

Faith Produces Works

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- [0 : 0 0] You know where to go. Book of James. Follow me there. James chapter 2. It's, of course, always a privilege to be able to speak, and especially tonight. Sometimes I like having more time, sometimes not.
- But I'm glad I have more time this time, because chapter 2 is just jam-packed. And you can't really split it up into small parts. James chapter 1, I think I preached eight different messages from James chapter 1.
- But I'm going to try to get through all of James chapter 2 in one go. So we'll see how it turns out. So James chapter 2, before we read the passage, like I was saying, the book of James, it really flows well together.
- It's hard sometimes to break it up into smaller pieces. It's hard to distinguish where you would put a chapter, the scribes or whatever they were that divided these chapters.
- They did better than I would have done. Because it's all really one big message. It's not very obvious splits. So chapter 2 sort of flows smoothly out of the end of chapter 1.
- [1 : 0 0] And so just out of review, James 1.27 says, It talks about pure religion.
- And a major theme of the book of James is really putting action to your words. Not just claiming something. Not just having a faith. Not just sort of going through the motions. But really letting it change your life.
- And change the lives of the people around you. And so chapter 2 is no different. James challenges the reader to go out and make their religion, make their faith, make the thing that they claim to believe, Make it useful out in the world.
- Make it or let them be used to make a difference. James here, he's very anti-Pharisee. He doesn't want people to be so busy with religious activity and this facade of religiosity and piety that they don't actually affect people's lives.
- He doesn't want that to overshadow the true difference making. Because the gospel, it is not just a fact to be appreciated. It's not just a cool topic. It's something that should motivate us to go out into the world and to share with others.
- [2 : 1 3] And it changes lives. But as James teaches us, as the whole Bible teaches us, it won't change lives if we don't take it to more people. Right? It can't affect the people that don't hear it.
- And so James, in chapter 2, he starts off, he kind of attacks one of the biggest reasons people don't share the gospel. One of the biggest reasons people don't go out into the world.
- And that's partiality. It's partiality. It's being partial. So let's read James, chapter 2. We'll read from verse 1 all the way to verse 13. Verse 1.
- My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons, or partiality. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place, and say unto the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool.
- Are ye not then?

- [3 : 44] But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.
- For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do ye, as they which shall be judged by the law of liberty.
- For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Let's pray. Thank you, Father, for this day. Thank you so much for this opportunity to share something from your word.
- Pray that you would not let me get in the way of the message you have for your people tonight. Pray that I would just be a conduit of your truth. Thank you for the opportunity. We love you. Help this lesson that we learned from your word to affect a change in our lives.
- Help us to do some true introspection, and to see what you would have us to change based on the truth that we learned tonight. Thank you for everything going on around the church tonight.
- [4 : 50] We thank you for everything you're doing in our lives. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen. And so, we're talking about partiality. About respect of persons. And basically what that is, is choosing to treat one person better than another person.
- But only based on superficial things. Right? Not based on anything actual. It's a perversion of judgment. It is what it is. All throughout the Bible, we see that God is just, and it specifically points out that God is no respecter of persons.
- It does not matter who your family is. It does not matter where you come from. It doesn't matter what you do. Anything. Nothing matters. God loves you. And God has true, he has just justice.
- Right? He has righteous judgment. And he does not pick and choose. He has no favorites. We are all equal in the eyes of God. But what does this partiality have to do with pure religion?
- Like I said, I said it flows well. And if you're not seeing it, well then I'm not doing a good job explaining it. Right? One of the biggest barriers between the church in the world is culture. I mean, it really is.
- [5 : 52] Sometimes churches have, I guess, kind of weird culture. Right? I think we've all experienced that a little bit. And sometimes we can, we have a different mindset than the world. Which is good.
- Right? We should have a different mindset than the world. We should act different than the world. We should be different. We are a peculiar people. And that's okay. But sometimes if we let that stop us from going to the world, that's wrong.
- Right? That is a perversion of judgment. People who are in different social standing than us. People that live different lifestyles. People who have different beliefs than us. Because these are the hardest people to build a friendship with.
- These are the hardest people to meet them where they are. But those are the people we are called to go to. I mean, we're called to go to all the world. To every creature. And so we can't distinguish, well, I don't really fit in with that crowd.
- So there's nothing really I can do. No, we're called to go to all creatures. God has called us to do something. And he will empower the church to do it. It's not for every single individual.
- [6 : 51] To go to every single individual. But it is for the church's job. It is the church's job to go to every single individual. That's what God would want. God is not willing for any to perish.

And so he empowers us. He makes a way for us to overcome our differences. He makes a way for us to go through the weirdness and the inconvenience of speaking to somebody about the gospel.

It's easy for us to be sort of like the Pharisees. And have our little groups and close ourselves off to the world. And to just not go outside of our bubble.

It's very easy. If we don't make an intentional effort, we're not going to get outside of our comfort zone. And that's, I think, what James is trying to say here. He's trying to say we need to get out of our comfort zone.

We can't just stay where we want to be. We have to go where God wants us to be, even if it's difficult to go there. We have to do the things that God wants us to do, even if they're difficult.

[7 : 48] Even if they're uncomfortable for us. We can't pick and choose. We just listen to God. People tend to stay with people like themselves. And, you know, that's fine in most cases, right?

You know, you're not going to invite some random person to your family cookout, okay? You know, you have to pick and choose with some things. But when we're talking about the gospel, we can't pick and choose. We take it to everybody.

We take it to the people who are around us. We are called, in the book of James, just in the last verse, we're called to the fatherless and the widows. We're called to the ones who need the most help. To the ones who are lost and without hope.

And why are we called to these people? Let's look at that in the first place. Why at all do we need to go to these people? Well, look at James chapter 2, verse 1. It says, James says, Look, this isn't your faith.

You don't own it, right? You're not the one who gets to choose what's right and wrong. This is the faith of Jesus. This is faith in Jesus. And look at the life of Jesus. Who did he go to? Who did he hang out with?

[8 : 52] He was known as the friend of sinners. He would be ridiculed by the religious crowd for eating with the untouchables. For eating with the people that, well, you're not supposed to do that.

That's weird. You're not supposed to cross that border. There's a line there. Right? Jesus was known for crossing the line. Jesus was known for going to the people who no one else would go to.

He was not partial. He knew what people needed and he gave it to them. This is the faith of Jesus. He's the one who ate with the publicans and sinners. And, you know, he really just didn't care about the opinion of the Pharisees.

Because their opinion didn't matter to him. Right? He knew what was right. And so he acted on it. And so how can we claim to follow and obey that same Jesus if we're letting ourselves not go to those people?

If we're not getting out of our comfort zone when it comes to evangelism, when it comes to discipleship? Naturally, we want to be with the people with whom we are comfortable. With people who are like us.

[9 : 51] With people who are nice to us. And for people who can do stuff for us. Right? That's who we want to be around. That's just naturally. So how do we break out of our normal, habitual ways? Right?

Because that's how we are. Humans, we just want to be with people like us. That's our natural way. So how do we break out of that? Obviously, if God tells us to, he's going to empower us to do that. He's not just going to leave us without a way.

He's not going to give us a command that's impossible for us to follow. Right? And so first of all, the gospel changes our value system. The gospel changes what we value.

To the world, riches, influence, power, authority. Those are the valuable things. Right? But not to God. Right? Because he has all authority. He doesn't need to try to gain influence with anybody else.

Because he has all of it. If he wants to just claim all of it, he could. And in the end, in eternity, he will have all of it. For sure. In everybody's hearts. Everybody, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[10 : 48] And so he's not, he doesn't care about the religious crowd. He's not trying to be some popular teacher on earth. He wasn't. He changes our value system. If we look at verse number four, James 2, 4.

It says, That's a pretty powerful statement, right? Evil thoughts. If we judge people based on anything that God wouldn't judge them by, that is an evil thought.

That's not just, oh, well, it's not the best. Oh, okay, well, you know, maybe I should do better. No, it's an evil thought. And it's something that we have to purge from our hearts and minds. It's something that through the Bible, we need to grow in.

It's an area of life that we need to grow in. All throughout the Bible, we see God is no respecter of persons. And what if God treated people differently? What if God only saved those who were born into a certain family?

I mean, what if God only saved those who dressed a certain way? What if God only saved certain people based on a no, or based on something that they couldn't control?

[11 : 54] He would be evil, would he not? If God only chose certain people. And so in the same way, when we treat somebody with less respect or dignity, we're judging them based on evil reasoning.

And why do we even do that? That doesn't even make sense if you read the Bible. Well, it's just we seek to get something out of it. At least in this illustration that James gives, obviously this church that the rich man and the poor man went to at the same time, they were trying to get something out of the rich man.

Were they not? Maybe they didn't think, oh, there's a rich guy. I'm going to see if I can be nice to him and get something out of him. Maybe they didn't plan it. Maybe they didn't have malicious intent. But they still were judges of evil thoughts.

See, in our culture, since it's so natural to be biased, since it's so natural to be partial, it's just kind of ingrained in culture. It's just ingrained in society that you just treat the rich person better.

If somebody can give you something, you treat them better. And that's our natural way of thinking. And so we have to, we may not be intentionally being partial, but we need to intentionally not be partial, if that makes sense.

[13 : 01] Right? We have to realize, okay, this is, this is a situation where I'm choosing to prefer one person over the other, and I need to fix that. It's a, it's a heart check that we need to do. And I think we just don't do it sometimes.

I think sometimes we just dismiss it as, oh, well, someone else will do that. Well, it's, it's fine. You know, I, I should do better, but we don't really take this sin as seriously as other sins. It's kind of one of those on our list of like, well, it's not that bad.

And we would never admit that we have that list, but in our mind, we all have that list. Right? Well, you know, maybe it's not the highest priority sin to take care of or something. No, that's not how sin works. Right?

We'll see that more later. But we shouldn't try to be getting things out of people because the things that we can get from a person aren't valuable to us anymore. If we understand eternity, anything on this world just isn't that valuable anymore.

And so we should treat people based on that fact. And we should act as if that is true. When we see people how the world sees them, that's evil. We're thinking evil thoughts.

[14 : 04] But when we see people how God sees them, well, that's when we're impartial. And it's only then that we treat all people equally. Excuse me. And so we see, first of all, the gospel changes our whole value system.

That's how we can break out of the partiality. That's how we can stop treating people differently, even if it's subconscious, is that we should have changed values. And B, we see just from the teachings of Jesus, he flipped everything on its head.

Right? He taught something that this sinful world just cannot understand. He completely changed everything. If we claim to follow Jesus, then we should know that these earthly riches, they're ultimately worthless.

Right? Our life here is just temporary. And that comfort on earth, it really just amounts to nothing. But when we are discerning how to serve those inside and outside of the church, status and influence, potential for gain, these should not be factors for us.

When we're discerning who we should serve and how we should serve. Christ did not seek his own comfort. You can read a story from, I think it's from Matthew chapter 8 until the end of 9.

[15 : 13] And it's just story after story after story of Jesus. He's traveling. He's teaching. He's doing miracles. I believe he feeds the 5,000. He does all these things in a row. And that's all in the span of a few days.

It never says, and Jesus got to sleep. And Jesus got to take a nap. And Jesus got to do this. But what it does say, it says, and Jesus saw the multitudes and he was moved with compassion. Right? Jesus, he wasn't in it for himself.

He wasn't in it for any gain that he could get. He already had everything. In the same way, we're co-heirs with Christ. We already have everything we need. God has provided it. We just have to take the opportunities that are in front of us and not think, well, maybe not this time.

Maybe not this. When we choose, we can be partial towards ourself. Right? Partial, we choose ourselves over other people. That's also partiality. So Jesus, if we want to follow this Jesus, well, then God provides comfort.

God provides everything we need. God gives us the rest that we need. So if we're following him, we're going to have everything we need. And so we shouldn't try to change our own plans based on what we think is right and wrong.

[16 : 18] No, we just follow God. He's going to provide. Like Jesus did, he just went and he went and he went. And I think any person in here would be exhausted after all the things he did in a row. But he did it because he had compassion for the sinners, for the lost people, for not the Pharisees.

Right? The Pharisees probably stayed one day and then they left and went home to their nice houses and got a nice nap in their nice comfy couch or something. But Jesus, he didn't do that. He didn't have a place to lay his head.

Right? Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to sleep. Jesus, he didn't seek his own comfort. He went to those that needed a comforter. And Christ did not seek to have a great name or influence.

In fact, many times he told people, hey, I know I did this miracle, but don't tell anybody about it. Okay? It's not time for me to be famous yet. Right? It's not time yet. Just go on your way. Go see the priests to the lepers.

And just don't tell anybody about this on your way. And obviously everybody always went and told everybody. Because if you were miraculously healed, obviously you'd go tell some people. But Jesus, he just, he didn't care about these earthly things.

[17 : 24] He just did what he knew he needed to do. He did what God laid out in front of him. He did the things, he took the opportunities that he had and he wasn't partial with them. He just, when he saw a crowd that needed healing, he went and healed them.

And in the same way, God has blessed us with gifts and abilities and talents. We are a part of the body of Christ. Right? We have a place. We have a part in the work of the church.

And so when God provides an opportunity, we have to take it. We can't be partial. We can't decide based on our own judgment. We have to take the opportunities that God clearly lays in front of us.

James chapter 2 and verse 5. Well, obviously James chapter 2. Verse 5. Hearken, my beloved brethren. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?

This echoes, almost verbatim, pretty close to the Beatitudes. Right? Matthew 5, 3. Jesus said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

[18 : 28] Right? The Beatitudes is one of those examples of Jesus just flipping the world system on its head. Just changing the way people think about things. He says, The poor are the ones that are rich.

The poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. That is completely different. In this time, I mean, people thought that, oh, the religious leaders, those rich and influential and famous people, like the high priest and all them, all the scribes and Pharisees, those are the people who inherit the kingdom.

But Jesus said, no. The poor in spirit, the humble, the ones who know they need God and that they don't have any righteousness on their own, those are the ones who inherit the kingdom. And James 2, 6, he indicts the church that he's speaking to, the audience.

He says, But ye have despised the poor. Ye have despised the poor. Right? You're the ones telling them, okay, just go sit down in this low area. Go sit under my footstool.

You can, you know, let me prop my feet up on you. No, I don't think that's what they were doing. But it's like, just sit on the floor next to where my feet are going to be, to the poor people. When, in God's eyes, those are the people, the poor in spirit, who are inheriting the kingdom.

[19 : 33] And we treat them, or this audience was treating them, as they were just trash, just garbage, like a dog that just sit at your feet. And we see also in this verse that the rich men didn't deserve any better treatment.

It's not like the rich people were funding the church service. It's not like the rich people were supporting them and doing all this thing, so, oh, okay, we'll honor you because of what you're doing. No, the rich people that they were preferring, they were the ones drawing them before the judgment seats.

These rich people were the people who were bringing them under judgment, that were attacking them, that were persecuting the church. It was the rich and the famous and the influential that were doing that. We see in Acts chapter 4, verses 5 through 6, it says, It came to pass, Peter and John, they had been preaching in the temple, just around, and the chief priests and all these very rich and famous people, I guess we can just read it.

It came to pass on the morrow that their rulers, the elders, the scribes, verse 6, Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, who was also the high priest, it's complicated, John and Alexander, and as many were as kindred of the high priest, they were all gathered together.

I mean, all the bigwigs were there. All the important, influential people, they were all in Jerusalem, because it was feast time, during this, when Peter and John were preaching, and so they brought Peter and John before all the important people, right?

[20 : 57] And it was these people, these important people, that were judging Peter and John, saying, You can't preach the name of Jesus, saying, You're not allowed to do this. We will punish you. We'll stone you.

I mean, Herod, who was the king at the time, he had one of the apostles killed with the sword pretty soon after this. These are the people that they were treating well. It doesn't make any sense, right?

If you actually think about it, take a step back. At first, you think, Oh, well, you know, they're treating the rich people nice to get something. But they weren't getting anything out of these rich people. They were just treating them nice to hope that maybe they could get something.

They were judges of evil thoughts. And the next, we see that the love of God does not discriminate. If we have the love of God in us, it does not discriminate. That's how we can break out of partiality that is so natural in us.

We realize that the love of God, it does not discriminate. James 2, 8-13 says, If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, you do well.

[21 : 58] So it says, look, if you're doing the royal law, like the law that Jesus gave, love your neighbor as yourself, you're doing great. Good job. But if you have respect of persons, you commit sin and are convinced or convicted of the law as transgressors.

He says, if you love people, if you love your neighbor, good job. You're doing good. But if you have any partiality, you're wrong. You're guilty. The law says you're guilty. He's not letting people dismiss partiality.

He's not letting people say, well, you know, I love Jesus. I'm a follower of God. But I just can't. I just can't go to that person because this reason or that reason. I just, I can't do this. I can't step out of my comfort zone because this, this or that.

Yes, you can. You really can. You have the Holy Spirit in you. You have the word of God. We have every tool we need to step out by faith. And, you know, ask that neighbor.

Hey, do you want to study the Bible sometime? Ask that neighbor. You know, how are you doing? And start a conversation and get to spiritual things. It is very awkward. It is so difficult. I'm trying to learn how to do it better.

[23 : 01] Right. To just start the awkward conversation. Talk about God. Right. Talk about the Bible. Talk about Jesus. If you get to it and they let you talk about it, they're going to love it.

Right. If they actually take the time to understand who Jesus is and what he did, it's going to change their lives. But we have to take the step. We have to get out of our comfort zone and we just have to say it.

We have to ask them, do you want to study the Bible with me? You may never speak to that person ever again because you said that and you may lose a friend. Right. But you did what you have to do. You took the opportunity that was in front of you and you showed love to that person.

One of the most convicting things is to think about if you really love somebody, the best thing you can do is share the gospel with them. If you love somebody, that is the best thing. Like giving them a chance to hear the words of eternal life, that is the best thing you can do.

And so if you hold that back, you're not acting in love. And the love of God does not discriminate. James, he just really pulls out of the stops here. He says, if you have any excuse, it doesn't work.

[24 : 05] If you're using partiality, you're guilty. And that's a heart problem that we all have to overcome. And it's one of the most deeply ingrained things in our heart and mind is just, I want to be comfortable.

I don't want to step out. I just want to be with me, myself, and I and that's it. Especially, I'm especially like that. If I could just be the only person, that'd be great. Just don't want to, I don't want to speak to other people.

But, I got to put, we all have to push ourselves, right? And so if we claim to love our neighbor, like Jesus says, but we have any partiality, we have fallen short. And maybe here's the point where you could say, well, okay, you're saying there's no excuse.

Well, I'm not saying. The Bible is saying we have no excuse. If we're partial at all, we're guilty. Well, what is love, right? We can be like the scribe in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus was saying, love your neighbor as yourself. And the scribe was like, well, who is my neighbor, right? We can try to add a caveat and figure out, well, let's go by the Bible definition of what is love?

[25 : 04] How does love, how is love lived out? And 1 Corinthians 13 says it pretty clearly. We could have all the best gifts, but if we don't do it out of love, it's useless. We could have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge.

But if you don't have love, it's just like a sounding noise, right? It's useless noise. And if we give all of our things away to the poor, if we give it all and we give our body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth nothing, right?

Charity suffereth long, it's kind, it envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself, it's not puffed up. It doth not behave itself unseemly. Seeketh not our own, is not easily provoked.

Thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

That is the love of God. That is perfect love. And remember, this is the standard that we try to emulate. This is the perfect standard that we try to live up to.

[26 : 06] And remember what the use of the book of James is, and really the use of the whole Bible is, you know, it gives us hard sayings. It gives us things that are very difficult to do, but it's not legalism for them, for the Bible to ask these things of you, right?

We say, well, you have to show love to your neighbor. Jesus commanded. He said, love your neighbor, which is everybody, as I love them. Jesus died for all of them.

So, are you saying, well, do I have to die for everybody? I don't understand here. Jesus is the standard. We do our best to live up to that standard. Obviously, we're going to fail. Obviously, we are going to show partiality.

We're sinners. We're not perfect. But if we're not striving for it, that's how we're guilty. If we're not striving to love everyone as we should, then that's where we're wrong.

We need to take a strong stance as a church and individually against partiality. And that needs to be one of our focuses. It's just give out the gospel and don't think about, you know, are they rich?

[27 : 05] Are they poor? Am I going to be, are they going to respect me? Are they going to respect me less? What's going to happen to me? Don't think about yourself. Think about them. That's love. Excuse me. You know, obviously, James is not saying that, you know, we're not going to go to heaven if we don't reach the standard of love that Jesus had.

It's obviously not what he's saying. But because we're saved, because we have the spirit, then that is the standard we try to reach. The rest of chapter two goes on to explain that works do not attain our salvation, but works prove that we are saved, right?

True faith produces works. And that's number three, how we can break out of partiality that is so ingrained in our culture, in our minds, is that faith, true faith, it produces works.

True faith, we grow. If we have true faith and we live it out, we will grow. James 2, 14 says, What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith and have not works?

Can faith save him? Now that phrase, we always, oh, can faith save him? Well, yeah, obviously we know faith can save him. But it's saying, what does it profit? If he doesn't have works, what does it profit?

[28 : 16] It's not talking about salvation. This book is written to a church. This book is written to saved people. He's not giving a lesson on soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. No, he's giving a lesson on, if you're a Christian, act like it.

If you're a follower of Christ, act like it. If you say you have faith, but you don't work it out in your life, then who are you helping in life? It's a very harsh and straightforward book.

And it's hard to read. It's really hard to preach. If a brother, he gives another example, James does, in verse 15. He says, And we just say, yeah, I hope you do well.

Good job. Yeah, I hope somebody else helps you. I'll pray for you. Pray for your brother. Right? If we just say that and we don't act, it's not helping anybody. It's not helping us. It's not helping them.

It's not helping the faith. Right? Faith produces works. It's as simple as that. If we believe that God is good and that he is holy, he is love, he is just, and that he gave us a moral law to follow.

[29 : 45] He gave us Christ, the perfect example. He gave us the Bible, where it's all written out and explained pretty plainly. He gave us the spirit to empower us and give us wisdom. And he gave us the church, where we can see examples and receive teaching of what we're supposed to do.

Then we're going to obey him. Right? If we have all these blessings, all these things to help us obey him, we will. If we have faith and it's true, we have religion and it's pure, we're going to do good works.

It's just going to happen. There's no excuse. There's no worldly thing that could make us not do good works. At least there shouldn't be. Right? Until sin is in the mix.

But James wants us to get it in our heads that if we claim Christ, we're going to change. Our lives are going to be changed. And if we allow God to use us, others are going to be changed.

And a changed life is the only outcome of true faith. A changed life is the only outcome of true faith. And obviously this change doesn't come overnight. It's not easy.

[30 : 47] It's not without setbacks. But life changes. Your life will change if you believe Christ. And it's true. James, at the end of the chapter, he gives us examples.

We won't read the verses. But he gives the example of Abraham. Abraham constantly doubted God. Did he not? He was always saying, oh, yeah, my wife is actually my sister. So that he wouldn't get killed.

Right? He didn't trust God in many cases. He didn't do anything really seemingly to protect Lot from Sodom. He tried to play God. And he had a son illegitimately who he was like, oh, this will be my heir.

And God's saying, no, it's not going to be your heir. But he did it anyway. But ultimately, he believed God. And he was changed for it. And it was counted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God.

And he failed so many times. He failed over and over. But he was the friend of God. And his faith, which was lived out through works, changed him. And he was the friend of God.

[31 : 44] And then Rahab. Rahab was a harlot in a wicked city. Had never heard one verse of the Torah. Right? Did not have any scripture. But she knew Israel's God is the real God.

I believe in him. And you know what? Because she believed in him, she hid the spies. And she said, hey, I know you guys are going to come destroy the city. We all know it. Can you save me? Can you reserve me a spot somehow?

How can you protect me? Her faith led her to ask that. Her faith was lived out in an action. Nobody else in Jericho's faith, if they had any, was lived out in action. So they didn't really have faith.

And all of Jericho was destroyed except for Rahab. She was saved because of her faith, which were lived out in works. And so here we have a pretty good description of pure religion, of true faith.

It changes our value system. We don't think about things the same way as we used to. We don't have those evil thoughts. It changes the lives of others around us. If we allow God to use us, it'll change lives.

[32 : 45] And it changes the way we love and we serve. We stop worrying about our own needs as much. We have to take care of ourselves. We have to be good stewards. But we stop worrying about it so much.

We know God's going to provide. We know God provides for what he commands. It changes us completely. And in this picture of pure religion, we have to ask ourselves, where do we fall short?

If you remember James 1, verse 23, there's an example of the Bible is a picture. Excuse me. It's two things. It's a picture of Jesus' perfection.

It's a picture of who we should strive to be like. But it's also a mirror that we can see ourselves in. And so we compare the two. We see, okay, here's Jesus and here's me. What do I need to change to look like this picture?

And that's what we need to do with this passage. So in the, excuse me, in the, I'm trying to think of what I'm saying. I lost my notes.

[33 : 41] Looking at this image, where do we fall short concerning partiality? Where do we fall short in the area of just giving and serving and not worrying about the earthly things and not worrying about respect or influence and just not letting those things affect our thinking?

How are we doing in that area? Obviously, it's not my place to condemn anybody. Because I honestly feel like I'm the guiltiest person in this room of being partial. So I'll just let you know personally, some ways I feel like I was convicted about this passage and some maybe practical applications that we can all take into consideration.

Is that, I mean, what happens when a needy person comes to us and asks for help? What, you know what I think? Oh, not again. Oh, let me hide my wallet. Let me try to open it, pretend like I have some money in there and not give it.

And you maybe think, okay, well, there's a line. You don't just give all your money to the poor. I understand. But shouldn't we have a hard time drawing the line and not giving?

Shouldn't it be hard to not give? Right? Does that make sense? Like, in my mind, it's very easy to not give. But it should be hard. Right? If we truly love like Jesus loved, it should be hard to not give to people.

[34 : 52] It should be. But for me, it's really hard to give. And what happens when, you know, maybe a kid that comes on the van is just making a mess of the place? You know what I think? Man, I took a long time to set up that room.

And now all the chairs are on the floor. And now this is happening. And I feel like the church is about to burn down and something crazy is about to happen. That's what I think. But shouldn't we think, this kid is in church?

This kid is faithfully coming to church. Sometimes he comes more faithfully than me, right? No. But, I mean, there is a soul who has no good influences in his life. And now he's in church.

And his life is going to be changed if we keep loving him. His life is going to be changed if he stays open to the gospel. That is incredible. His whole family could be changed, right? That is incredible.

And so, I think one way we can sort of get partiality out of our minds is just realize we just stop valuing the wrong things, right? We need to stop being judges of evil thoughts.

[35 : 49] The purpose of, like, a church facility is not to look nice. It's to serve the church, right? It's to grow people. It's to help people. It's to give. So, if we turn away people, where are they going to go?

Maybe they'll go to another church. That would be good. But what if they don't have anywhere else to go? Or what if they go to someone who's going to tell them a false gospel? What if they go somewhere else? We have the truth.

We should have open arms and open doors to give it away. Anyway, we are God's haven of rest on earth. We represent Jesus. We have to love. How are we doing in the idea of religious status?

There's an idea that sometimes there's, like, people think there's some sort of spiritual hierarchy. And I understand some people have more wisdom than others. You know, some people have more experience. That's obvious. But 1 Corinthians 4, 7 says, For who maketh thee to differ from another?

What hast thou that you didn't receive? What do you have that you did in yourself, basically? Now, if thou didst receive it, why do you glory as if you hadst not received it?

[36 : 52] I always think of, we make fun of some young people, not anyone specifically, but generally, young person with a really nice car, they probably didn't buy it, right? We say that's daddy's money.

And they try to boast about their nice car, and it's like, dude, you didn't buy that. You didn't earn that. You can't boast about this nice car you have because you didn't buy it. It's not yours. It's your dad's. The title's probably in his name, and you don't even pay insurance on it, right?

So, like, we do that with gifts, though. It's not ours. It's our father's. It's our father's gift, and he's just letting us use it. And so there's no such thing as religious hierarchy.

There's no spiritual hierarchy. And that cripples the church, thinking that there is. Because I read an article, or I saw a stat from an article, at least. It says 37% of Christians who are not engaged in any sort of discipleship, they think they're not qualified or not good enough to be discipled or to disciple somebody.

37% of people who are not involved in discipleship, it's because they think they're not good enough for it. They think they're especially not good enough to teach. That's just not true. Because it's not about us.

[38 : 01] It's about the Bible. It's about the truth. God's word is powerful. We don't have to be. We have to overcome this idea that, oh, I can't. Oh, I'll be made fun of. Oh, I can't do this. I don't know how to.

That's okay. That's why we have the Holy Spirit. That's why we have the Bible. That's why we have the church to help us. We have to overcome the lies of the devil that say we aren't good enough to share the gospel with somebody. Or start a Bible study with a friend.

I mean, take steps. And again, it's not growth overnight. But we can all learn. We can all grow. And we can all do better in these areas. And so if we are living out the love of Christ towards everybody, ponder in your heart and ask God to reveal to you, as I try to, at the same time as you do, the ways in which we lack.

Because trust me, we lack in this area. Right? We don't love perfectly. We are partial. And so we can all ask God, Lord, show me where I need to change. Lord, show me how I can grow.

Show me through your word what needs to change in my life. And so with head bowed and eyes closed, as the musicians come and play the music, let's pray and ask God to show us those things.

[39 : 10] Where in my life do I need to change? Show me the partiality that is just baked into my personality. Baked into the society.

Baked into my culture. You know, and purge it out. Lord, show me the sin and purge it out of me. Pray that he would give you the wisdom to change. And clearly provide a path for change.

And provide a person to help. And provide anything you need that's stopping you from changing. Pray for ways that we can improve as a church. Pray for ways that we can improve individually.