

Practical Day-To-Day Christianity

[As shown in the letter written by James]

Part 2

James 2:1-4 [NIV] *“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, **don’t show favouritism.** Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” **have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”***

Why is it wrong to judge a person by their economic status?

Wealth may indicate intelligence, wise decisions and hard work.

On the other hand it may just mean that person had the good fortune to be born into a wealthy family.

Or it could even be a sign of greed, dishonesty and selfishness.

By honouring someone just because they dress well and are wealthy is to make appearance more important than character.

Why do we do this?

- 1 Sometimes wealth [ours or others] makes us uncomfortable because we do **not** want to face our responsibilities to those who have less than we have and are in need of help.
- 2 We want to be wealthy ourselves and we hope to use the rich person as a means to that end.
- 3 We want rich people to join our fellowship to help support it financially.

All of the above motives are selfish.

Such motives ignore that both rich and poor people equally need our loving fellowship.

Such motives are not following Jesus Christ’s example.

Luke 20:21 [NIV] *“So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that **you do not show partiality** but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.”*

Matthew 22:15-16 [NIV] *“Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know **you are a man of integrity** and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. **You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.**”*

Even the orthodox Jewish leaders completely acquitted Jesus of favouritism.

Acts 10:34 [NIV] *“Then Peter began to speak: “I now realise how true it is that **God does not show favouritism**”*

Peter had to learn this fact by a dramatic sign from God.

Romans 2:6-11 [NIV] *“will give to each person according to what he has done”. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. **But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.** There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. **For God does not show favouritism.**”*

It was Paul’s conviction that both Jew and Gentile stand under a like judgement in the sight of God, there is no respect of persons, no favouritism in God’s judgement.

Ephesians 6:5-9 [NIV] *“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that **the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.** And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and **there is no favouritism with him.**”*

Again Paul is warning people not to treat some people with favouritism.

Colossians 3:25 [NIV] *“Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and **there is no favouritism.**”*

Anyone who does evil, poor or rich, of high or low status according to society’s standards will be judged by the same standard by God.

Matthew 6:19-21 [NIV] *“**Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,** where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,** where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Riches are not a sign of God’s blessing and approval.

God does not promise us earthly rewards and riches.

Matthew 19:16, 21-22, 29-30 [NIV] *“Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” ... “Jesus answered, **“If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”** When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.” ... “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.”*

The fact is that Jesus calls us to be willing to forsake our wealth in order to hold on to eternal life.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 [NIV] *“**Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God,** who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”*

If we are blessed with riches we are to avoid putting our hope in that wealth, but be willing to share this wealth with others.

Luke 14:33 [NIV] *“In the same way, **any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.**”*

We may be asked to give up all our wealth to follow Jesus.

Matthew 5:3 [NIV] *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

When Jesus is talking about the poor He is talking about those who do not have many physical possessions but also about those whose simple values are often despised by our affluent society.

Philippians 4:11-13 [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Contentment is something that a Christian learns when we realise where true riches are to be found.

The secret is drawing on Jesus Christ’s power for strength.

Learning to rely on God’s promises and Christ’s power will help us to be content.

Philippians 4:19 [NIV] *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*

We can trust that God will provide for all our needs, even if it is the courage to face death for being faithful to Jesus Christ, just as Paul did.

We must remember always the difference between our wants, that so often we call needs, and our real needs that will enable us to fulfil God’s will for our life.

James 2:5-7 [NIV] *“Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?”*

It is easier for a poor person to rely totally on God because they are more aware of their powerlessness.

Thus it is often easier for them to acknowledge their need for salvation.

One of the greatest barriers to salvation for the rich is their pride and self-reliance.

One of the barriers to salvation for the poor is bitterness, when they lack the contentment that can be theirs by relying on Christ.

Abraham Lincoln once said, *“God must love the common poor people because He made so many of them.”*

Christianity has always had a special message for the poor.

Luke 4:18 [NIV] *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,”*

Matthew 11:5 [NIV] *“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”*

The Christian message is that those who matter to no-one else matter intensely to God.

1 Corinthians 1:26 [NIV] *“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. **Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.**”*

The fact is that the gospel message offers so much to the poor, and demands so much from the rich, that it is the poor who are swept into the church fellowship.

Matthew 19:21-22 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.”*

The poor heard Jesus gladly but the rich young ruler left Jesus because of the demand that Jesus placed on his wealth, which was a barrier to him accepting salvation.

The rich and masters would have many reasons for insulting the name Christian, for a slave who became a Christian had found a new freedom in Christ.

James 2:8-12 [NIV] *“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbour as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a law-breaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,”*

The “royal law” is the law that is the king of laws, being the sum and essence of the Ten Commandments.

1 John 4:16 [NIV] *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.**”*

God is love.

Romans 13:10 [NIV] *“Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.”*

Love fulfils the whole law.

The connection of thought between the previous verses in James and this statement is this:

If you love your neighbour, you would not neglect the poor man and give respect to the rich man.

What you love is wealth and that is **not** what the law commands.

James 2:13 [NIV] *“because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. **Mercy triumphs over judgment!**”*

As Christians we are saved from eternal death, that our sinful lives have earned, by God’s free gift [grace] through faith in what Jesus Christ has done for all humanity, not by keeping a set of laws.

James 1:25 [NIV] *“But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does.”*

This is the law of liberty, freedom from seeking to keep a set of laws that are humanly impossible to keep perfectly.

2 Corinthians 5:10 [NIV] *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

But as Christians we will appear before the judgement seat of Christ, to be judged for our conduct.

God’s grace does not cancel our duty to obey Him, but gives our obedience a new basis, that of love for our neighbour.

It is on this new law of love we will be judged.

Matthew 25:31-46 [NIV] *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “**Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’** “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

We love our neighbour in a very practical way, physically or spiritually.

Note:- Those who were fulfilling this law of love did **not** realise they were by loving their neighbour in this way were loving Jesus Christ.

These people were showing mercy to those in need and as a result were receiving mercy themselves from God.

Matthew 5:7 [NIV] *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*

Matthew 6:14-15 [NIV] *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

Matthew 7:1-2 [NIV] *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

All scripture agrees that those who show mercy will receive mercy.

James 2:12-13 [NIV] *“Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!”*

James goes even further, he states that mercy triumphs over judgement, by which he means that in the day of judgement the person who has shown mercy will find that their merciful attitude has eradicated any negative judgement.

The judgement they could have received if they had **not** shown mercy to others.

We cannot earn forgiveness by forgiving others.

But if we withhold forgiveness from others when we have received it ourselves from God, we show that we don't understand or appreciate God's mercy towards us.

Matthew 6:14-15 [NIV] *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

Matthew 18:21-22 [NIV] *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”*

What Jesus is indicating we should **not** keep a record of how many times we forgive others.

Ephesians 4:31-32 [NIV] *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**”*

Luke 23:33-34 [NIV] *“When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. **Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”** And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”*

Those who are unwilling to forgive have **not** become one with Christ, who was willing to forgive even those who were crucifying Him.

James 2:14-26 [NIV] *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? **Can such faith save him?** Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. **You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder.** You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor **Abraham** considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even **Rahab** the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? **As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.**”*

Some people claim to have faith when all they have is intellectual assent, that is agreement to a set of Christian teachings, such “faith” is incomplete.

True faith transforms our conduct as well as our thoughts.

If our lives remain unchanged, we don't truly believe the truths we claim to believe.

The Greek words translate “faith” are “*pistis*” or “*pistos*” expressing conviction, persuasion but also trustworthiness.

We have to be faithful to our beliefs, through the way we conduct ourselves.

This is the message that James is bringing to all Christians.

The universal emphasis in the New Testament is what James is expressing in these verses.

Matthew 3:8 [NIV] *“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”*

John the Baptist insisted that actions must prove true repentance.

Matthew 5:16 [NIV] *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

Jesus preached that we have to have good works in our lives to be a true Christian.

Matthew 7:15-21 [NIV] *“Watch out for **false prophets**. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **By their fruit you will recognise them**. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them. **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”**”*

We judge people by their actions, what they produce.

Just calling Jesus Christ our Saviour and Master is **not** enough, such belief must be expressed in doing the work that God has given us to do, God’s will.

Romans 3:28 [NIV] *“For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith** apart from observing the law.”*

We are justified by faith in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:16 [NIV] *“know that a man is **not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ**. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because **by observing the law no-one will be justified.**”*

Law-keeping will **not** bring us justification in God’s eyes.

Paul also insists that we do good works.

Romans 2:5-8 [NIV] *“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. **God “will give to each person according to what he has done”**. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”*

Our reward at the time of judgement will be according to our works, not our words.

Romans 14:10-12 [NIV] *“You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘Every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’” So then, **each of us will give an account of himself to God.**”*

We all will have to account for what we have done for Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:8 [NIV] *“The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and **each will be rewarded according to his own labour.**”*

Rewarded according to our works.

2 Corinthians 5:10 [NIV] *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that **each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**”*

Rewarded for good or bad works or a lack of works.

Colossians 3:9 [NIV] *“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices”*

We have to put off our old nature with all its deeds.

James 2:19 [NIV] *“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder.”*

The demons are intellectually convinced of the existence of God, they in fact, tremble before God but for all that belief they are still full of evil deeds.

Their belief has not altered their lives to become angels faithful to God their Creator.

Just as Paul states the initial step in our Christian life must come solely from the action and the initiative of God as in all things.

Our part is faith in this initial action of God.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

As a response to this loving act of God we must show our gratitude by laying down our lives in acts of love to other human beings.

Ephesians 2:8-10 [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

We are not saved by works but saved for works.

True faith is bound to overflow into action, and action only begins when we have faith in some great cause or some great principle that God has presented to us.

James offers two illustrations of faith in action.

Abraham proved his faith in God by his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac through whom all the promises that God had made to him were to be fulfilled.

Rahab sheltered the spies who had been sent to spy out the Promised Land. Without faith Rahab would never have risked her life by identifying her future with the fortunes of Israel.

Our faith is proved by our identifying ourselves with Jesus Christ in the face of whatever persecution such faithfulness to Him will bring on us in the future.

True faith and good deeds are inseparable.