

Grace, Mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. **This is God's Word.**

Dear fellow brothers and sisters in faith,

Do you have any pets at home or are there any pets where you go to school? A few years ago, my wife taught at a school in Wisconsin and one of the teachers had a guinea pig at the school. My wife liked to talk to the guinea pig, because he would move around and make noise and it was sort of entertaining. One day she was talking to the guinea pig for almost (5) minutes before she noticed he wasn't moving around and he wasn't making any noise. It was then that she realized she was talking to a dead guinea pig. Guinea pigs don't live real long and this one had died. It was very apparent because there was no movement – there was no action.

As we consider this portion of scripture from James, we see that he is also talking about something that is either alive or dead. He is talking about faith. James points out that if faith is alive, there is some action – some movement to indicate it is alive so as we consider these words of James, we want to see what he has to say about **"Real Faith in Real Life."** He points out how, **"Real Faith Reflects God's Love."** And how **"Real faith Gives Glory to God."**

I. There are many times that we have confessed our Christian faith by saying the words of the Apostles Creed or we have told someone that we are a Christian, but what does that really mean? It means more than just having your name on the membership roles here at Beautiful Savior or some other Christian church. It means more than the fact that you have been baptized

Being a Christian means that there is something living and active within us. It means that our hearts are filled with confidence and trust in Jesus as our Savior and that moves us to do or not do things. James gives us a practical example of that at the beginning of this portion of scripture,

“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.” James begins by describing these people of faith as, **“believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Like the people James is addressing this letter to, we also are believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. We trust in Jesus as our Savior and we trust in him as our “glorious Savior,” who has completed his mission on earth and is ruling in heaven in glory for our benefit. The mission of Christ was to die on the cross and to pay for the sins of the world and he has done just that and we recognize that he has paid for our sins through faith.

Such faith is a gift from God. We can’t accept Jesus on our own. We were born as enemies of God and our sinful nature tells us we don’t need a Savior. We are only a child of God because of God’s love. It’s only possible because God **“wants all [people] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4).** **“It is by grace that we have been saved through faith and that not of ourselves. It is a gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8)** When the Spirit created faith in our hearts, that faith opened our eyes to the love of God. It is that love of God which we want to reflect in all that we do and in our attitude towards others.

James writes about how our attitude towards others is not always God-pleasing. It doesn’t always reflect the love of Christ that is in our hearts. As an example, he points to **favoritism**. Differentiating between people according to their stature and wealth. Giving all our attention to the wealthy and ignoring the poor. If we judge people in this way and show preference to them, James calls us **“Judges with evil thoughts.”** That sounds pretty harsh, but when we judge people according to the standards of the world, we are using a standard tainted by sin.

We are exchanging earthly wealth for spiritual wealth. Christ didn’t consider earthly wealth to be very important. He was born in a stable and once he began his ministry, he didn’t even have a place to call home. According to the standards of the world he was homeless and poor, yet he bought for us a treasure beyond comparison – he bought for us the forgiveness of sins and has given that forgiveness to us through faith. This Spiritual wealth is a wealth that lasts an eternity and now James asks us to reflect that spiritual wealth in our lives.

As you think about these words from James, How’s your attitude? Do you ever show favoritism? When we think of favoritism, we think of prejudice and most of us would say that, “We are not prejudiced at all.” That’s why James makes his point another way. He writes that showing favoritism is also, “To love your neighbor as yourself.”

Then the question becomes more difficult. We have to ask ourselves, “Do I love all people equally?” “What about those people that get under my skin? People that I just don’t like?” Do I have to count them too? I’d like to tell you not to worry about the difficult people in your lives -- we all have those kind of people but God’s Word says that’s not okay, “God’s Word says, Don’t discriminate against the difficult people in our lives either.” Because once we judge people by our own standards or the world’s standards, that leads us to sin – and not only the sin of favoritism but other sins like gossip or slander. James writes, **“If you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point, is guilty of breaking it all.”**

If your whole life was perfect, but you slipped up just once, you'd stand before God as a lawbreaker. It takes only one little pin to pop a balloon or a little stone to shatter a window. The law isn't like a set of bowling pins. You can't knock down one and leave the rest standing. Thanks be to God he doesn't play favorites. Thanks be to God that he sent Jesus to pay for all of our sins, including the ones when we fail to love our neighbor as ourselves. What a great love our God has shown us and we pray that through faith we are able to reflect that love in our actions. For in all our actions, we want to give glory to God.

II. James points out that Real faith Gives Glory to God. It gives glory to God through action. A seminary professor once said, "The Christian does good works not TO BE SAVED but because they ARE SAVED! James asks, **"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?"** In other words, how can you reflect the love of Christ that is in your hearts if that love is not evident in your lives? James gives us an example – If you have someone who comes to you and they are destitute and in need of food and clothing and you send them on their way, wishing them a good day, you really have done nothing at all. Your actions have spoken much louder and clearer than your words. You have not loved your neighbor as yourself; you have not given glory to God with your actions.

Sometimes we slip into the notion that since "good works" do not save and it is only faith that saves, then we don't have to do any good works at all. But the apostle Paul points out in his letter to the Ephesians that God **"Prepared good works in advance for us to do."** This is something that God wants us to do. It reflects the love of Christ that is in our hearts and it gives glory to God.

That can happen in so many ways. Like when parents care for their children, or when we share the gospel with someone who has never heard it before, or when parents discipline their children, or when families come to church, or when we give food to help feed the poor through food banks, or when we give blood through the Red Cross, or when we donate to a local relief agency – and the list could go on and on. That is faith in action – that is loving your neighbor as yourself – that is giving glory to God. *These deeds don't earn us salvation*, Jesus already did that for us, but our good works can show that our faith in Jesus, our Savior is very much alive.

We can usually tell if something is dead or alive by the amount of action we see. God has given us new life through his Word. He has created faith in our hearts and it a real faith that brings us real life – spiritual life. We are alive! Our faith lives in us!

May Real Faith in your Hearts Reflect God's Love in your Actions. May The Real Faith in your hearts Give Glory to God through your actions. Amen