

Jesus and Prejudice

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[0 : 0 0] Father, your word tells us that we're very easy seeing specks of sin in other people's eyes and blind to the huge log sticking out of our eyes.

And your word tells us that we flatter ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin. And Father, we know that your word says that, but we confess before you, Father, that we often don't really feel it and don't really practice it or think it.

Father, as we read your word today, Father, your word really is going to challenge us in this. And so, Father, we invite and give you permission with nothing held back to have your word speak into the depths of who we are.

We hold nothing back that your word might speak into the depths of who we are, might reveal who we are, might bring the gospel to who we are, might rule in who we are in our daily lives.

So, Father, we ask in your kindness that you would have the Holy Spirit bring your word to us. And this we ask in Jesus's name. Amen. Please be seated. So, the Bible text today addresses one of the main issues that is sort of tearing apart modern society in North America.

[1 : 3 2] So, if you turn with me in your Bibles to James chapter 1, verses 26, we'll look at the text. James chapter 1, verse 26 and following, and we'll look at the text.

And here's how it goes. It doesn't sort of get right at it at first, this issue which is tearing apart much of the fabric of society in North America, but it's going to get there.

And here's how it begins. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

James, tell us what you really think. It's worthless. Do you want to nuance that? No, it's worthless. Religion, verse 27, that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

And we're just going to pause that. We're sort of looking here. So, right off the way, we're right off the way. Well, just one simple thing, if you're not aware of it. The Bible, all the way through the Bible, right from the beginning of the Bible to the end of the Bible, Old and New Testament, when you see the phrase orphans and widows or widows and orphans, depends on the, it's the same type of thing, what you have to understand is it's talking about the poor and the powerless.

[3 : 0 0] That's a poetic way of talking about the poor and the powerless. The poor are always powerless. Some people who aren't poor are also powerless. But that's what it's talking about, poor and powerless.

But the problem we're going to have right away with reading this text is the word religion. And those of you who might be watching or those of you here who are seekers or trying to figure out or you got dragged here, you're not familiar with the Christian faith.

One of the things that evangelicals like us tend to say is when we see the word religion, it's two thumbs down. It's only bad. We would echo the phrase of that famous theologian Bono from U2, who says that religion is what you have when the Holy Spirit has left the room.

Or the religion is what you have when Jesus has left the room and what you got left is religion. And that's what we would say. We would say as well, we're not into religion, we're into relationship, a relationship with Jesus.

And that's what we would say. We would almost always use the word religion in a bad way. And that in fact fits with how most Canadians would understand it. If I told people that I was very religious, they'd go, what?

[4 : 15] In their mind, they'd go, what? He said he was really religious? Like in a positive way? But if I said that I was very spiritual, people might go, oh, that's sort of interesting. You know, spiritual, not religious. It's not a phrase you hear very much anymore.

But for most Canadians, we might tolerate religious people as long as they keep their religion private. In other words, spiritual. But religion is generally a bad word in Canada.

And spiritual or spirituality is generally a neutral to good word in Canadian society. So right off the bat, when we're reading the Bible, we're going to have a hard time. We're going to misunderstand what the Bible says.

Listen to it again. And by the way, it's not always going to be easy to have the words on the screen. It's one of the reasons why it's really important for those of you who are Christians to bring your own Bibles. Or to bring your phone and have the Bible text and try to control your desire to check Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

You know, maybe in fact you need to have a locking mechanism. It only opens the Bible. Don't check the weather for the afternoon. Just the Bible. Most of us would be wiser if we spent less time on electronic devices, actually.

[5 : 22] But that's a whole other topic of conversation. And by the way, if you're watching this online, there's a bit of an exception for the service. We don't want you to turn the service off right now.

We're really glad you can join online. Okay? So anyway, the verses again, it goes, If anyone thinks he's religious, and right off the bat we're going, Boo, yeah, yeah, boo, boo.

But then it goes, And does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart. That person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

So what is really going on here with the use of the word religion? And by the way, as I've said many times, Christopher Hitchens, the New Atheists, Deconversion Blogs, none of them can top the New Testament for critiquing religion.

None of them can top the New Testament for critiquing religion in the bad sense. What's going on here is a different word, a neutral word.

[6 : 25] And in fact, it captures, when I was a young man, there used to be posters and stuff like that that would ask this question. If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? And so the religion here is being used about the external life that you live, the things that people can observe.

And that's what it's being talked about. So in a sense, you know, if all of a sudden your co-workers, you know, they're, I don't know, they're just sort of, they see how you are at work, and maybe they happen to see your credit card bill or your financial statement, and they say, well, he doesn't spend money like a Christian.

I don't know, he likes to curse and swear and use foul language, and I've seen him on Pornhub, and I don't know, like, he's a Christian? Really? It's a bit of a shock.

That's the question. If you were put on trial for being a Christian from your behavior people could observe, would there be enough evidence to convict you? So now that you understand it, you're saying it's very, very interesting what John, sorry, James is saying, is this is what, these are going to be, in a sense, three tests that we're going to have in terms of trying to evaluate religion, how you actually live your life as a Christian.

[7 : 49] And it's very, very interesting. Like, whenever I prepare a sermon, I spend some time in prayer thinking about what would happen if this was the Sunday, or if I was to share this text with some of the non-Christian friends that I have, some of the non-Christians that I know, and I try to guess how they'd, I try to figure out a little bit from conversations how they might react to the text.

And just as a group like us will have problems with the word religion, they would have problems with the word religion. But it's an interesting three set of tests. Tests, and I was thinking about it. I think for my secular friends, they'd like the first test.

Because I think most people would say, like, in fact, if you could write a self-help book on how to control the tongue better, people would buy it. Like, people would buy it. If you could come up with some proven techniques to help you control the tongue, people would buy that.

Because lots of people would acknowledge that they say stupid things. And that's not even counting foul language and all that other type of stuff. That most of us would acknowledge.

In fact, if there could be a book, Men, How to Finally Talk Perfectly to Your Wife, lots of men would buy that book. It'd probably have to be written by a woman, by the way, because a man, most of us men are, as our wives would put it, shockingly slow learners in terms of how to speak to their wife.

[9 : 20] But so most Canadians think, that's a pretty good test. And then be interesting about how you relate to the poor and the powerless, that people who are actually practicing a good religion, like externals, there's a particular way, in a sense, an openness, a visiting, a caring for the poor and the powerless.

And I think most Canadians would say, yeah, that's two thumbs up. That's a pretty good test. And then I was thinking about the fact that the worldly thing, keeping yourself unsteamed from the world, and here's where it would get a little bit tricky.

I think for those of you who are watching who aren't Christians, you'd go, I don't even know what that means. Like, it sounds a bit weird. But it would get very, very uncomfortable. Like, you know, one fellow that I have, who I'm friends with, very friendly with, one of the things he likes to do in his spare time, he's gay, and he loves to go see drag queens.

That's one of the things he loves to do, like go see a really good drag show. And if I was to tell him that that would be an example of the world, that you're supposed to keep yourself unsteamed for, there'd probably be a bit of an awkward silence there.

Right? So on one hand, this is a sort of an interesting list, and just a bit of a clue here, or a precursor. Most of the rest of the book of James is sort of woven around these three themes.

[10 : 39] How you use your tongue, how you deal with the weak, how you deal with the poor and the powerless, how you deal with the weak, and how you keep yourself unstained from the world.

That, in fact, is sort of how the rest of the book, most of the rest of the book unfolds, around trying to dig into that in terms of what exactly it looks like. And you still might, but one of the other things, before we get into the rest of it is, it might be a bit shocking, it is a bit shocking to us, as to why it says that these three things are the test of religion.

Like, you might say, okay, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Like, why isn't it talking about communion, baptism, like Bible reading, proper worship, church attendance, like small groups, your personal prayer life?

Like, why is it, what's going on here? So there's two things to understand, because that's a very, very good thing to be puzzled over. The first thing is that you could talk about all the different spiritualities and religions of the world in terms of how they try to balance the vertical and the horizontal.

Or in other words, the God word aspect of religion and the human aspect and creational aspect of what it means to, in that religion. God word might be better than vertical for those religions who sort of see God everywhere.

[12 : 07] But, you know, in a sense, you could put a bit of a thing, you know, some emphasize more the horizontal, some emphasize more the vertical. But there is, in fact, the Bible calls us to a type of balance around that.

And if you read the Gospel of John, Gospel of John is big, big, big on the vertical. Like you read, I mean, in fact, it even comes right out and says at the end of the book, why did I write this book? I wrote this book so you would know who Jesus is and follow him.

Like, he tells you why he wrote it. Like, it's almost all vertical. James, but it's not just vertical, there's other things in it that talk about the horizontal, how you live in terms of with other people and with the creation.

I just sort of, a bit of an aside. Do you want to know something which is really cool? This isn't actually known very much. We all know, like, who was it who invented the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals?

The people who were responsible for it. Wilberforce was one of the people, the same guy who was responsible for abolishing slavery, and also, one of the guys responsible, you can talk to James Lenny afterwards, for the Christian, the outreach to Israel, which, in fact, created, helped create eventually the whole nation of Israel.

[13 : 16] It was evangelicals that wanted people to come to a relationship with Jesus who started the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. So, anyway, so John is primarily vertical.

James is a book that really majors on horizontal things. And why is that? And so, we're going to see, it's not that he ignores the vertical, but he really is going to try to get us to think far more deeply about how shall we then live.

And to see why this is important, just imagine this scenario. After the service, you go out for coffee with somebody, and they say to you, with no type of embarrassment, said, you know, you get in talking about spiritual things, and, you know, whatever that means.

You know, your walk with Christ. And he says to you, gosh, you wouldn't believe it. just yesterday afternoon, just yesterday afternoon, I had this spectacular sex with my mistress.

But after it, while she was still dozing in bed, I had this most awesome devotional time in the Bible with Jesus. And when I left, I gave her a peck on the cheek, she was still in bed, and I just was going, left feeling so high about my walk with Christ.

[14 : 28] Now you'd go, I mean, in fact, you might not even know what to say, my guess is many of you would be so gobsmacked by that statement that you would go, because what you would want to say, those of you who are far more direct, is that you had a crappy time in the Bible.

You can't have sex with your mistress and then say you've had a powerful time with Jesus. It doesn't fit together. It's like pouring water on a fire. It doesn't make the fire better.

Unless your devotional time was to be massively convicted of sin and say, Lord, have mercy upon me. I need counseling. I need therapy.

I need prayer buddies. I need responsibility partners. I mean, if that didn't happen, you had the worst devotional time imaginable. Right? And so that's what James is going to emphasize.

What are some of the things that mark a true walk with Jesus? Jesus. And that's one of the reasons why the book of James is so important. So what is the very first thing that he starts to look at?

[15 : 35] Well, the very first thing he starts to look at is, in fact, an issue which is a profound human problem and is, in fact, one of the issues which is tearing apart the fabric of society in Canada, Canada in a small way, but the United States in a very big way.

Like, what is it? Let's look. Chapter 2, verses 1 to 7. And it goes like this. My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

I'm just going to pause there for a second. We're going to camp on that verse just for a few moments. It says, once again, my brothers and sisters, show no partiality. It can also be translated as prejudice.

It can also be translated as discrimination. It can also be translated as favoritism. Show no prejudice, partiality, favoritism, discrimination as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

And it's a bit awkward in the English translation. You can sort of see it if you look at it very carefully, but in the original language it's very obvious. Is you can't have, if you say you have faith in Jesus but are showing prejudice, it's destroying your faith.

[16 : 50] In fact, it'll be on the slide later on. There's one really big idea to this section. It's a really big idea I want you to take away from the sermon and we'll show it on a slide later on.

And it is this. The more real the biblical gospel is to your heart and the more real the triune God becomes to your heart, the more you see the deep sinfulness of favoritism, partiality, and prejudice.

I'll say it again. It's the big idea of the text. that the more real the biblical gospel is to your heart and the more real the triune God becomes to your heart, the more you see the deep sinfulness of favoritism, partiality, prejudice, discrimination.

And as many of you know, and if you don't, heart here refers to the very command center of who you are, the depths of who you are. That part of you, that from that part of you the mind comes, the imagination comes, the will comes, the emotions comes, memory, planning, where that one, the Bible says there's one source that all of these things emerge from and the biblical word for that is the heart.

And so as the biblical gospel becomes more, is more real to your heart and the more real the triune God becomes to your heart because of the gospel, the more you see the deep sinfulness of favoritism, partiality, and prejudice.

[18 : 20] One of the things which is very interesting about this text in the original language, it doesn't make good English, so it's not translated this way, but it actually says partialities. It's plural. And it's plural for two reasons.

It's plural for emphasis. Like, you know, you're reading, reading, whoa, reading, reading, reading. You know, I was walking the dog and then this happened. It's something like that to shout at you, so to speak, put it in bold.

But it's also by saying in plural, it's saying all the different forms. Left-wing prejudice, right-wing prejudice, white prejudice, black prejudice, North American prejudice, African prejudice, Chinese prejudice, you know, First Nations prejudice, all types.

In a sense, it's unprejudiced about prejudiced. It's impartial, impartial, about partiality. It shows no favoritism to the sin of favoritism. And it says, these things are like fire and water.

They don't go together. There's faith in Jesus and there is prejudice and favoritism. And so this is really important to see because as we all know, gosh, we would have a hard time writing a book of the glory.

[19 : 37] In fact, if you wrote a book called The Glorious History of Christian Opposition to Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism, people would mock it mercilessly everywhere.

So, let me tell you, I am not, I mean, who is it needing prayer? It is me, it's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in need of prayer.

But the thing which is really interesting is long before the Enlightenment, long before secularism, and not emerging out of the pagan world of ancient Greece in the very, very early days of the Christian faith is this stern denunciation of all prejudice, favoritism, partiality, and racism, completely and utterly rebuked as being incompatible with the Christian faith.

In other words, if you read the book of Proverbs, one of the things which is so cool about the book of Proverbs is that in a sense it talks about the shamelessness of God.

And God is shameless because he can use all manners of conditions of men and women to shame you. I've shared with you before, I'll share it with you again. What motivated me to a deeper Bible reading?

[21 : 05] It wasn't listening to a Christian preacher. That is not a, I'm not being proud about this. It's just one of the shocking things. It wasn't because I read some more C.S. Lewis or some great Christian writer.

You know who inspired, who in a sense rebuked me into Bible reading? Was my first year philosophy professor who was an atheist and a proud member of the Communist Party of Canada where he ran for federal and provincial elections on the Communist Party platform.

and it was taking his class because he would regularly throw up Bible passages, make fun of them and I would be, that's in the Bible?

But I realized, I had to start, I have to start reading the Bible. Gosh, you know what, I just can't read Philippians over and over and over again and the Gospel of John over and over and over again.

I got to get into the weeds. I got to read those lists. I got to read what really happened. And so you read the book of Proverbs. One of the things about it is that that's just exactly how God is.

[22 : 17] Excuse me. He's shameless. He'll get your attention with somebody whose guts you hate. He'll get your attention with some atheist, communist professor.

He'll speak to you and Christians, we have to be open to rebuke wherever it comes from. But here's the thing. To learn that prejudice is a sin, you don't need to read post-modernism.

You don't need to read critical theory. In fact, the matter is, is that critical theory encourages prejudice and favoritism and partiality.

Part of the problem we have in our culture is that the knowledge class is increasingly influenced by critical theory and that is increasing prejudice in our society.

In fact, as is not that well known, if you want to go to the greatest centers of anti-Semitism in Canada, you go to universities with their boycott, divest movements and other types of things which basically want to see the Jewish people annihilated.

[23 : 28] but you don't have to go to reading Rousseau or something like that. You go to the Bible and if you read the Bible, the Bible says, what does it say?

My brothers and sisters, show no partialities, no prejudices, no racisms, no favoritisms, no discriminations as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

And it says, as it holds it, it says, one moment, you can't be holding on to prejudice and say you're holding on to Jesus. You can't be holding on to discrimination and say you're holding on to Jesus.

You can't be holding on to both. The more you're holding on to this, it means you're letting Jesus go. And the more you're holding on to Jesus, the more he's going to convict you of the sin of prejudice, discrimination, and favoritism, and of course, racism, which is one example of all of those things which are great sins.

And what prejudice is all based upon is the discriminations that we make based on appearance, on sort of the things which matter not to God at all. Things like appearance, race, and how many dollars you got in the bank.

[24 : 46] None of those things matter to God. It's not a sin to be low income. As the book of James is going to say, some of the things that keep certain people in low income, boy are they sinful.

Wait till we get to chapter, I think it's chapter 4. It's going to be very stark about some of these types of things. But the fact of the matter is, is that we make lots of, and the Bible is just saying, anything which is based on these types of decisions about the color of your skin, about how old you are, the color of your hair.

You got tattoos, you don't got tattoos, you got piercings, you don't got piercings. You know, the way your accent shows your social class, that you might be from a working class background or a rural working class background, your ability to speak, the way we may be distinguished between somebody who's obviously, you know, working class and somebody who went to Oxford or Cambridge and has that type of, all of those externals, they're all examples of prejudice, favoritism, discrimination and they're all wrong.

And the Bible is going to give us a very, now James is going to go and try to bring this home to us by giving us a very simple example. And one of the things we have to understand about this simple example is this. The simple example reveals the role of micro decisions or unconscious decisions in our life.

Most of you, most of us, if you're like me, if our lives were only formed by the big decisions that we make, you know what, we'd probably be pretty good.

[26 : 21] You know, who you marry, you know, whether you go to school or not, like big decisions. But the fact of the matter is that most of our life is made with unconscious decisions or micro decisions, small ones, and it's a micro decision that James is going to use as an example.

And look what it says. Verse 2. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit here in the good place, while you say to the poor man, you stand over there or sit down at my feet, have you then not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

judges based on, James, why don't you tell us what you really think? Evil is what is forming this small action.

Evil thinking processes, both in terms of the logic is evil and the premises are evil and the result is evil.

So it's saying, you know, it's a day where the church is almost completely full and somebody comes in just a few minutes before 10 and they're obviously very, very well off and rich and we respond to them one way.

[27 : 46] We say, hey, listen, you know, there's the best seat in the house. We'll move, Brian, get out of the way or Kat, get out of the way. This is the best seat in the house. We'll have you sit there. Oh yeah, we'd love to do it.

You have the best seat. A poor person comes in and you either tell them to pick the worst seat in the house. I'm sorry, you don't even give them a seat. You say, you have two options, dude. You can go stand throughout the entire service way back in the shadow where we can't see you or you can sit on the ground.

Those are your options. Now, obviously, it's a bit of an exaggeration but it's a... I don't know if he's going to be watching the service.

Usually, when I give examples about things society-wise, I'll try to either be neutral. I would have used like a Trump. I don't know what I'm going to use for neutral political things anymore because Biden and Trudeau are like two peas in a pod, right?

So, I don't know what I'm going to quite do for when I make a... Maybe I have to say those who watch Fox News and those who watch CNN or something. I don't know because it's just hard but I either try to be even-handed or I'll talk about Nazis or Soviet Union or Cambodia or something like that and so one person at coffee time, back when we could have coffee time, he said, George, why don't you ever use Canadian examples?

[29 : 05] And I said, well, you know, the problem is if I use Canadian examples, I could lose people in the sermon because it becomes political and they start, you know, nattering away in their mind, you know, at it. And so, I'm going to take a risk.

If he's watching, he knows who he is. He might remember having this conversation with me. So, here we have this example of treating people different in terms of economics. And in this example, we could say, by the way, there's no way we would ever do this or think this, right?

Come on. I mean, this is Church of the Messiah. There's no way we'd think about this or do this. So, let's try to bring it home. How many of you are very bothered by the fact that teachers want to have, here's how I'm taking a risk, be vaccinated earlier?

Doesn't it show a class bias? Doesn't it show, James 2, that we don't stand up and say the people who serve us coffee at Tim Hortons and stock the shelves in Metro should be served way before the teachers?

Let's be very honest about it. Teachers, I know it's the unions, I'm not blaming particular teachers. Teachers are amongst the best paid careers in Canada.

[30 : 25] Absolutely in the top bit. Teachers didn't have to work last March, April, May, June, or I mean, go outside, they could all work from home. The guy and gal who's probably a new Canadian and maybe if they're not a new Canadian, they don't have a high school education, they're working in Tim Hortons serving you your coffee.

The guy or gal stocking the shelves at the Metro, on top of that, if it's Tim Hortons, they're probably new Canadians and probably not white. But why is it that there's no conversation amongst Canadians about why is it that teachers are even there?

Good grief, I mean, they were doing everything at home. Like, we should be honoring those faceless people who work in Tim Hortons in Metro. They should have it way before teachers.

In fact, you know, teachers and all, they often have a lot of protections about people coming in. Tim Hortons probably have none. Who knows, it could be hacking up COVID fumes by the gallon and come and get their coffee.

See, I might have lost a whole pile of you and I might now get a few angry emails from people who are part of the teachers unions. That's fine. I think my point is valid.

[31 : 42] When I read papers, I don't think I've seen any, there's debates about the order of teachers getting it, but nobody has said that Tim Hortons employee should get it before teachers.

Why? Because there's an unconscious decision and micro decisions of class bias. Right? I mean, think about it for a second.

I mean, the civil, I'm not putting down civil servants, but the upper level civil servants who make these decisions, they're of the same social class as the teachers and the union leaders.

And parliament is filled more with people who are like that than people who got election. Imagine in the next election, the only people who could run are current people who serve you coffee at Tim Hortons or stock the shelves at Metro.

Now, just as a side, we might actually have a better house of commons if that happened. But now I'm really in trouble. But anyway, William F.

[32 : 45] Buckley famously said that he'd rather be ruled by a random selection of people from the Boston phone book than the faculty of Harvard. But anyway, sorry, now I'm really losing you.

That's maybe why I shouldn't use these examples. I don't know. I'm sorry. But the point is that we make these types of decisions and their micro decisions, their class decisions, we're unconscious to them and the Bible says it's wrong.

The Bible says it's wrong. In fact, if we just go on, we'll see a little bit. Remember I said the big idea of the whole sermon is that the more real the biblical gospel is to your heart and the more real the triune God becomes to your heart, the more you see the deep sinfulness of favoritism, partiality, and prejudice.

Look at what goes on in verses 5, 6, and 7 as James rounds out this section and starts to launch into the next thing. Look at what he says. He says, 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?

Now, just two things here. We're going to see here, it's sort of a bit beyond the Bible here is not saying that every poor person goes to heaven because they're poor and that every rich person is damned, which is sort of the next verse.

[34 : 08] It's not making that. It's making a bit of a more general statement and the fact of the matter is this, that God chooses people who are poor and powerless to be his children.

I've had many people over the years say to me, Jesus, but I don't know if Jesus would ever choose me. But what James is saying here is the fact of the matter is, how does conversion work?

Jesus chooses you before you choose Jesus, and that is true of every single human being. Whether you are a person who cannot remember, you became a Christian so young in your age that you can't remember really becoming a Christian because you've always loved Jesus, or whether you've had a dramatic conversion experience, the fact of the matter is that Jesus always chooses you first, and after he has chosen you, you choose him.

And the fact of the matter is that Jesus chooses people who are poor and powerless. He does. And if God has chosen those who are poor and powerless to be his children, how can you, if you believe the gospel, if he is your Lord, discriminate and put them in a lower place?

If God chooses those who are poor and powerless to be part of his kingdom, how can we say that we don't care about that? there's a higher standard than who's in his kingdom than what he has, and we're going to treat them in a different way.

[35 : 34] And then in verse 6 it says, but you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you and the ones who drag you into court? Verse 7, are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

And this language of a name by which you were called, in the original language, what it's trying to capture is an invoking of a name over you in terms of now who you belong to or what family you're in.

In a sense, what it's saying is this, if God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit had a last name, if they had a last name, when you put your faith in Jesus, when I put my faith in, let's just say whatever, I'm not going to say, whatever God's last name was, when I put my faith in Jesus, I now have a new last name.

I'm George, with the last name is now the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And that is true whether you are in Nairobi, whether you are in Moscow, whether you are in Tehran, whether you are in Ottawa, and it is true whether you are part of the Billionaires Club, or you are an untouchable in India.

the moment you respond to the invitation of Jesus to have him be your Savior and Lord, to trust that he has done everything that needs to be done to make you right with God, and that when you put your faith and trust in him, everything that is needed to be made right with God has been accomplished by him, and he takes you not weighing your merits, but pardoning your offenses, he clothes you with his righteousness, he gives you new life, and he takes you as his own, his precious possession, you are now part of his family, your last name is now his name, you have a new identity, and that is true regardless of your income, regardless of your race, regardless of your age, regardless of your nationality, regardless of your educational attainment, that is what the gospel is, that is who the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are, they are a God of love, he is a God of love, from all eternity, and out of an abundance of his love,

[37 : 55] God has done this and offered this for his people, and if that is what it means to be a Christian, how can you show prejudice and partiality? How can you not desire to have any class bias, any racism in your life removed from your life, as this grips you?

chapter 1, verse 18, it talks about how God only gives good gifts and the greatest gift, he's only a giver, he's a potential, always giving, and that's why it comes out that the more than only the triune God, the more as well you see the abhorrence of prejudice, discrimination, favoritism, racism.

It is evil. So just to close up, once again, the big idea of the whole sermon, the more real the biblical gospel is to your heart, and the more real the triune God becomes to your heart, the more you see the deep sinfulness of favoritism, partiality, and prejudice.

And then one other particular thing to take away is, Lord, help me to see the prejudice log in my own eyes before I see the prejudice speck, in the eyes of other people.

You know, on one hand, what this is telling us to is to dive deep into the gospel, to say to the Lord, Lord, not just help me to rid prejudice of my life, but help father the gospel to become more real to me.

[39 : 27] Help me to know you, father, son, and holy spirit, more, and to be known by you. Fan into flame within me a longing and yearning to know you, and to be known by you, and to know about you, to be formed by the gospel, by the gospel as is portrayed in the Bible.

Father, make that true, and father, as you make that true, in your mercy, deliver me from seeing the prejudice and favoritism. I mean, don't deliver me from ever seeing it, but father, help me to look first for whatever logs there are in my own eyes.

You know, when Jesus says to look for the log in our own eyes before we see the speck in the others, he's not calling us to moral blindness in the world. that what he's calling you to is the path to moral clarity, a moral clarity based on humility and penitence about yourself and being gripped by the gospel, a moral clarity that can see the evil of prejudice in all its forms, while at the same time realizing that it's me, it's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer.

please stand. If there are any watching this or hearing this who've been troubled by the fact that they think, well I don't know, I think I like Jesus but I don't think he'd like me.

He wouldn't like me because of my views, he wouldn't like me because how messed up my life is, he wouldn't like me because nobody else likes me, he wouldn't like me because I don't like myself. You know, if that's, you've now been told that in fact the matter is, if you feel any tug to Jesus at all, you need to know that that tug you feel for Jesus is because Jesus has chosen you and is calling you to be his own.

[41 : 24] And there is no better time than right now to say, Jesus, thank you for calling me. I say yes. I say please be my Savior, be my Lord, let me be in you and be in me, whatever, use your own words, just say yes, I'm no longer running, I find it hard to believe that you would actually choose me before I've chosen you and want me before I even wanted you, but I accept, I give myself to you, I surrender, I surrender, I'll use your own words, there's no better time than now.

And for all of us, it's, you know, as a follower of Jesus, it's not a bad thing to be convicted of sin. If you're gripped by the gospel and convicted of sin, that's actually a good thing, not a bad thing, not a thing to be depressed over, but a thing to be hopeful about.

So let's just pray. Father, we thank you that for those of us who are here, that have given their lives to Christ, that he is our Savior and our Lord, we thank you, Father, that that good gift comes from you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We thank you, Father, that you called us before we ever called on you, that you loved us before we ever loved you. You desired us to be your children before we ever desired to be your child. And Father, we thank you for this gift of grace.

Father, it's hard for us to get our mind around it, bring it home to our heart in a deep way. And Father, you know for each one of us the different ways that we are making micro decisions and unconscious decisions that flow out of prejudice, partiality, favoritism.

[43 : 06] Father, please make the gospel more real to our hearts. And Father, have you and the Holy Spirit and Jesus become more real to us, three persons, one God.

And Father, help me to see the prejudice and partiality and favoritism logs in my own eye, so that I might see the world clearly and see myself clearly, that I might be free and delivered.

Father, please help me to see that. And I ask this in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, Amen.