ **have you not then***

¹ "The Greek present tense has many possible meanings; one of them is to signify that something is happening now and continuing: "It is raining—and there is no saying when it will stop." The dominant note in this use is incompleteness." NICNT Commentary, James Adamson

² "As the text stands, the Greek is hardly the kind one would expect from a writer like James, a circumstance underlined by the various *and*, in our opinion, unsatisfactory proposed renderings. We therefore propose transference of "our" to the end of the sentence, making Christ "our glory." NICNT Commentary, James Adamson

³ "beringed fingers (the Greek word, not found elsewhere,³¹ neither a plagiarism nor accident, is a vivid and masterly coinage, another striking neologism..." NICNT Commentary, James Adamson

⁴ "The term assembly or "synagogue," here only in the NT applied with a Christian connotation, confirms the early date of the Epistle of James, which, however, also uses the commoner Greek word for "church"¹⁹ in 5:14. This picture is drawn from life. It is neither necessary nor possible to decide whether "assembly" here means the building (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:16; Acts 18:19; 19:18) or the congregation present (and evidently, in part still arriving); the third common use, for the whole body of membership, is not likely here. Till the final rift between Judaism and Christianity both Christian and non-Christian Jews used, at least often, the same word for their sacred meeting-place, and possibly, in the time of James, here and generally they both met in the same place for worship, as, for example, the Christians James and Paul used the Temple (Acts 21:26; 22:19). Though practically synonymous (cf. Prov. 5:14, where both are used together), apparently the word we translate "assembly" (*synagōgē*) had a more local, less purely religious connotation than the other word *ekklēsia*." NICNT Commentary, James Adamson

⁵ "it is possible that for a time early Jewish Christians in general, and not only James in this Epistle, used both *synagōgē* and *ekklēsia* for their place of worship. The usher who greets the rich visitor may have been the regular Jewish *ḥazzan*, the only paid synagogue official, whose custodial duties ranged from cleaning the premises to safeguarding the Torah in the Ark and blowing the silver trumpet to signal the Sabbath." NICNT Commentary, James Adamson

⁶ "Pay observance to—this verb is used for "look with attention, or interest (rarely, with envy), or respect or favor"; it is common in the LXX, usually of God looking on man, and occurs in the NT only in Luke 1:48, in the Magnificat (look with favor), 9:38 (look with the favor of healing), and here, expressing the preferential favor with which the rich man is regarded and accommodated." NICNT Commentary, James Adamson

made distinctions⁷ among yourselves [played favorites] *and become judges* [decided people's values] *with evil thoughts?* [from a selfish place]"

- **My brothers and sisters** – This is not just to church leadership, although they have the ability to sin specifically in this way, but to all the Christians gathering as the church. Favoritism and selfish interest are something we all have to wrestle with in our hearts.
- **Christian codes vs. Worldly codes** – The world says, get all you can out of life and look out for yourself. Christianity says, give all you can while you are alive and let God fill you back up, and make sure that you live for God and others before yourself. We operate on a heavenly agenda and that is to bless people and partner with God for their restoration to wholeness in Him. We operate on different planes.
- **Partiality = Favoritism** – it's treating people differently based on the benefit to yourself. Are we doing that? Why are we doing that? So let's talk about how that would look in modern day:
 - We make more time and give more attention to the influential because it could help us later.
 - We try to only hang out with the good looking, cool students around us in school or group because it makes us feel good about ourselves.
 - We see someone in need and walk the other way since we aren't going to get anything out of the interaction, but we will end up giving and feeling less.
 - We make wealthy friends so we can play with their expensive toys and live on their coattails.
- **Our Faith is based upon Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of glory, OR, Lord Jesus Christ, our glory** – What does that have to do with the context of favoritism?⁸ to be honest I'm not sure what James' point is here. It seems that he is elevating our thoughts above human things, above worldly things, and reminding us who we serve and how amazing our Lord Jesus is, who is our example. Maybe it's to kind of embarrass the church into realizing that when you stand next to the glorious King of Creation, selfish favoritism looks really ugly.
- **What being around wealth does to some of us** – Let's be honest, money allows for things. It provide escapism, treats, toys, freedoms and fun. It allows security, protection and safety. Money is attractive. What's so great about it, is that we can use it any way we want to fulfill almost any craving or need we have. Money is like a drug that promises solutions to your problems or at least an opportunity to forget that you have a problem, for a little while. Money is tempting because it's a power element. So, when we get around it, we turn into Golem (Lord of the Rings analogy). We change. We morph. We manipulate to be closer to it and maybe have some of it rub off on us. When we are around people with wealth, we start to view them differently, treat them differently. They become a means to an end and not an end in and of themselves.

⁷ "The Greek verb indicates their "facing both ways" in their rulings, nominally to Christ and actually to worldly snobbery." NICNT Commentary

⁸ "Those who have the Lord Jesus Christ as their Glory cannot have "discrimination" in their brotherhood..." NICNT Commentary, James Adamson

- **The Isolation of Great Wealth, Popularity, Beauty, etc.** – Unfortunately, when someone has a lot of money, they tend to get very lonely. Why? Because they find that most people want to be around them to see what they can get. They always have to examine motives for why someone is paying attention to them or spending time with them. I know a little bit about this due to popularity and influence. I know that people act differently around me. I know that some people want to be near me because of what I do. I know that I am being manipulated a lot. I have to over-examine everything and it's tiring. It's easier to just be alone. Whether it's money, beauty, influence, power or any mega-social-commodity, if you aren't careful it can make you very cynical about why people are with you and feed into your insecurity leaving you scared, angry and isolated.
- **Making false distinctions among ourselves** = Favoritism. It's just a fancy way of saying favoritism. But favoritism and seeing people as better or worse as a commodity, is a false narrative. It's not true. They may be able to benefit you, but they are more than what they have. When we fall into a selfish paradigm, we are living in a false and damaging worldview.
- **Becoming judges with evil thoughts** – Ultimately, it's sinful to play favorites. Why? Because it's devaluing or over valuing people. We don't get to do that. There are just people with pros and cons, good and bad, righteous, and unrighteous, wholeness and brokenness. We need to see people like God does. When we don't, we turn to what the bible says are 'evil thoughts' which means our selfishness bends our perspective to see people as something to use, abuse or consume.
- **Rich Man, Poor Man**
 - **Understanding the Biblical Definitions & Dynamics of Rich and Poor**
 - **James 2:5-7** - *“Listen, my beloved brothers [and sisters], 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?⁹ 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 blaspheme¹⁰ the honorable name by which you were called¹¹?”*

⁹ “The world tends to “choose” those who are rich in (say) money; God, those who are (not “those who are to be”) rich in faith, i.e., “abounding in” (Mayor), “in virtue of” (Hort), or “in the realm of” faith (Ropes)—the last, with its contrast between judgment by God’s standards and the world’s, is to be preferred.⁶¹ James does not spiritualize or idealize poverty. Poverty does not guarantee either faith or final salvation; but whereas the rich often have, and feel they have, a “heaven upon earth,” the poor, in general, are much more likely and eager to believe in a celestial heaven to come, to compensate for the present purgatory, as it often has been, on earth... But it is not just a matter of indigence or affluence. The “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3), who are to have a place in the kingdom of heaven, do not include those of the poor who are without faith, and do include those of the rich who have not succumbed to their wealth.” NICNT

¹⁰ “Blasphemy is an attempt to injure a man by gravely malignant speech; against God, it is the sin of attempting to bring him into dishonor by such speech. In the OT blasphemy, in the last analysis, always refers to irreverence toward God... To profane the name of the Lord was a special type of blasphemy, punishable by stoning.⁸¹ It included irreverence, insincerity, and some flagrant moral breaches forgiven only at death, and also idolatry⁸³ and impudent disparagement of the Torah, or putting shame on the name of Yahweh.” NICNT

¹¹ “The name by which you are called probably indicates that the Antiochene name “Christians” for the believers was already current among other Jewish followers of Christ (see Acts 11:26). The death of James the brother of John is recorded in the next chapter (Acts 12:2) after Paul had spent a year at Antioch, which was in close contact with Jerusalem (Acts 11:27–30). The innovation of the name “Christians” would lend point to this verse in James (2:7). The phrase “the honorable name” (i.e., of Christ, from which the Christians got their designation “Christians”) has been found at Pompeii; and before the evangelization of Antioch, believers had spoken of “the only name under heaven by which we must be saved” (Acts

- **Listen up, My beloved brothers and sisters** – Christians need to hear this stuff. All of us. None of us are immune or excluded.
- **Poor vs. Rich in Biblical Mindset¹²** – It’s important to note that sometimes the Biblical authors are using common motifs of their day. It could be how a word or phrase was understood. It could be a common storytelling element. It could be a lot of things. But if we don’t do our due diligence and study those, we can fall prey to bad interpretation methods (exegesis). We can entirely misunderstand what the author’s point was. I think that’s the case here with the concepts of rich and poor that James is using. From his cultural background there was an assumed cultural narrative. Whether that came from the Jewish community, the Christian community, the poor community, a rural community, an ancient mindset, or whatever. The point is that a certain group of wealthy people in society were seen as ‘the rich’ and they were viewed negatively. They were seen as the oppressors. The poor were in some parts of society seen as cursed (secular religious) and other parts of society (Christians) as blessed. In other words, depending on your group, you saw groups and types of people differently. It’s no different today, we do the same thing. But, for our matter at hand James was working off a narrative where the group called ‘the rich’ were the bad guys and ‘the poor’ were to be pitied and considered precious to God. Now, that doesn’t mean all rich people are bad. The Bible is very clear that Christians with wealth were the ones that funded Christ’s ministry and that they are wonderful gifts to the community as long as they are unselfish and generous with God’s blessings. But in an oppressed world (they were under the Roman Empire) it wasn’t easy to be rich. Usually there had to be a reason why you were rich and many times (although not all), you had to cut corners to get there. So they were viewed as the bad guys taking advantage of others. On the other hand, the poor were the rejected, the outcast, the ignored and the taken advantage of. This allowed the Christian community to look at them with compassion and try to help them. They also recognized that Jesus treated the down and out with special care, so it showed that God’s heart was near the downhearted. So, there was a bit of a view that if you were struggling you were spiritually being blessed as God came near you. It’s this mindset that James makes the following comments.
 - **God chooses the ‘poor in the world’ to be ‘rich in faith’ and ‘heirs of the kingdom’** – in what way?
 - **What does ‘poor in the world’ mean?** – It may be that there is a lack of money and resources, and the world doesn’t value you. For example, look at a lot of our power players in politics today, and you’ll see that the wealthy get a lot of power due to their wealth. The poor leaders aren’t seen with any

4:12; 5:41). *By which you are called* is not in Greek idiom but Semitic, a quotation from Amos 9:12, which James uses also in his speech to the Council (Acts 15:17). The idea of a name being “called upon” someone is common in the LXX (e.g., Jer. 14:19), and here implies Christian profession (Matt. 10:22; Mark 13:13; Acts 9:16), possibly with reference to a baptismal formula (Acts 8:16).” NICNT

¹² See research notes at the end which come from the NICNT Commentary on the Bible’s View of Rich and Poor. It’s more than I would want to comment on.

sort of respect. It was far worse in those days. The poor were considered cursed by God, to the religious and merely a nuisance by the secular (they always need something from you). So, to be poor in the world's eyes, for whatever reason is what James is getting at.

- **What does 'rich in faith' mean?** – Why would James match someone poor with greater faith? Is poverty inherently righteous? No, it's not. His point is much more practical. He is saying that when we are in desperate need we don't get to rely on things in front of us. We live in the hope and faith that God will care for us or provide something we don't have. **Poverty DEMANDS faith in a way that abundance does not.** It doesn't mean the poor person harnesses that faith in a good way, it only means that they cannot rely on traditional self-help methods.
 - **What does 'heirs of the kingdom' mean?** – The early church Christian concept was that the more you struggled in this world and were rejected by the world, the closer God came and the more He would pour out heavenly resources. It allowed you, in your desperation, to have a door unlocked of need and openness to receiving from God and that would allow you entrance into His blessing.
 - **Those 3 are promises of the Lord for those 'who love Him'** – what does that mean? Christianity all hinges on relationship and love. Consider the great commandment (we'll get into that in a second, look below for reference). Therefore, whether we love God or don't is the determiner of our eternal destiny. Either we want more of God (heaven) or not (hell). So, anything that is a blessing of God is really held out for 'those that love Him', who ultimately become His kids and are saved.
 - **You have dishonored the poor man** – in what way? By playing favorites. You disrespected and hurt a poor person because they couldn't bring you extra blessing. You didn't see any benefit from being nice, so you didn't. That's not okay.
 - **The "rich" oppress you, drag you to court, and blaspheme the name of the Lord** – why would wealth make them so hostile to God and people? Again, notice how James is talking about this category of people called, 'the rich.' They are not just wealthy, they are not good or nice people. They are abusers, manipulators and selfish. They have their wealth likely by nefarious reasons and they will continue to pursue wealth at all costs. Those are the bad guys. Why would we, as the Church, want to highlight those people and give them honor? It only makes the scenario worse. Don't they need to be humbled and not glorified?
- **Core Violation**
 - **Favoritism Violates the Great Commandment**

- **James 2:8-13** - *“If you really fulfill 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 sin¹³ and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”*
 - **Facts: Favoritism is sin** – there’s no messing around about that. You don’t get to justify it. Now favoritism is selecting people out for personal benefit. That doesn’t mean that all people are treated the same. Equity is not equality. Equal opportunity is the goal, but not equal outcome. Leaders have more access to me as Senior pastor by necessity, not favoritism. That’s not a bad thing, it’s necessary. What we are talking about here is giving someone benefit because you can selfishly and unrighteously get something in return. Those lines are messy.
 - **The royal law = the Greatest Commandment** – love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. It’s the center of Christianity.
 - Mt 22:35–40 – *“And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*
 - **Keeping it simple** – you do well to do the basics. It’s the lens by which you should run every action and behavior through.
 - **Sin = transgressing = transgressors** – In a sense we are what we do. I know that’s not popular in many counseling circles, but I think they are talking about a different perspective on the subject. Too many of us sin without recognizing that makes us sinners. Too many of us want to believe that we are better than we are. Too many of us will lie consistently but not consider ourselves liars. But that’s the very definition of the word. We do the same with gossip. We do the same with all of our sin that we try to justify.
- **Law Breakers**
 - **Understanding How the Mosaic Law Works**
 - **James 2:10-11** - *“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ 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.”*
 - **What’s the Law?** – The Bible is primarily written by Jews and many times it’s written for Jews, so there are a lot of cultural assumptions. One of those is the term, ‘the law’. EVERY true Jew would know immediately what is being talked about. It goes back in history to the time of Moses. God was setting up the

¹³ *“You are working sin”: see “work” in Matt. 7:23; Ps. 6:8; 113:16, and see the notes on 1:2, 20 above. James sternly refuses to condone this grave sin as if it were a trivial peccadillo: the plain and unambiguous Greek word, once only in Classical Greek and never in the LXX, “transgressor,” explicitly condemns it as an offense against God’s law. To the rabbis such transgression was “rebellion,”¹⁰⁹ and broke “the fence of the Torah,” and the “yoke of heaven”—a most heinous sin, indeed effrontery toward the Shechinah.” NICNT*

nation of Israel and giving them His heart, His rules and regulations. Those instructions, contained within the first 5 books of the Bible (a.k.a. Torah, Pentateuch) are called 'the law'. It was the government (theocracy) of Israel and the standard for how God could be approached and how He could be served. It's a famous term.

- **Break One, Break it All (Old Covenant)** – Ultimately this demands that we talk about how the Old Covenant/contract Law was set up. In essence God set up the regulations and laws of Israel with an agreement. God said, if you love me and obey my commandments, I will bless you in a way that no other nation on earth is blessed. I will be with you and operating on your behalf. If, however, you do not. If you disrespect me, reject me and disobey me, I'm going to curse you and wreck you. You are not just a regular people group, you are my people group and you represent me to the world. It's critical that you do this right. That agreement with Israel lasted until Jesus Christ.
- **New Covenant Reality** – When Jesus Christ came, He brought with Him, from heaven, a new way of doing things with His people. He fulfilled the Old Covenant Law perfectly and then died for the sins of all of us who didn't fulfill the law perfectly (everyone) and set up a new Covenant/Contract. This new one is based on relationship in a different way. Its foundation is upon Christ's sacrifice atoning for the sins of the people. It's based upon mercy and grace. It's a new state of being God's kids, with a new nature, allowed to approach God and having their sins dealt with. Now it's about relationship with God and a father/children reality. That means discipline as well as love, but it's all for the good.
- **Where compartmentalization fails us...again** – We talked a couple weeks ago about the good and bad types of compartmentalization (thinking of things in entirely separate categories). The danger is when we use it spiritually. When we think that we can be good people in one areas, bad in another, but considered holistically good. That's not possible. Who we are, is who we are. It bleeds. So, again, we address the issue when James is telling us not to think that we can be a lawbreaker in one area, but still considered righteous. That's not a thing. The Old Covenant Law is an all-or-nothing situation. Either you are perfect or a lawbreaker. Period. That's why we need Jesus.
- **New Covenant Judgment**
 - **Living Through the Lens of Mercy Instead of Judgment**
 - **James 2:12-13** – *“So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty¹⁴. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*
 - **So** – in light of all that we've talked about, what do we do? We live differently. We take it to heart and make adjustments.

¹⁴ “Mercy and law are not really different principles. They are really the same in principle, both resting on God's justice; but they necessarily differ in administration, because it is not possible to frame rules (laws) completely covering all sorts of Christian duty (to God, and through him to our fellow men), such as Christian charity, gratitude, and kindness.” NICNT

- **Speak and Act = Lifestyle** – James is saying, live like Christians. Speak and act. Think and engage like a Christian.
- **We live under the Law of Liberty from God** – When James says, live like ‘those who are to be judged under the law of liberty’, he means as those who are Children of God under the new Covenant in Jesus Christ. Ultimately it’s a long way of saying, ‘living in a state of grace and relationship.’
 - **What’s the Law of Liberty?** – The Law of Liberty means that we are free in Christ. Our sin has been paid for and that allows a different interaction with God. We are interacting as someone free and whole.
- **We need to treat others with the Law of Liberty** – If we are being treated by God with an incredible, extraordinary grace, we need to treat other people with grace. We are living out of our fullness/abundance.
- **We will be judged with the measure we judge others** – what does this mean practically? Will we be condemned to hell (judged) if we are mean to other people or unforgiving? No. It’s talking about how accountability and having to answer for what we’ve done. It means that in a relational sense, if we are mean and jerks, unforgiving to others, then God will hold us more accountable for our behavior. We don’t get to just treat other people any way we want and assume that God’s good with it. It’s a discipline technique, not a wrath warning.
 - **Understanding the Great White Throne Judgment** - Let’s talk for a moment about the Great White Throne Judgment. Doesn’t God cast away our sin? Why two judgments? The best way to understand that GWTJ is to see it in two parts. One is for the Children of God and it’s a judgment of rewards, not sin (sin was paid for by Jesus). The other is for enemies of God (unbelievers) and it’s according to their sin condemning them. The confusing part is that James is talking to believers and talking about being judged more tightly, but if we are in grace, how can that be so? If our sin is paid for, how can that be? It would seem to me that God isn’t talking about the ultimate GWTJ, but about day to day in this life. God holds us more tightly accountable if we hold others that way.

Conclusion

- **Seeing People Through God’s Lenses** – the heart of what James is saying is that we must see people the way that God sees them. We need to treat them the way that God treats us. He is our bar, not our emotional reactions, not the way other people have treated us in the past, not the dysfunction of this world. We are Christians, we are living a higher existence, a God-elevated existence.
- **Praying Through Relational Mess** – let’s take a few moments to pray through some relational mess that we have found ourselves in. It could be us needing to forgive someone. It could be us needing to ask forgiveness. It could be releasing someone from our lives or needing to re-bond with someone. Relationships matter a lot.

Additional Research

Biblical Viewpoint of 'Rich and Poor' per the NICNT Commentary

"In our Commentary on 1:9–11 we observe how James specially warns the rich, as he will throughout his Epistle. So it is in 2:1–13, especially in vv. 5–7, and, in a climax, 5:1–6, again in James's thoughts of Judgment Day. By NT times the social problem had become a religious issue, poverty and piety, wealth and wickedness having become almost synonymous. Inevitably the Epistle of James was influenced by the OT "patriarchal-pietistic ethics of poverty."¹⁴ Most of his readers were apparently drawn from the "poor," whose affinities were with the anawim. James, however, does not teach that poverty in itself is a virtue. Nor does he regard wealth in itself as evil: what he does condemn is avarice and exploitation.

In seeking to understand the attitude of Christ and the early Christian teachers toward the rich we must not confine our attention to such passages as those on the Rich Young Ruler, Mt. 19:16–22, the Rich Fool, Lk. 12:16–22, the Camel, Mt. 19:24, or other such warnings as those in the Epistle of James. Christ and the disciples never held that all the rich were bound to be ungodly men, irreparably doomed to damnation.

We must therefore be prepared to distinguish what we may fairly say James regards as the typical rich man and the recognizable exceptions, that is, those of the rich that are not possessed by their wealth. The typical rich are depicted in 2:1–13 and 5:1–6; 1:9 is addressed to the comparatively poor Christian brother who, amid the "diverse temptations" of 1:2 and 1:12ff., is exposed to the temptations of wealth—that is to say, sheer greed, for it has sometimes driven people to sin (see 4:1–3, 13ff. and Prov. 1:10–19). It is important to note that here, as in 1:9 and 4:10, 15, James urges the Christian to salutary and corrective "humility," signifying not a calamity from without, such as bankruptcy, or expulsion from his club, but a sane mental condition free (or, if there was need, freed) from pride. We believe that here in 1:10, with a thought parallel to the passages in ch. 4, James means that the rich Christian must seek joy not in spiritually insignificant worldly calamity to himself but in humbling himself with the temporarily chastening but eternally saving realization that wealth per se, besides being a grave temptation to sin, is worthless for his salvation, and that the rich man, if he is nothing better than rich, will be condemned in the day of judgment.

In 1:10, we believe, the rich man is of the Christian brotherhood and is here warned of the danger that threatens him and all the rich. In 1:11 "the rich man" is a generic term, meaning any rich man, not necessarily a Christian. In 2:1–9 the rich incomer and the poor incomer may not be Christians but only visitors, serious or aimless; but we cannot positively assert, with Ropes, that apparently the rich visitor is not a Christian. Moreover, if we must conjecture, the serious warning in vv. 5–13 may not refer to visitors but to a regular habit in some churches of making class distinctions in the placing of the congregation, footstools and all. Obviously the "management" in this example was of the richer rather than of the poorer class, and this is evidence of an element of well-to-do people in the apostolic churches; the ideal of Jas. 1:27 was not presented to a flock consisting only of mendicants. There were also some not unreasonably called rich (Acts 4:34f.; 5:1–11); James, too, shows that he found some prevaricators among them, but the denunciation in 2:6f. is patently of non-Christians, blasphemers of the name of Christ, and the explicit aim of these verses is to give proof that it is un-Christian to worship such sinners (the rich) by "respect of persons." There is no difficulty about having Christian visitors or members of the congregation in 2:2 and non-Christian rich in 2:6f.; in 1:10f., in our view, we begin with a rich Christian exhorted to "humility" and pass on to the fate of the typical rich.

Chapter 4, a chapter on greed, includes, inter alia, murders and other such sins of worldly-minded lusts and pride, but, as is mentioned in the note on 1:9f., the theme in ch. 4 is sin in the pursuit, not in the mere possession, of wealth. To this latter theme James proceeds in ch. 5. Even in translation the change in style is startling, and is the key to understanding this passage. The rich in 1:11 and 2:6f. are not necessarily Christians; they merely represent the typical rich man. They are used as an argument (1:10f.) to turn a sincere rich Christian to humbleness, and (2:13) in admonishing Christians for toadying, virtually as accessories, to the rich. We must not assume that the rich visitor was in fact typical of his class: he was not a blasphemer of Christ, obviously, and need not have been an oppressor, like those of vv. 7 and 6 respectively; the sin of the Christians here is their deference to wealth per se, without regard to character or anything else. In ch. 4 the pride and lusts of Christian pursuers of gain at all costs are denounced, and these sinners, like those of 2:1–13, are exhorted to repent: ch. 5:1–6 is unique in the Epistle of James.

Verses 1–6 apostrophize the rich, not as Christians but as a class, with ruthless condemnation: the sequel (vv. 7–11) contains no rebuke for the Christian, no "Do not ye likewise." Even its one verse of caution (v. 9) is an aspect of the encouragement that rings through vv. 7–11, addressed to striving Christians, not to the hardened sinners of vv. 1–6. The thought, like the style, of vv. 1–6 is that of the prophets or of some of the Psalms, especially Ps. 58; exactly so does James, after his confident indictment of the rich, close the theme with no less confident comfort of his patient brethren.

The prophetic passage shows how in skill, power, and versatility James's Greek is unsurpassed in the NT. He is by no means the only biblical writer on worldly wealth, but we do not think any approaches him in the persistence, passion, and vehemence of his campaign against the sins of the rich. This should not seem strange to those of us who believe that the author of this Epistle was actually James, the Lord's brother; he would have good cause for his attitude to the wicked among the rich, knowing, as he must have known, the part money had in securing the trial and condemnation of Jesus.

In conclusion, James notably and consistently condemns not a few of the sins of the rich, including injustice amounting to social oppression. Jas. 2:1ff. is directed not so much against the rich themselves as against the church functionaries who succumb to the temptation to pander to them with escort to good seats and other subservient attentions. Later, however, those rich who have been so adulated in church are shown in their true light. They turn on the poor Christian, drag him into court and legally persecute him (2:5ff.). Chapter 5 is a vehement denunciation of the social sins of the wealthy, including nonpayment of the workers' earned wages, and there is no defect in James's theory or practice of Christianity that would justify any critic in representing James unfairly as merely aware of the rich being possessed by their riches, or otherwise indifferent to the poor."¹⁵

¹⁵ Adamson, J. B. (1976). [The Epistle of James](#) (pp. 29–31). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.