

# The Failure of Favoritism

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Preacher: James Biesiadecki

[0:00] Christ who lives within me. I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives within me. So I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

As we gather in this place, Lord, that is the only hope we gather around is through the finished final work of Jesus that is received by faith as we turn from sin and believe the Savior.

And as our life is changed as a testimony, Lord, we pray that you would empower us day by day to walk with you and to exalt the Christ who saved us. We are imperfect in every way and Christ is perfect in every way. And so may you bless us today with your presence. Bless us as we look at your word together. And may we, as we look into the mirror of your word this morning, may we examine ourselves in light of it and may we be changed. So Father, we pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. What a great, great time of worship. Man, thank you, Lucas. I know it's a challenge at times to do it all yourself and be the one man band up there. Thank you, Dale and whoever else was doing slides and whatever and trying to orchestrate all of those things. Just quite a blessing to all of us as you guys serve. I want you to turn in your Bibles to James chapter two. We are going verse by verse through James. We're crawling through. We did make it to chapter two. Can I get an amen?

Right? I mean, we have graduated, right? We have moved on into chapter two and it is going to be a great continuation as we look at this. I think from time to time I may take a break from our continuous work through the epistle of James and may come to a topic from time to time. But every time I preach and in our church, that's the way we practice is that every time we teach the word of God, it's going to be expositively. That means we're going to teach the text of scripture. So even if I say I may bring a topic, that doesn't mean I preach topically, I preach expositively, meaning the text dictates the topic.

And so there may be some topics we need to deal with, but it's going to come from the text and we're going to preach the text and look at and study together the text. Today, the topic is going to be, it's at least going to be the beginning as I have studied this this week, because as Lucas and I talked about it earlier this week, just the challenge of trying to break this section down in chapter two, which is a lot of stuff. And I kept trying to boil it down into a couple of different outlines and never could really land on a solid one that really reflected the text. So I may give you all of them this morning. So we may get out of here at three o'clock or so. I don't know.

[3:21] No, I'll work through. And when it's time to quit, I know the mind can only receive what the backside can endure. So I get that and we'll get out of here in a reasonable amount of time. James chapter two is what we're looking at today, beginning in verse one. And now that you're comfortable sitting down, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's word. James chapter two, beginning in verse one.

My brothers, a poor man. And if you say to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit here in a good place, while you say to the poor man, you stand over there or sit down at my feet. Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, 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? But you have dishonored the poor man, and are not the rich ones who oppress you and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

We'll stop there today. Father, we pray that you bless the reading of your word today. May we receive it as you have sent it. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. You can be seated. You can be seated.

The failure of favoritism. We really need to learn how to treat people. And I thought of this, I thought of this even, you know, I thought of Shep this week as I was thinking through this passage. You know, I've known Shep for several years. He's a deputy sheriff. Shep, Shep, wave at everybody. I mean, we've been praying for Shep. He got some bad news, good news on his medical stuff today. And so he's got some diagnosis that he's dealing with. And, but, but it sounds like good treatment planned. And so we're going to continue to pray for Shep.

But I've known Shep. Shep's, he's, man, he's always got such a good attitude. He's always a, an encourager. And, and, you know, I was thinking that, you know, one of the first times I met Shep is when, uh, I was, you know, cruising.

[6:20] banquet clock. He sits behind me and, and I look in my.

But it's Shep. And so I'm, I expect. and he asks the normal question.

He said, well, brother, do you have your driver's license?

I said, nope. I shot my wife and there's a loaded pistol in my car.

And the next thing I know, there are police cars everywhere. I said, man, it seemed like eternity sitting in the back of that car.

[8:04] The deputy tells me that you don't have a driver's license. I said, no.

He said, you didn't have insurance. I said, no, I've got insurance. I said, no, I'm not going to have insurance. I said, no, I'm not going to have insurance. I said, no, I'm not going to have insurance.

The deputy said that there was a loaded pistol in that car and we can't find it anywhere.

He said that you shot your wife and you buried her in the woods. I said, that guy is such a liar.

I told you. That's a joke. I wasn't speeding. I wasn't arrested. I never met.

No one was harmed in this story. Okay? But I thought it was a good story just to talk about the issue of favoritism.

[9:15] Because we come to this passage here, and James, as we have been looking at this passage, is giving us a really, really hurtful practical application of the law.

It's hurtful. It's hurtful because as I'm examining myself in the mirror of the Word of God, I'm seeing a whole lot of stuff up close in the 10x view of that little concave mirror, and I'm seeing all kinds of stuff that I'm embarrassed about in my own life.

I'm seeing things that don't conform to the expectations of God that He reveals in His Word. And as I'm seeing these things, I don't know if it's happening with you, but for me, I'm looking at these things and I'm just like, man, the more I'm reading, the more conviction I'm feeling, the more conviction I'm sensing about my own life and areas of my life that really do fall short of the glory of God, sinful areas of my life.

James is a servant of Christ, and he lays that out from the very first words of the epistle and sets the, he's boss. He is the absolute, all-encompassing sovereign of my life.

There's no area of my life that's off limits to Him. Not one area, not one word spoken at the judgment seat of Christ that I will not give an account for.

[10:48] Every word spoken in secret. He's the Lord. And as James paints this picture, he is describing for us the need of wisdom from God for the moments of our life where there's crisis, when there's challenges, when there's hurt, when there's pain.

All of those things that lead us to a point of questioning God. Questioning God in His motives, questioning God in His will, questioning God for the circumstances of our life, or why did you even make me this way, God?

Kind of questions. And he lays out for us that we are to search for that wisdom in the sacred word, as he describes the sacred law of God, the word of truth.

He uses all kinds of synonyms over and over again to describe where this wisdom is coming from, and that that search for God in His word is to be accompanied by a seeking of His face in prayer.

We're to ask of Him to give us wisdom. And this asking and this requesting of God as we're seeking His face and searching for Him in the circumstances of our life is to be the pursuit of our heart.

[12:10] And out of our heart, the expressions are going to come of true religion. We are actually not just in a relationship with Jesus.

It is a relationship. That's the foundation of it. But that relationship is going to express itself in religious kind of expression, which He has described in some specifics that we talked about last week.

Namely, that we are expressing ourselves in this changed heart in controlled speech. I don't control my speech.

He said, your religion is in vain. There's a hypocrisy here that's betraying a heart that has not been transformed by Jesus. Or maybe, if it has, and it's not the trajectory of your life, maybe at least it's an area of your life that you really should examine in light of the word.

Is your life consistent with the wisdom of God? It plays itself out in a compassionate heart where you are ministering to the needs, as He gave the examples of orphans and widows, specifically.

[13:30] People that can't thank you. People that can't do anything for you. It's going to cost you to be involved in their life. It's going to be a little burdensome. And even as we talked about it Wednesday night in our family fellowship, there were some great insights that I thought some brought out about the passage, talking about when we asked the question, what's the hardest of these things, and why is that hard, and for those.

And there's no expression of that, not just in a heart that feels it, but in hands that actually serve in those needs. And I have to ask myself, what's wrong with my heart?

What? Because there's something wrong. And if holiness, being unstained from the world, is not a pursuit of my life, and I don't care, so I just say what's on my mind, and I really don't deal with anybody's life, I don't spend any time ministering to anybody, and I'm not pursuing personal holiness where I want to please the Lord with the behavior of my life, I have to ask myself some really hard questions because my life is not conforming to the reflection of God's word as God has revealed himself, right?

And so I've, so I don't know about you, but in my experience, I'm looking at this, and there's all kinds of little things that I'm looking at and going, man, that's ugly in my life. Man, that's, I say something so quick and a sharp, smart aleck remark on Facebook or whatever, and then I'm reminded of what I saw in that passage, and I have to go back and delete it.

You know, or, and it's not, it's not terrible, it's not dirty, it's not anything like that, but it was just kind of hurtful, or it was really overly critical, and I went back, and I had to pull that out and say, man, there's little ugly things that I'm seeing, and it's all because God's wisdom's being revealed, and I'm comparing.

[15:31] James shows us some very, very practical things. True religion. Living faith. This is what living faith is as opposed to dead faith.

This is what true religion is as opposed to false religion. It's, it's what it means to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, what he describes here is a, in terms of the word he uses here, partiality. Your translation may say favoritism, or personal favoritism. In the ESV, which is the, the version that I'm reading out of, it's using the word partiality.

My brothers show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord of glory. Reminding you of who this is in your life, servant.

You are the servant. He's the Lord. He's the Lord of glory. You're holding the faith that he's put in your life. He's given you faith. He's raised you from the dead. He's given you hope. You're holding this faith.

[16:38] And while you're doing this, this is an extension even of the orphans and widows. This is another application area where you are to show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

For if a man wearing gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly. And now he's talking about this life in the church and this issue of favoritism.

Favoritism here specifically is dealing with an economic kind of favoritism where there's rich and poor. We see that in 1 Corinthians 11, 22, even as the early church is experiencing the Lord's Supper, if you remember.

And Paul said, don't you have homes to eat and drink in or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? It's a common problem in the churches of this time, the biblical time, that there is economic disparity and it's being seen, played out in the churches and it seems to be a very common problem.

And it never goes away and it doesn't change in this context. Right? We all experience this. We feel this. There's disparity between economic groups.

[17:59] But the scripture doesn't limit it only this partiality, it's not just limited to economic things, it's also extended to racial disparity.

And that is an issue in our country. We have to acknowledge it. It has been a historic issue in our country, primarily historically a racism toward African Americans.

And now in our country, there is a continued racism in the DEI movement. Diversity, equity, and inclusion that we see everywhere.

We see it in Phillips downtown. Those of you that have been employed there, you've had to go through your training of DEI, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Just recently, Tractor Supply had to deal with this, if you saw that in the news.

I think this past week, I think it was just a few days ago, that as tractor supply, of all places, like rural America, whatever, and rainbow flags and transgenderism and all this stuff being promoted through the company and people outraged, saying something about it, thank God.

[19:09] You know, Christian people ought to speak up and say stuff about these things. We've said as a church, it's a core value. Our values, we're going to speak our values into the culture. We're not going to shy away from those things.

Not going to be apolitical. So, they had to turn around and they issued a big apology, a big letter. Hey, we fired all of our DEI people.

They're talking about 50,000 employees and 6,000, I think, stores across the U.S. So, we're dealing with these things. Does the Bible address the issue of racial inequities?

Yes. It does. What's the answer for it? Jesus Christ. Because it's not a skin problem. It's a sin problem.

The remedy for it is not culture and government mandates. The answer for it is actually the gospel of Jesus Christ that remedies the problem and ought to be reflected in the church.

[20:08] Galatians 3, 28, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. There's neither slave nor free. Neither male nor female. You are all one in Jesus Christ. Christ. Praise the Lord, right?

So, it's economic. It's racial. And you heard even in that verse, it addresses some gender disparities. There is a sense, there is equality between male and female in the scriptures where we are to regard one another equally at the ground as level at the foot of the cross.

That does not mean, however, that there are not distinctions in male and female as God created them. There are roles with distinctions within male and female, husbands and wives.

There's authorities and submissions. All of those kinds of things are at play. It doesn't take away those things, but what the scripture addresses, the boundaries for this. Partiality can be a sin, a sinful thing, and that's what we're seeing in this passage.

And it can be economic, which is the primary application here. It can be racial, which is what we see in Galatians 3.28. It can even be an age where we see places that talk about us not looking down on youth, even like Paul speaking to Timothy, let no one look down on you because you're young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

[21:42] And in age, we've said as a church, this is a core value for us. We want to be a generational church. That's why these babies are in here with us. We love them. Cry. We love them.

We don't love them. We don't want them separated from us. Now, is it hard? Yes, it's hard. Is it a little burdensome from time to time when they're particularly fussy?

Mom's got to stand up sometimes. And you've got to grab another passy and put it in their mouth and you're trying to plug everything in there. You're shoving bulletins in and whatever you can to kind of muffle the sound.

You know, we get it. But man, what a value. Ground is level at the foot of the cross and that's the whole point of this.

it's a practical living faith expression. How are you going to treat the disparity in these groups in the body of Christ?

[22:41] What are you going to do with them? Partiality. In verse 1, he devotes a lot of time to this and it's going to be a focus of every

chapter in the letter of James.

Every chapter. There's going to be some hint of this or some all out discussion of it as we saw in James chapter 1 verse 9 but let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation because like the flower of the grass he will pass away.

And in that he described for us the elevation of the poor and the humility of the rich so that all things are leveled at the foot of the cross. not elevating them above not putting them all below everyone but everyone is level at the foot of the cross.

We have equal access to Jesus. And then in chapter 2 here in chapter 3 verse 13 but the wisdom that is from above is among other things full of mercy and good fruits impartial.

The wisdom from above is impartial and it's pointing back to this section. Impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

[23:55] Making peace between the disparities that are seen there. Chapter 4 verse 6 God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.

So whichever case you're in rich or poor black or white or Hispanic or Asian whatever the case might be male or female young or old level the ground level the ground at the foot of the cross and watch the glory of Jesus play out in the body.

He gives grace. And then in chapter 5 come now you rich weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you you have condemned and murdered the righteous person.

He's talking about the corrupt rich. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. Weep and howl for the miseries that are coming.

So what's he saying in all that? This is a problem. It's a problem for the church then. It is a fundamental problem for every church of every generation for all time until Jesus comes which is why it's in the scriptures.

[25:06] And why he devotes so much attention to it. verse 1 he connects this to the local church specifically the assembly brothers as he's describing this but he also connects it by way of the synagogue because he's using the imagery of the synagogue he actually uses the word synagogue here to describe the assembly when someone comes into your assembly.

This isn't a charge against the culture. This is a charge against the church. This is a charge against believers brothers sisters us.

The synagogue is the place where court cases would play out. Local things are settled there before they go on to a Roman court. The authority is passed down from the Roman government to these synagogues so that they can handle smaller disputes.

They handle those in the synagogue and so he's talking about these cases where they're taking advantage of you and these things are happening in the synagogue but he's talking about you brothers and your assembly not that assembly even though the imagery is playing in.

He's talking about the church. Church ought to be the place where we don't seem like a court case. The church ought to be a place where disputes can be settled because brothers and sisters love each other and are overlooking a multitude of sins in each other's lives.

[26:51] Right? There ought to be something characteristically different about us that Jesus defines in the upper room when he says the whole world is going to know that you're mine by what?

Your love for one another. Shouldn't look like Perry Mason, right? It ought to look like a family that loves each other.

Those that hold the faith. So there's an inconsistency that he's pointing out. So here's how he's defining this favoritism or this partiality.

Okay? You see it in verse 2 when he says, for if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly. So brothers is key word.

Your assembly. Now it's locked it into the local church. Some commentaries go in all kinds of directions. But it seems if you're going to stick with the text, the text seems to limit the scope of that.

[27:55] This is specifically addressing the church. It can be applications everywhere else, but it is specifically addressing the church. Brothers, in the assembly, someone's coming into your assembly, and what's happening?

And here's really the first issue. This partiality is really the making of a sinful assessment of value. It's a sinful assessment of being soiled and filthy. It's like when we met some missionaries. We were serving in Central Asia.

We met some missionaries in India. They were telling us about India. We told them, man, the place where we live, it's pretty dirty. They were like, oh, you have no idea. You have no idea how dirty it can be.

And then she went on to explain to us how walking along the sidewalk, one of the covers on the sidewalk, the sidewalk covers the sewage. It's not pipes beneath the ground.

[28:52] It's just a canal. And it's just covered with these concrete things. And very often, which is what happened to her, she stepped on one of those. It broke through and she went all the way up to her, the upper part of her thigh in raw sewage.

And she was obviously, like you would be, horrified, right? And she comes out and the locals are, they see that she's a foreigner and they feel sorry for her.

And she, and ladies, you can really relate, she lost her shoe in there. And they felt sorry for her, so one of the guys dove in and retrieved her shoe.

When this is used in the word shabby, the clothing that he emerged with is the idea. He's filthy. It's filthy.

I mean, repulsively filthy. And, and so, someone comes in in new clothing and a gold ring and someone comes in and they are filthy.

[30:01] And you say to the one, come sit here. We've got a front row, this is first class seating right here. I mean, you see these guys in the front rows? I mean, this is first class seating.

You guys are in coach back there, okay? First class, that's what I always tell everybody. I'm going to put the cushion seat up front. When we ever get cushion seats, they're going to go up front, right?

To encourage everybody. Nobody wants to be close to me. I don't know why. You know, they're not shabby, you know. You said, come here and sit at my feet.

Not only are you already in a humility, a situation of humility, I'm going to impose further humility on you, which is going to not only cause you to repel people because of what's around you, now you're going to be repelled by the congregation.

You're going to stand over there. You're going to sit at my feet. And we do this all the time. We make assessments of people and I see pastors do this all the time too and I have really tried in my however many years, 30 years of ministry, whatever, to not fall into this because somebody comes in and man, they're driving the Hummer, they're driving the Jaguar, they pull up to church and watch the ministers like, you know, like piranhas, you know, gravitate toward them and go after them and man, I'd love to have them in my church.

[31:33] church. And young in ministry, I remember somebody that was a manager of a lumber company that came and joined our little church and man, I was so excited and then he got disgruntled because decisions weren't being made his way and he ended up leaving and I thought, oh, we're going to crumble.

My administrator said, James, you tithed more than he did. Appearances. No idea.

Some of the most giving people in our churches have been the widows that have attended and dumped, you know, all of their retirement into the church in different ways. I mean, it's just been amazing to see who gives and who doesn't.

I don't look because I don't want to know. It'll taint things and I stay away from all that. show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

For if a man wearing gold 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 you say, pay attention.

[32:45] So it's the assessment and it's the attention. I've made an assessment based on what I see. And now I'm giving them my attention and I'm pouring my attention into those people rather than showing the kingdom of God in all of its glory that whosoever will may come.

It's quite a different picture. You've made an observation based on what you see and you've assigned value. I mean, isn't that what Martin Luther King Jr. was getting at in that speech, the I have a dream, I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

It is not the devaluing based on race. It's not elevating one race above another. It's not devaluing the poor or devaluing the rich.

It's about bringing things to the level ground at the foot of the cross. It's assessing things based on the great assessment that D.L. Moody said.

[33:57] He said, every soul that I ever encounter has only two distinctions. They either have an S on their forehead or an L on their forehead. The L doesn't mean loser. It means lost.

And the S means saved. The distinction that I make is that the ground is level at the foot of the cross and my goal as a preacher of the gospel is to proclaim a gospel that is accessible to everybody.

That's your goal too. To make sure that you don't make distinctions about rich and poor. We ought to let everybody feel welcome in the body of Christ.

Our Southern Baptist Convention, which we're not officially a part of, come out of Southern Baptist Convention, but just the distinction that was trying to be made several years ago in adopting critical race theory as a helpful tool to understand the gospel was maddening.

It was an actual shift in the Southern Baptist Convention that is marked. And all these little backroom deals with seminary professors and presidents and people assuring African American churches that were not theologically aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention assuring them that there's big changes coming in the convention.

[35:24] One of them by the name of Charlie Dates of Progressive Church in Chicago, he came out after there was the big backlash and all the seminary presidents had to backpedal and say, oh no, no, CRT is unacceptable as a means to help us in the gospel.

And these African American pastors were then mad. Some of these churches were open supporters of homosexuality. Some of them had women pastors, et cetera, et cetera.

But there was an overlooking of this because of race and we're trying to get over George Floyd and we want more African American churches in, so we'll overlook doctrinal integrity and we'll sacrifice that in order to bring you in.

And then when they had the backpedal, they're all like, hey, wait a second, you said it wasn't going to be this way. You elevated them above doctrinal truth. Are you out of your mind? And Charlie Dates, the pastor of Progressive Church of all names, right, he responds saying, Southern Baptists have no place to speak to racism because in fact they are the theological architects of American slavery.

none of our denominations, he said, are as relevant and biblically prophetic as our age requires. Baptists lack the moral character to deal with the real issues.

[36:48] That's what he said. Scripture says something about this. This is not irrelevant to us.

These racial issues are embedded in the Scripture. And we are to have a sense of compassion about historical things. We should. But reparation is not the answer for that.

Repentance is an answer. Reconciliation with God is an answer. Restoration with God. Standing on the truth of God's Word is an answer.

But reparation does nothing to solve the problem. For me who owned no slaves to pay someone who was not a slave to repair the issue of slavery does not solve the issue.

Sinful attention. When he uses this word attention it means to pay close attention to, to show special respect for, to gaze upon is a literal interpretation.

[38:01] So it's like the picture, you know how it is when you see somebody that's important, you know, and there's a celebrity in your presence. Have you ever had a celebrity in your presence, you know, where you're like close enough that you can see them and, and, and, and all kinds of stuff may be going on.

You may be at a football game, basketball game, or whatever, but you keep looking, right? You, you, you're, something happens, how do they respond? You know, what do they do? What's their expressions about things?

How are they doing, you know, you, and what are they wearing? What are they eating? What are they, and all of these things are going through your mind and you just, you just can't help but stare, you know? And this is, this is what he's saying, this, this gazing upon, you're, you're giving special attention to the rich.

You're giving special attention based on race. You're giving special attention for a variety of reasons. And it's sinful. Now, he's not saying that there's not supposed to be preferential treatment in some categories.

You are to honor your mother and father. You're to have a special concern and care for them. You are to show, as a man, you're supposed to show favoritism to your wife.

[39:18] You are to cling to her alone and forsake all others. Amen? There is a special attention that she gets, a preferential treatment. It's not always wrong to favor, but there is a place where it becomes sinful, and it's when I'm making the assessment, making the assumptions, giving the attention.

I'm supposed to look out for the people of my own household in a very special way. It's not like, like if somebody else is naked and hungry, and my kid's got food, I take my kid's food away and give to them.

That's not noble, actually. I'm actually fulfilling a God-given biblical responsibility to care for my household. I must care for my household, and yet I'm, at the same time, supposed to have compassion on the other.

I've got favoritism in a sense, but it's not sinful favoritism when it's within biblical bounds. And then in verse 3, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit here in a good place while you say to the poor man, you stand over there, or sit down at my feet, have not then you made distinctions among yourself?

Discrimination. That's where we get this word. Among yourself, and become judges without thoughts. You've placed them there. You've told them to sit here.

[40:51] You've said this to the poor man. Application. So the assessment was sinful. My assumptions in that are sinful.

As I read through the verse, I'm just thinking, my goodness, where's my heart in this? My attention is sinful. Now the application here is sinful.

The treatment in the assembly. And what he says is, you've become a judge. You've become judgmental. This is the real definition of a judgmental spirit.

I'm making distinctions between people based on external values and not eternal truths. Let's see, what time is it?

I told you, this is, if I go into the next point, it's going to be, it's going to be another 30 minutes.

[41:50] So, I think there's a warning for us. I think there's a warning. If we're guilty of this, it's going to end up being a poor reflection on the church of Christ, the assembly.

If we're guilty of this, it's going to be a poor reflection on the person of Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory. If this is present in the church, it's going to be a poor reflection on the kingdom of God overall.

Has not God chosen, verse five, those who are poor in the world to be rich in the faith and heirs of the kingdom. It's going to be a poor reflection on the church. It's going to be a poor reflection on Christ.

It's going to be a poor reflection on the gospel. It's going to be a poor reflection on you. The gospel we proclaim. Verse one, he said, the faith that we hold.

Verse five, those that God has chosen. Verse seven, those who God calls. Preaching of the gospel is affected. The place that the world ought to see the most beautiful racial, economic, and otherwise harmony ought to be in the church.

[43:18] When I examine myself in light of these things, how does it fall? How are you going to be remembered?

What are people going to say about you? Because all of this is going to be the reflection on Christ, right? And as I was thinking about this all this week, I heard this song, and I never heard this person, I don't know much about them, so I'm not promoting them, but the song itself was so convicting.

Somebody named Morgan Harper Nichols, I don't know. A prayer for grace. She said it this way. She said, if I could make just one request that would mark all the days that I have left, I'd rather not be known for treasures and fame or trophies and accolades I know will fade.

Instead, I'd rather be known by the kindness and love I've shown to be known for patience and long-suffering, a giver of life by the words that I speak.

I'll be the first to confess I'm not always found at my best, but Lord, be my strength in those moments I'm weak, and I'll keep on giving the grace I've received.

[44:43] And finally, when I see your face and I reach the end of my race, I don't want to be known for finishing strong, but as someone who was carried by your grace all along.

So with every breath you give to breathe, I pray your glory is what they see. Of all the words the world could say, may they say, I was full of grace.

Father, as we come this morning, hear your word, look in the mirror, God, we are just reminded of the snares that we fall in.

Sin that so easily ensnares us, and you have clearly defined this in the text as sinful, condemning. It's not living faith, it's not true religion.

So Father, I pray today that as we look at this issue, and as we reflect our heart in this issue, I pray that the issue itself would not be the focus, but Lord, that our heart before you will be the focus.

[46:16] I pray that this morning that you would remind those who are in Christ Jesus of what they have been saved from and what they've been saved to.

We've been saved out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. We've been saved into the fellowship of the Son. We've been brought to the table.

Father, our prayer this morning is that you would help us all, no matter our state, to be a humble people in your presence.

And if we're not, Lord, it may betray an area of blindness that we need to address. Or, as I compare all of these things, if the collective answer is there's no expressions of life in me, then Lord, I pray that you would bring each one to repentance.

Bring them to faith. help them to see the Christ of the Old Testament who came as promised.

Everything that you said he would be. Lived a perfect life.

[47:31] Died on the cross as a substitute for every sin that we will ever commit. Every sin that I've committed or will commit all paid for by the finished final work of Jesus on the cross.

you died for sinners who rejected you. You weren't accepted. You were rejected and you were rejected by me.

By everyone in this room. Lord, in your mercy you have revealed yourself. Some, even this morning, you're revealing yourself and you're calling them to yourself.

because this is the gospel that Christ came according to the scriptures and he died and he rose again. And one day he's coming to judge the living and the dead and every person in here is reminded in this.

One day I will stand before the creator of heaven and earth and the only thing that will matter is not my race and not my economic status and not what I brought to the table but what Jesus brought to the table at the cross.

[48:44] What I did with Jesus will determine my eternity. So Father, I pray that if someone here has never turned from sin and turned to Christ, I pray that today will be the day of salvation for them and that they'll be born again and even as we have this invitation time, they'll surrender their heart and life to you because they need you.

So Lord, bless this time. We pray that you be with us as we continue. We pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.