If you believe in an all powerful, all good, God, how can you not believe we are in a war, because I think it is rather obvious that this word doesn't reflect the character of an all powerful, all good God.

Gregory Boyd in *Furious Love*

Prayer Study # 486

JAMES CHAPTER TWO

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia

James 2Amplified Bible (AMP)

The Sin of Partiality

FAVORITISM

2 *My fellow believers, do not practice your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of partiality [toward people—show no favoritism, no prejudice, no snobbery].*

The New Testament consistently condemns showing favoritism to others because they are rich or famous or popular or powerful. Jesus showed no favoritism (Luke 20:21: *Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, by teach the way of God in truth.*) Even the orthodox Jews who hated Him had to admit that He did not show favoritism. Paul went straight to this point in his letter to the Romans: *For there is no partiality with God* (Romans 2:11).

SNOBBERY WITHIN THE CHURCH

2 *For if a man comes into your meeting place wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in,* ***3*** *and you pay special attention to the one who wears the fine clothes, and say to him, "You sit here in this good seat," and you tell the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down*

*[on the floor] by my footstool,” **4** have you not discriminated among yourselves, and become judges with wrong motives?*

In the ancient world rich people wore rings on every finger except the middle one. This was such an issue that Clement of Alexandria recommended that Christians, regardless of their economic cirumstances, only wear one ring on the little finger. That ring should have a Christian symbol on it, indicating that the wearer was seal with a ring to follow Christ.

In these verses we see the sad reaction of the Church, still somewhat common today, toward rich and poor. The rich man is ushered to a special seat and given honor and respect. The poor man is told to stand, probably in the back of the meeting room, or to squat on the floor, beside the footstool of the rich.

The Church was the only place in the ancient world where social discrimination was not to exist. Yet even in these early churches there was a problem with the leadership showing partiality to the rich, of making class distinctions which were and are a “no, no” in the Christian Church.

THE RICHES OF POVERTY AND THE POVERTY OF RICHES

***5** Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters: has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and [as believers to be] heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? **6** But you [in contrast] have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress and exploit you, and personally drag you into the courts of law? **7** Do they not*

blaspheme the precious name [of Christ] by which you are called?

In Jesus' first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus said, **"He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor"** (Luke 4:18). James is not condemning having riches. He is condemning how rich people use their money. In the ancient world, the rich exploited the poor and could have them arrest and taken to court immediately upon seizing them on the streets. The rich thought they had no need of a savior, but the poor felt so much love and welcoming in the Church that they were caught up with Christianity and filled the churches of that day.

THE ROYAL LAW

8 *If, however, you are [really] fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself [that is, if you have an unselfish concern for others and do things for their benefit]" you are doing well.* ***9*** *But if you show partiality [prejudice, favoritism], you are committing sin and are convicted by the Law as offenders.* ***10*** *For whoever keeps the whole Law but stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of [breaking] all of it.* ***11*** *For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you have become guilty of transgressing the [entire] Law.*

James calls the great commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves the *royal law.* Perhaps he is thinking that the King of kings is the one who gave this commandment. Then he goes on and explains that when you break one little part of the law, you are a sinner or transgressor and before God will

receive punishment as though you broke all of the law. Of course, because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, you have been justified, just as if you had never sinned.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY AND THE LAW OF MERCY

12 *Speak and act [consistently] as people who are going to be judged by the law of liberty [that moral law that frees obedient Christians from the bondage of sin].* ***13*** *For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; but [to the one who has shown mercy] mercy triumphs [victoriously] over judgment.*

As he finishes the first section of this letter, James reminds the Christian of two great facts of the Christian faith:

a) We are under the law of liberty. The religious people follow a complicated set of rules and laws and face punishment. The Christians are free from the law and eternal punishment because of the blood of Jesus. They walk according to genuine love towards Christ and towards others. This love for Christ compels them to obey Him.
b) Only those who show mercy will receive mercy.

Faith and Works

14 *What is the benefit, my fellow believers, if someone claims to have faith but has no [good] works [as evidence]? Can that [kind of] faith save him? [No, a mere claim of faith is not sufficient—genuine faith produces good works.]* ***15*** *If a brother or sister is without [adequate] clothing and lacks*

[enough] food for each day, ***16*** *and one of you says to them, “Go in peace [with my blessing], [keep] warm and feed yourselves,” but he does not give them the necessities for the body, what good does that do?* ***17*** *So too, faith, if it does not have works [to back it up], is by itself dead [inoperative and ineffective].* ***18*** *But someone may say, “You [claim to] have faith and I have [good] works; show me your [alleged] faith without the works [if you can], and I will show you my faith by my works [that is, by what I do].”* ***19*** *You believe that God is one; you do well [to believe that]. The demons also believe [that], and shudder and bristle [in awe-filled terror—they have seen His wrath]!* ***20*** *But are you willing to recognize, you foolish [spiritually shallow] person, that faith without [good] works is useless?* ***21*** *Was our father Abraham not [shown to be] justified by works [of obedience which expressed his faith] when he offered Isaac his son on the altar [as a sacrifice to God]?* ***22*** *You see that [his] faith was working together with his works, and as a result of the works, his faith was completed [reaching its maturity when he expressed his faith through obedience].* ***23*** *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and this [faith] was credited to him [by God] as righteousness and as conformity to His will,” and he was called the friend of God.* ***24*** *You see that a man (believer) is justified by works and not by faith alone [that is, by acts of obedience a born-again believer reveals his faith].* ***25*** *In the same way, was Rahab the prostitute not justified by works too, when she received the [Hebrew] spies as guests and protected them, and sent them away [to escape] by a different route?* ***26*** *For just as the [human] body without the*

spirit is dead, so faith without works [of obedience] is also dead.

All of us know that salvation is a free gift from God to all who will yield to the Holy Spirit's drawing and invite Jesus to come in their hearts. James is in no way contradicting this fact. Nor is James contradicting Paul who said in Romans 3:28: *A person is justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ…* and in Ephesians 2:8-"*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" bit further.* James emphasis is on what the new creation in Christ, already 100% saved, does. Our works are important, and the New Testament constantly emphasizes this fact. Jesus Himself said, ***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"*** (Matthew 5:16). Even Paul preaches the importance of words: *Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*

Those who have not been washed by the blood of Jesus will stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment and be judged according to their sin (Revelation 20:11-15). Those who know Jesus, however, will not be judged according to sin, because the blood of Jesus continually cleanses us from all unrighteousness: *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin* (1st John 1:7). Nevertheless, we will be judge according to our works (Matthew 25:31-46; 1st Corinthians 9:24-25; 2nd Timothy 2:5).

In summary Paul's main emphasis is on grace and faith, and James' emphasis is on action and works. Paul teaches those who are at the very beginning of the Christian life, and he insists that no one can do anything to earn the forgiveness of God. We can only accept His forgiveness. James, on the other land, teaches those who are professing Christians who are walking out their faith. These Christians have been justified, just as if they had never sinned. Now they must sanctified or separated unto God from the world. We are not saved by works, but we are saved for works.

James illustrates his position that faith without works is dead by giving the example of someone who says they have faith but do no deeds. They see a person in desperate need, and they speak words of comfort but make no effort to change the needy person's circumstances. D

James also uses the examples of Abraham and Rehab. Abraham had faith to believe God, even when this belief was tested by God telling Abraham to put Isaac on the altar and kill him as a sacrifice. His faith cooperated with his works, and he was called "the friend of God."

Rehab also had faith, and this faith caused her to act. Unless Rehab had been prepared to risk everything to help the spies, her faith would have been useless.

Barclay writes of these two examples: "These two examples show that faith and deeds are not opposites; they are, in fact, inseparables. No one will ever be moved to action without faith, and our faith is not genuine unless it moves us to action."

"What A Difference You've Made In My Life"

What a difference you've made in my life.
What a difference you've made in my life
You're my sunshine day and night
Oh, what a difference you've made in my life.

What a change you have made in my heart
What a change you have made in my heart
You replaced all the broken parts
Oh, what a change you have made in my heart.

Love to me was just a word in a song that had been way overused
But now I've joined in the singin'
'Cause you've shown me love's true meanin'
That's why I want to spread the news.

What a difference you've made in my life
What a difference you've made in my life
You're my sunshine day and night
Oh, what a difference you've made in my life.

What a difference you've made in my life (listen to it)
What a difference you've made in my life
You're my sunshine day and night
Oh, what a difference you've made, yeah.

What a difference you've made in my life
Difference you've made in my life
What a difference you've made in my life
You're my sunshine day and night
Oh, what a difference you've made.

Go ahead and sing it.

What a difference you've made in my life

What a difference you've made in my life,
Yeah-heah-eah-eah-heah
You're my sunshine day and night
Oh yeah, sing it to me
What a difference you've made.

What a difference you've made in my life, woh-oh-oh-oh
What a difference you've made in my life
You're my sunshine day and night
Oh, what a difference you've made
What a difference you've made, in my life...