

Mercy Should Never Be Picked Last

Q&A: 205-677-True

- Opening: Last week Chase preached a sermon called **No Face Choosing**, based on **James 2:1-10**. James instructs the church in this passage: **V1. My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.** In summary partiality is an action in which *your treatment of a person or group of people is based on some external attribute.* You confer superiority on one person at the expense of another.
 - And this would certainly create the type of schisms in the church that the NT teaches against. Paul told the Corinthians **1 Cor 12:25**, that God has so worked that **there may be no division in the body, but that the members have the same care for one another.**
 - Favoritism is not congruent with the gospel of Jesus. That is why James says **show no partiality AS YOU hold the faith.** If you are doing the one, you won't do the other.
- As Chase mentioned last week, although James uses the example in chapter 2 of deferring to the rich over the poor; that is not the only way by which we fall into the peril of partiality.
 - We might find ourselves distinguishing between people because of social status (popularity); personality; race or ethnicity; taking offense; unforgiveness.
 - And James says in **v4**, that if we distinguish between people for external reasons - **we have become judges with evil thoughts.** And then later in **v8-9**. He says that this is sin, because **you are not fulfilling the Royal law.** **What is meant there by the Royal Law?**
 - If this year proceeds as planned, you will hear us mention a simplified version of an acrostic that we first introduced here a few years ago. **ACT**. As people of faith, we ACT, we take action. This is what James is leading up to - a passage we will look at next week: **What good is it my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?**
 - As Chase read from Tim Keller last week, **in Christianity being comes before doing.** You find your identity first. Then you learn how to act. We have said it this way many times: **if you know who you are - you will know what to do.** When you're identity is a Christ-follower, works will follow. You will **ACT**.
 - **Adore** - This is the primary command of a Christ follower; **Connect** - the second command to **love and serve** people; **Tell** - Our commission to make disciples. **God brought us forth by the word of truth (James 2:18)** We look for ways to invest the word of truth into others.
 - The sin of partiality is a violation, of the **Royal Law - The Law of Love.** Our command is to love and serve God and to love and serve people (**A.C.T**). And Jesus tells us that every command of God rolls up into these two. **So if** there people in the church that we purposefully distance ourselves from, or that we overlook; that we fail to reach out to, or invite into our home, or invest in, or spend time with due to some external factor, and if we confer superiority on one person at the expense of another - we have transgressed against the **Royal Law**.

- Now I want to take a side path for just a moment. I believe it would be an **error (not sin)** but an error to say what James is teaching here is **relational uniformity**. This would be the idea that among your relationships, there can be absolutely no distinctives. But I am not convinced that is what this passage means. If you chose to live like this, it would certainly not be sinful. Maybe it would even be best. But I think to say that is what James is teaching is an overreach. And I base that primarily on how we see Jesus Christ operating in the NT
 - Jesus showed no partiality. He served and died for ALL, even his enemies. *But there were some notable distinctives in his relationships*. For example, **Jesus did not grant everyone the same calling** (John 21 after the restoration of Peter Jesus told him **that when he was old, people would stretch out his hands and carry him where he didn't want to go** (Foreshadowing). Peter, seeing the Apostle John nearby following them as they walked, and asks Jesus, **'Lord, what about him'**. Jesus responds, **'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me'**. Another example is that **Jesus did not give everyone the same access** during his earthly ministry. Of his 12 Apostles, Jesus chose to only make 3 of them witnesses to one of the most profound moments of his earthly life, the transfiguration; where Jesus' Heavenly glory was revealed on him physically. And furthermore according to **Mark 9:9 - he ordered them to not to tell anyone what they had seen until after he had risen from the dead**. (They had to keep it a secret - No social media was a blessing)
- I do not believe Jesus modeled relational uniformity, and I do not think that is what James is teaching. There will be divine distinctives among the church due to a variety of callings and life circumstances that God grants to us. I believe that it is allowable to have distinctives among the access we grant into the most personal aspects of our lives. I am not convinced this passage teaches against that. Although, that may not be the best way to live.
- But what I absolutely believe this is teaching - is that no one in the church should be overlooked, ignored, marginalized, or excluded for any reason except perhaps in a rare case of church discipline due to willful unrepentant sin. And I believe battling against partiality takes intentional, consistent, and personally work. (**Thanksgiving for the alone**)
- This message is overlapping Chase's from last week, and I am finishing up the section of thought he started. His sermon was called **No Face Choosing**. This is serving as the second part of that message and I am calling it **Mercy Should Never Be Picked Last**.
- I was picturing how we choose teams on the field for a pickup game. We line everyone up, and choose one by one. This is a particularly hurtful time for me, because I am always last. Since at least the 5th grade, my skills on the field have been vastly underappreciated. You don't become consistent last choice by accident; you are last because people think you stink. They do not see your value. And so I was wondering, what if we were picking the team for the church. And before us we had all of these different attributes to choose from: *Dynamic Worship Leader, complete with skinny jeans (no offense John); Incredible bible teacher, always makes you laugh and never goes over 30 min (no offense to me and Chase), immaculate facilities, cool website,*

Hip logo, multi campuses, friendliness, (christmas Tree?), video announcements, innovation, Truth, Prophecies, Dreams and Visions, Youth Ministry, Missions. And there in the very back, is Mercy. What place would mercy have on our team? How much do we value being a church of great Mercy? And do we realize that if we are not a church of great Mercy, then we do not reflect the God we worship?

- Paul told the church in Rome, **God shows no partiality**. Even though he would have been just in doing so. Every one of us have failed God. Moreso, every one of us has dishonored God. Everyone of us has offended God. Look at **James 2:10, For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 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.**
- Every one of us in some way are transgressors of the whole law. Think on that. Any single infraction of God’s law, makes us guilty of the whole law. In God’s courtroom, every defendant is the same. We can make distinctions. We can say, well ‘I did not do this sin’ or ‘I did not do that sin’, but before the creator judge of all the universe, we are all guilty of all the law. And the wages of breaking God’s law is death, for all transgressors. There is no difference. There is no place for comparisons. There is nothing that makes us superior. *The ground is level at the foot of the cross.*
 - **And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world...carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2**
- God is a God rich in Mercy. And HIS church must reflect that.
- James continues in **v12-13: So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**
 - We talked about the Law of Liberty in the 5th sermon in this series, because James uses that same term in **1:25**. The Jewish Christians receiving this letter from James would have been very familiar with the Old Testament law with all of its requirements. The law was good - But mankind could not fully obey it. **So they were not freed by it**, but ultimately condemned. But Jesus - came and fully obeyed the law on behalf of all who look to Him for help. The gospel teaches us that Jesus lived the life that we could not live; yet died. The wages of sin is death. Why did Jesus die if he never sinned? Why did he have to pay that wage? Because He died in our place. And he offers this great exchange for anyone who will look to him in faith, and then show that faith through repentance of their sins. He took our place in the courtroom of God; He received our guilty verdict. And He grants to us innocence. Jesus received the punishment under the OT law and We walk out of the courtroom in freedom - now under the Law of Liberty. **Romans 8:2 For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death.**

- This in no way minimizes our transgressions. This is not God's way of saying that what we have done is not a big deal. Quite the contrary, **the cross is a reminder that we are far worse than we can ever imagine but far more loved than we can ever understand.** And so we rejoice because **if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed John 8:36**
 - And so James tells us to speak and act as those who are judged under the law of liberty. How do people live, who have been granted incomprehensible mercy? We live as merciful people. We show no partiality. We make no boasts of our merit. We consider ourselves greater than no one. We forgive, We forgive, We forgive. We display the character of the gospel that has saved us. We obey the royal law of LOVE. We are patient. We are kind. We are not resentful. We do not insist on our own way. We rejoice with truth. But we keep no records of wrong. And Agape, we do this for everyone among us. Because **judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.** Jesus taught this many times: *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Matthew 5:7. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. Matthew 6:14 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours. Matthew 6:15. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as God had on you?" Matthew 18:33*
 - Agape, we must be a church of great mercy. Because **Mercy triumphs over judgment.** It is the way of God. It is the source of your hope. It is the way we must live.
- Place your faith in Jesus and let God's mercy triumph over judgement in your life
 - Be Baptized
 - Live the character of the salvation you have been given. Be people of mercy, no partiality.