

James the Just - Part # 2

Respect of Persons

(Sermon Notes)

By Warren Zehrung – 9/06/2003

James knew Jesus very well. He was probably closer to Jesus than any of the apostles having been raised in the same home.

In part #1 in the Book of James we came to Chapter 1:27.

James 1:

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Pure religion is caring for the welfare of those who are unable (not unwilling) to provide adequately for themselves.

Pure religion is especially tending to the spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters in the Church who have gone astray.

We have come to James Chapter 2

When James wrote this epistle, the Church was about 30 years old and still he saw the need to write these things about Pure Religion.

Apparently, there were some of the same problems then – which we face today.

We see the Title of today's sermon in **James 2:1**.

Key to Perfection

James 2:

1 My brethren, have **not** the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with **respect of persons**.

***Respect of persons** is speaking of favoritism, and improper influential contact, especially socializing with the elite for gain – while looking down on others. 'Respect' is used here in a negative context.

Yes, we are to have proper respect for the elderly, those in office, parents, teachers and so forth.

People who are respecters of persons often get to thinking that they are **better than other people**. When someone gets like that – they can't hide it. Their inward **superiority** colors everything they say and do.

It's like – because they have **God on their side** – they can run rough-shod over everybody else. They don't have to follow the rules like everybody else. They look for others who's back they can pat – so that they can get their back scratched.

In the Church there are always those who ‘butter up’ the Pastor – thinking that promotion comes from him. We will see where Jude describes it this way, “having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.” Promotion comes only from God.

Psalm 75:

6 For **promotion** cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge:

In unhealthy congregations, someone flatters the Pastor – treating him especially nice and receiving special favors. The Pastor reciprocates by appointing the person to a position of responsibility.

The problem with that kind of church politics is that people are trapped into serving the whims of the Pastor – instead of standing up for the principles of God.

James goes on to explain that hob-knobbing with the rich, famous and influential is not the way to get ahead **spiritually** – it is False Religion.

Hitching you wagon to their star – won't get you far spiritually.

Big names and big celebrity in personality-based religion does not impress James – or his brother Jesus Christ.

The world is under the impression that there is great conflict between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There is not. They are God's word. It all fits together so well.

Deuteronomy 10 takes place after 40 years of wandering in the desert – because of sin Israel was kept out of Promised Land.

Moses said:

Deuteronomy 10:

1 At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone **like unto the first** [The set Moses threw down], and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood.

‘Deuteronomy’ means – 2nd giving of the law. And it is interesting that it is ALSO God's 2nd giving of the law of the Ten Commandments to Moses – because he busted-up the first set of Commandments.

Deuteronomy 10:

4 And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spoke unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me.

I wonder if when James **read these words** – he remembered to himself – “that's my big brother”

We think it more properly respectful to say, “My Lord and My God”, but Jesus allows us, permits us, and wants us to recognize that He is our Brother, too.

Hebrews 2:

11 For both he [Jesus] that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed **to call them brethren**, --i.e, “**brothers and sisters**”

Deuteronomy 10:

12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear [Revere, honor and respect] the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, [keep His commands] and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy **heart** and with all thy **soul**,

With all our emotions, intellect, spirit, mind, attitude and with all our feelings for life.

Deuteronomy 10:

13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day **for thy good**.

Keeping the Commandments is not only to please God – it is for thy good especially.

Deuteronomy 10:

14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is* the LORD's thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein *is*.

God is working with – fulfilling His promises through Israel and the Children of Israel...

Deuteronomy 10:

15 Only the LORD had a delight in thy **fathers** to love them, and he chose their **seed** [Children of Israel] after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day.

Get your attitude right Moses says.

Deuteronomy 10:

16 **Circumcise** therefore the foreskin of **your heart**, and be no more stiffnecked. [Strange language indeed.]

God is saying that there is something wrong with our hearts – we are **hard-hearted** people.

Open up your heart – and keep covenant with God.

Perform your vows to God

Have some empathy for others – realize what they are going through.

Have some sympathy for others – compassion.

Soften up – don't be so hard on people.

The term '**stiffnecked**' originated in ancient Israel. The farmers would plow their fields by using oxen. If the ox didn't want to follow the guidance of the farmer it would stiffen the muscles in its neck. This would make it **impossible to guide** the ox where it needed to go.

When one is described as "stiff-necked" in the scriptures it means that they refuse to follow the guidance of the Lord. They are not entreatable or soft hearted. They lack pity and affection for those in need.

Deuteronomy 10:

17 For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which **regardeth not persons**, nor takes reward:

*God is not a respecter of persons!

We have respect for people – not dis-respect. They are God's creation. Jesus is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet 3:9)

We are not to be biased, or prejudiced, or show favoritism to one at the expense of another...

Compare James' words here:

Deuteronomy 10:

18 He doth execute **the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger**, in giving him food and raiment.

19 Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Today we are sophisticated, smart, technologically superior – did God take that into consideration?

Deuteronomy 30:

It was years ago when President Ronald Reagan first proposed a permanent International Space Station to permanently orbit the earth.

In Oct 2000 – the human race became poised to stay in space from now on - permanently.

The space station's first full-time tenants aimed to secure an orbital foothold that could lead to colonization of the Moon, Mars and beyond.

"I'd say there's a decent chance that [today] may in fact be the last day that we don't have humans in space," said NASA flight director John Curry before a 16 nation consortium.

What will happen if Christ comes back – when people are in outer space? It seems likely to happen. When the Israelites were back leaving Egypt – who would have thought of that?

Moses jumps way ahead to the future of the Israelites – as if somehow he knew they would have to learn the hard way.

Deuteronomy 30:

1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

Israel scattered among the nations – and then some day returning to the Lord – it hasn't happened yet – has it?

Deuteronomy 30:

- 2 And shalt **return** unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;
- 3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

Verse :2 – they haven't returned to the Lord yet – it is still future!

Deuteronomy 30:

- 4 If *any* of thine be driven out unto the **outermost parts of heaven**, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

God will **gather** them off an international space station – and anywhere else they have traveled in the heavens.

Deuteronomy 30:

- 5 And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

Remember: **circumcise thine heart** = keep covenant with God.

Perform your vows to God.

Deuteronomy 30:

- 6 And the LORD thy God will **circumcise thine heart**, and the **heart of thy seed** [children], to love the LORD thy God with all thine **heart**, and with all thy **soul**, that thou **mayest live**.

This is speaking of the coming New Covenant for Israel.

Circumcise thine heart means to keep covenant with God – even to the spiritual intent of God's law as Jesus expounded in the New Testament.

Which, New Covenant, we are so privileged **to be a part of today!**

Hebrews 8:

- 10 For this *is* the covenant that **I will** make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will** put my laws into their mind, and **write** them in their **hearts**.

Hebrews 10:16 same

God's Plan is on schedule – but God is not a respecter of people. He is not biased based on family, race, position, or their prestige or lack of it.

Jude – James little brother (**Matt 13:55**) Also a ½ brother of Jesus.

Jude 1:

- 16** These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having **men's persons in admiration because of advantage**.
- 17** But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- 18** How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after **their own ungodly lusts**.
- 19** These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having **not the Spirit**.
- 20** But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
- 21** Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jude says to Use some discernment.

Jude 1:

- 22** And of some have **compassion**, making a **difference**:

Recognize that some are with the program – and some are **NOT**.

Jude 1:

- 23** And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Some of our brethren at Church are in trouble – and need to be pulled out of the fire.

We'll see this concept again in James 5:20 later.

1 Peter 1:

- 17** And if ye call on the **Father, who without respect of persons** judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear:

The ministry has fallen in to these abuses in Malachi's time

Malachi 2:

- 9** Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.
- 10** Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Acts 10:

- 1** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,
- 2** A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

Vision here:

Acts 10:

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should **not call any man common or unclean.**

Acts 10:

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Here we find The New Testament's Definitive Statement, and Foundation for racial policy. Notice:

Acts 10:

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that **God is no respecter of persons:**

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Paul stated the policy this way to the Galatians and all of us today:

Galatians 3:

26 For ye are **all** the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed [**spiritual Israelites**], and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 6:

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the **Israel of God.**

Let's go back to James 2 again:

Key to Perfection:

James 2:

1 My brethren, have **not** the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with **respect of persons.**

False Religion: Respect of persons = hanging around with the rich, famous, good looking, fun or important people who make you feel good – **while neglecting** people who have needs, don't have it all together, can't advance your career.

That is clearly a lack of faith.

*Better translation of

James 2:

1 ... You do not have the Faith of Jesus Christ if you have respect of persons.

Undoubtedly, James wouldn't be addressing this except that it was going on.

James gives a simple example of the kind of thing that was going on.

James 2:

- 2** 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; [old clothes]

Here comes a big wheel *and* a fella from the wrong side of the tracks.

Or, here comes Mrs. Sport car – High society and a working girl .

Maybe the Big Wheel will invite you to a **game of golf** out at the country club, or help you get a **loan** at the bank! – so you cater to him – and neglect the poor man.

James 2:

- 3** And ye have respect to him that weareth the [expensive suit] gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

There is nothing wrong with having a big supper and inviting guests – we are supposed to be hospitable.

An **overseer** of the Church should be hospitable.

1 Timothy 3:

- 2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, **given to hospitality**, apt to teach;

It lifts the spirits of everyone to **get together** with brethren – they can be happy times.

The difficulty with this picture is that some people are almost always invited, while:

Others are never or very rarely asked to participate – they are seldom invited to such events.

Old folks,

Singles,

Children,

Poor people,

Would desperately love to be involved in the fellowship –

But the prominent people DON'T THINK those folks would have much to offer.

Brethren, God does not treat lowly us that way – does He?

Romans 2:

- 11** For there is no respect of persons with God.

James 2:

- 4** Are ye not then partial [making a distinction] in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

James says you better examine your motives.

This is still a big problem in churches.

1 Chronicles 8:

1 Knowledge puffs up, too.

Knowledge **puffs** up, but charity edifies.

People with some knowledge can think that can look down on others like they are scum. That is **False Religion**

Ask yourself, "What is God's priority?"

James didn't say, "I'm the #2 man after Jesus – I'm the older brother,

His mantle falls rightly to me.

He more than likely had to deflect those kinds of accolades from welling meaning (but uninformed) brethren.

We've had men in the church – still walking this earth – that said "I'm # 5 in the KOG –Jesus, Abraham, David, HWA, THEN ME!

What did James say? "**Dulos**" **bond servant** of the Father and Jesus.

James 2:

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?

Do we look for opportunities to serve?

James 2:

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

Politicians cut deals – favoritism, pork barrel deals – just above the law – not quite bribes. They have their network of buddies who are repaid with contracts – when they get into political office.

Someone who can open doors and pull strings – for mutual advancement.

It starts way back a college with fraternities and sororities –and families of class and money.

God says do not be a part of it.

To give, be generous – because you are going to be repaid "somehow" is not right.

To use position or power **for advantage** is UnChristian.

2 Chronicles 19:

7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there* is no iniquity with the LORD our God, **nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.**

Don't give Christianity a bad name:

James 2:

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

Don't take unfair advantage of others – treat everyone the same way.

Leviticus 19:

14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, [because he cannot hear what you are saying] nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, because he can't see what you are doing] but [you] shalt fear thy God: I *am* the LORD.

We treat everybody as potential Sons of God!

Leviticus 19:

15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the **poor**, nor honor the person of the **mighty**: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.

We do not take or give advantage either way.

James 2:

- 8 If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:
- 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced [convicted] of the law as transgressors.
- 10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Romans 2:

- 1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judges: for wherein thou judges another, thou condemns thyself; for thou that judges doest the same things.
- 2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.
- 3 And think thou this, O man, that judges them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

James 2:

11 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.

It is very easy to be respecter of persons – let's be careful.

End James the Just Part 2