

“So Speak & So Do!”

I. INTRO:

- A. **Bishop Potter** was sailing for Europe on one of the great transatlantic ocean liners. When he went on board, he found that another passenger was to share the cabin with him. After going to see the accommodations, he came up to the purser’s desk and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship’s safe. He explained that ordinarily he never availed himself of that privilege, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who was to occupy the other berth. *Judging from his appearance, he was afraid that he might not be a very trustworthy person.* The purser accepted the responsibility for the valuables and remarked, “It’s all right, bishop, I’ll be very glad to take care of them for you. The other man has been up here and left his for *the same reason!*”
- B. In ch.2 we’ll continue to understand what **true religion & real faith** look like (see 1:27).
1. What if we just made that our perpetual goal?
- C. Over all theme: If you have **true saving faith**, you will practice **impartiality**.
1. Also, we will see people in terms of **character** instead of *clothing*.
 2. You will not **cater to the rich**, nor **ignore the poor**.
 3. You will love each person for the sake of Christ.
 4. Christian love means **treating others** the way the Lord **treats us &** doing it in the power of the Spirit.
 5. **Q:** Are we free from the preoccupation with what people **have rather than what they are?** **Q:** Do we love & learn from the *rich in faith?*
- D. James made this a tightly constructed passage: **1st**, he **introduces** a principle(1); **then** he **illustrates** his point(2-4); **next** he **explains** it(5-11); **finally**, **applies** it(12,13).

II. SO SPEAK & SO DO!

- A. **FAITH & FAVORITISM!** (1)
- B. Clearly, **faith in Christ** & **partiality** are incompatible!
- C. **Partiality/favoritism/respect of persons** defined: **It** literally means to “**receive by face**”.
1. **It is to judge a book by its cover.** It is judging a person by **how they look**.
 - a) **Like:** by their *clothes, cars, or color*.
 2. **It is pandering** to someone, because he is rich or influential or popular.
 3. **To lift up a person’s countenance**, to regard him with favor. (*i.e.* Samuel w/Eliab)
 4. **It is** to hold prejudice [*pre-judge*]
- D. Saying it in the positive? **Treat everyone the same!**

E. What does “*respect of persons*” actually look like?

1. **Discrimination** - the act, practice, or an instance of discriminating categorically rather than individually.
2. **To be bias, bent, to have a tendency** - an inclination of temperament or outlook, especially a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment.
3. **Prejudice**, from the words **pre + judge**: **preconceived judgment or opinion**; an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge.
4. **Judgments** based on evil motives.

F. James is **not** talking about the kind of **discernment** that comes from a thorough understanding of another’s character.

1. The 3 other places **partiality/favoritism** shows up in the NT. **We’re assured the Father is not a respecter of persons.**
 - a) When He judges, He judges the **heart**, **not** outward appearances!
2. **Wrong Judging!** - Mt.7:1 **Judge not, that you be not judged.**
 - a) *krino* meaning, “*to separate, select so as to declare a verdict.*”

G. This type of judging is wrong because of the **motive** or **attitude** behind it.

1. **Right Discerning!** - Heb.5:14 **But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.** (NIV)
 - a) *diakrino* (prefix added) meaning, “*to separate, to distinguish, to select.*”
 - b) It’s the idea of distinguishing on the basis of comparison, coupled w/careful thinking
 - c) The mark of a **mature Christian** is the ability **to** discern good from evil, strengths from weaknesses, **to** be concerned for the welfare of those we correct.

H. **THE WEALTHY & THE POOR!** (2-7)

I. (2,3) James fleshes out the issue w/a vivid illustration. They were guilty of 2 things:

1. **Treating rich visitors with great respect & Treating poor visitors with no respect.**
 - a) In 1884 a young man died, and after the funeral his grieving parents decided to establish a memorial to him. With that in mind they met with **Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University**. Eliot received the unpretentious couple into his office and asked what he could do. After they expressed their desire to fund a memorial, Eliot impatiently said, “Perhaps you have in mind a scholarship.” “We were thinking of something more substantial than that...perhaps a building,” the woman replied. In a patronizing tone, Eliot brushed aside the idea as being too expensive and the couple departed. **The next year**, Eliot learned that this plain pair had gone elsewhere and established a \$26 million memorial named **Leland Stanford Junior University**, better known today as **Stanford!**¹

¹ Today in the Word, June 11, 1992

2. **Explain: Chief seats** in synagogue (sit here in a good place); **stepped seating** around sides (sit here at my footstool).
3. If you're an **usher**, you're probably not going to struggle with sitting **Mr. Have**, a wealthy man up **front & Mr. Have Not**, a homeless person in the **back**.
But how might we struggle with this?
 - a) We still struggle with this...we're just better at **hiding** it now!
 - b) It's leveraging a relationship: **What can I get/take from this relationship?**
 - (1) Their **position** might be of help to you in the future; their **finances**; their **connections**; even their "**coolness!**" (like it will rub off on you)
4. Dan & I were talking about being at an "Exponential 07" Generosity conf at Saddleback Church.
 - a) "You can **live** without giving, **but** you can't **love** without giving."
 - b) "Satan has a zillion ways to waste your money."
 - c) Rick Warren was on Larry King live because of the success of his book...**but how did Rick leverage it? For himself? For his fame?** He said, he realized, **he was given a voice so he can be a voice for those who don't have a voice!**
- J. (4) **So why can't I show partiality?** Because it's impossible to judge another person's motives simply on the basis of *outward appearance* or any other *external force*.
 1. **No one can determine the heart of another especially in a 1st-time encounter.**
 - a) **That's why James says it's wrong!**
- K. **Given half a chance, people often crawl out of the boxes into which we've relegated them!**
- L. **Judges with evil thoughts** - It might be in hopes of **selfish gain**; **or** to maintain **class distinctions**; **or** simply out of **pride & contempt**.
 1. In his autobiography, **Mahatma Gandhi** wrote that during his student days he read the Gospels seriously and considered converting to Christianity. He believed that in the teachings of Jesus he could find the solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India. So one Sunday he decided to attend services at a nearby church and talk to the minister about becoming a Christian. When he entered the sanctuary, **however, the usher** refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go worship with his own people. **Gandhi left the church and never returned.** "If Christians have caste differences also," he said, "I might as well remain a Hindu."
- M. (5b-7) **The Enigma!** - James can't understand this, for often it is the rich who persecuted them **&** ridiculed their Savior.

N. **SELF & NEIGHBOR!** (8-11)O. (8) Obey the Lord's *Royal Command!*

1. Moses said it in Lev.19:18...It was law then, & it is still today, to love your neighbor as yourself!
2. Wow, what if all our relationships were guided by the *royal law of love?*
 - a) Unfortunately we all have certain *built-in prejudices* that color our reactions to people. Some against: divorced people, or emotionally ill people, or those who belong to a different political party, different ethnic or religious backgrounds.
 - b) We all have our unwritten royal law of love that states, "I'll love you if you don't speak w/an accent...if you dress a certain way...if you're educated...if...if...if."
3. Two apples up in a tree were looking down on the world. The **first apple** said, "Look at all those people fighting, robbing, rioting - no one seems willing to get along with his fellow man. Someday we apples will be the only ones left. Then we'll rule the world."
Replied the **second apple**, "Which of us - the reds or the greens?"

P. (9-11) Now, as if James is reading his readers minds, "Ok, my love might have a few *little limitations*, but at least we're not murderers!" (see vs.10)Q. If are a "*respect of persons*", you are sinning, you are a transgressor of the law:

1. Its inconsistent with **God's character**(5); Its inconsistent with **sound logic** (6,7); It's **inconsistent with Scripture** (8-11); It's **sin** (9); It makes you **guilty of the whole law** of God (10); It is just **as serious a sin as** adultery and killing (11); **God will judge** Sin (11).

R. **MERCY & JUDGMENT!** (12-13)S. (12) *Law of liberty/freedom* - Not freedom *from* the obligations of moral law; it is freedom to *fulfill* the just requirements of the law. (18b)

T. 3 basic principles:

1. **Let the Scriptures be your standard, not how we were raised!** (12)
 - a) Instead of excusing our prejudices w/statements like, "*That's the way I was brought up!*" - "*That's just the way I am!*"
 - (1) Allow God to change how you **think, speak, & act** by living according to his word.
2. **Let love be your law!**
 - a) Some of the most needy people get treated the worse.
 - b) Ask, *How can I love this person? - What's needed to build this person up?*

3. Let Mercy be your message! (13)

a) To **show** no mercy **is to receive** no mercy!

(1) We are commanded to temper justice w/mercy.

U. (13b) Mercy triumphs over judgment (not over *justice*, but judgment/*condemnation*).

1. It was once said that when we see a brother or sister **in sin**, there are 2 things we do not know: **First**, we do not know how hard he or she tried **not to sin**. And **second**, we do not know **the power of the forces** that assailed him or her. **We also** do not know what **we** would have done in the same circumstances.

V. **When I recognize my prejudice**, I will tell myself ***I lack sound information*** & am ***pre-judging*** that person, which makes my opinion ***irrational & unfair***.

A woman was waiting at an airport one night. With several long hours before her flight. She hunted for a book in the airport shop, Bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop. She was engrossed in her book, but happened to see, That the man beside her, as bold as could be, Grabbed a cookie or two from the bag between, Which she tried to ignore, to avoid a scene. She read, munched cookies, and watched the clock, As the gutsy “cookie thief!” diminished her stock. She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by, Thinking, “If I wasn’t so nice, I’d blacken his eye!” With each cookie she took, he took one, too. When only one was left, she wondered what he’d do. With a smile on his face and a nervous laugh, He took the last cookie and broke it in half. He offered her half, as he ate the other. She snatched it from him and thought, “Oh brother, This guy has some nerve, and he’s also rude, Why, he didn’t even show any gratitude!” She had never known when she had been so galled, And sighed with relief when her flight was called. She gathered her belongings and headed for the gate, Refusing to look back at the “thieving ingrate.” She boarded the plane and sank in her seat, Then sought her book, which was almost complete. As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise. There was her bag of cookies in front of her eyes! “If mine are here, she moaned with despair, Then the others were his and he tried to share! Too late to apologize, she realized with grief, That she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief!”