

1. Introduction

- a. James writes to his Christian audience as an attempt to show what it means to live out one's Christian faith in practical terms
- b. Last week we saw a principle for how to change your life. It was having a relationship with his word. A living relationship with his love letter.
 - i. James previously uses the mirror metaphor and asks us to "gaze into" the royal law—to ponder it before we go do it
 - ii. James is concerned with explaining *who* we are in light of Jesus Christ
 - iii. He always tells you what to do but he always includes the who you are component. He stresses morality but in light of what you are in Christ. (v. 7—the name by which you are called. V. 2—as you hold the faith)
- c. In these verses, he's writing to Christians about the matters of becoming a welcoming community and a serving community

2. A Welcoming Community

- a. He then transitions from understanding ourselves in the mirror to living it out. (V27. Religion that God accepts."
 - i. Is to serve others and live purely.
 - ii. It's not just social morality or personal morality. James says it's both and connected.
- b. He then gives a case study to prove the point of how the human heart tends to function in forming and welcoming relationships
 - i. One man comes in "golden-fingered" (literally in Greek). He's making sure he shows his importance based on what he wears. He has influence. And he makes sure to display it.
 - ii. Another man comes in with less importance and power. Not homeless—"shabby" implies a person who just got off work and is dirty.
 - iii. The point is that the second person doesn't benefit you in anyway and thus they are ignored
 - iv. James is pointing to the fact that we will tend to favor those in our lives who can "benefit" us either by keeping us comfortable, giving us some advantage, making us feel special or important, etc.
- c. What keeps us locked into relationships with people of a certain "type" and excluding those who don't benefit us is our persistent search for self-worth, significance, response
 - i. We all crave to be recognized—to feel important. This, according to James is what ultimately leads to favoritism and judgement of others
 - ii. "The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory, in the sense described, becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last." C.S. Lewis *The Weight of Glory*

3. A Serving Community

- a. Before we look at the call to serve from James, you have to see *why* he's calling us to be a welcoming (showing no favoritism) and serving community—he makes an appeal but in a unique way
 - i. 2:1—"as you hold the faith" in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - ii. The Greek literally reads, "the Lord Jesus Christ, the glory"
 - iii. Glory: means to esteem something, to give it weight, significance, meaning, value
 - iv. James is appealing to the fact that we find our own self-worth not in our accomplishments or self (as with the gold-fingered man) but in the source of glory itself—Jesus Christ!
 - v. Everything else will ultimately fade away (see James 1:10-11)
- b. James, a devout Jew, knew the Old Testaments stories of God's glory

- i. It always came down with a rumble and shook the earth
 - ii. Glory is weight/significance/value and James says that all of ours is wrapped up in Jesus Christ!
- c. He's contrasting two ways to show glory
 - i. We try to find meaning, significance and self-worth but what we accomplish, who we associate with, what we have or what we achieve
 - ii. But how did Jesus show his glory? Through weakness and impartiality. Through giving up his glory (See Philippians 2:6)
 - iii. We all want to matter. To have weight.
 - iv. Hell is just that. We are ignored (Matthew 7:23). We are reminded of our lack of importance. We have no weight.
 - v. Jesus doesn't just show us God's glory. He gives us the glory. Though he was rich he became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). So that poor saps like us can have the glory he always had.

4. Conclusion

- a. If we find our weight in him we are then pushed out to spread our weight in serving the widows and the orphans. (see the command for this in James 1:27)
 - i. Therefore, being a "serving community" is being a community who knows where our ultimate value/esteem/glory lies and then going to push it out to others
 - ii. Not out of moral obligation—out of "glory sharing" and "glory giving"
 - iii. We do because we know who we are in Christ. We serve because we see his glory given to us.
 - iv. Widows and orphans—the two most "worthless" people groups at the time—no rights, no privileges, no value—no glory!
 - v. James calls us to go to them in the knowledge of our own glory and pronounce glory on them!!
 - vi. We stop trying to find our own glory and can therefore be free and empowered to care for others
 - 1. "It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. ..."
C.S. Lewis