

James 26-08-23a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 23rd of August, 2026. We're in the book of Jacob, popularly and in English known as the book of James.

We are beginning chapter two. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful that we can come to the fount of cleansing.

We are forgiven and our sins are removed from us. We can move forward in the knowledge that your Holy Spirit is present with us to restore us, to renew us, to enable us and empower us. And we thank you for your grace in applying the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross on our behalf.

We thank you for him. We thank you for his example, not only in his sacrificial death, but also his sacrificial life and benefiting those in his periphery and ultimately benefiting all of us by way of example in demonstrating that it is not by might nor by power, but by your spirit that we can live in a way that pleases you, that captures righteousness and lays it up in store with effects, both in the present and in the ages to come. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, that the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts, help us to see clearly its pertinence and application in our own lives.

We ask it in Jesus name, amen. You remember James chapter one, I am not gonna reread it. We have a lot to cover this morning.

We're gonna dive directly into James chapter two. I will only review one small portion of chapter one because we will be referring to it. It is going to be pertinent and have sort of a reference backward to it in our passage this morning.

Verses five through eight. If any of you like wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given to him. Let him ask in faith with no doubting for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

He who doubts is going to come up again in our passage this morning. Let not that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord, he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. This doubtful mind being a waffler and going back and forth between two positions is fatal in almost every area of life.

It spreads and it affects everything. We become unstable in all our ways. Now, James chapter two.

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly, a man with gold rings in fine apparel and there should

also come in a poor man in filthy clothes and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, you sit here in a good place. And you say to the poor man, stand there or sit here at my feet, my footstool.

Have you not shown partiality among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren, has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For he who said, do not commit adultery has also said, do not murder. Now, if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

He begins as he has so many times with an appeal to my brethren. Chapter one, verse two, my brethren counted all joy. Chapter two, verse one, my brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with partiality.

We'll see it in verse 14. What does it profit my brethren? If someone says he has faith, but does not have works. Chapter three, verse one, my brethren, let not many of you become teachers.

Little warning there for some of us in particular. 3:10, out of the same mouth, proceed blessing and cursing. My brothers, my brethren, these things ought not to be.

Verse 12 of chapter three, can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? No spring yields both saltwater and fresh. Chapter five, verse 12, but above all, my brethren do not swear by heaven, by earth, with any other oath, let your yea be yea and your nay be nay. Chapter five, verse 19, brethren, if any among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, wanders from the truth, how often does that happen, including ourselves? You also have brothers in chapter four, verse 11, do not speak evil of one another, brethren.

In chapter five, verse seven, be patient brothers until the coming of the Lord. Verse nine of chapter five, do not grumble against one another, brothers. And verse 10, my brothers, take the prophets.

Why are we looking at every single one of these? We are a group. James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is addressing the group. What we are seeing in chapter two is behavior by the group, in the group, towards someone who endeavors to join the group or comes into the group.

One person, one attitude, one misapplication, one faulty piece of conversation spreads like yeast in dough, it spreads like gangrene. And not only is James speaking to those he loves, those to whom he is related physically as a Jew and spiritually as brothers and sisters in Christ, he is appealing to them as a group. This, as we've seen in the last few sessions, softens the direct appeals, imperatives and exhortations a bit because when he shifts to the second person, it is almost always the second person, plural, you all.

You all together as a group should have this mind, should have this behavior, should have this attitude. We've seen the gentle tact with which he introduces these concepts. If any man is this way, he is going to have this problem or has this opportunity, and then he turns it around.

And now in chapter two, we're going to have a lot of the second person, but he is appealing on the basis of love, shared interest. And that is a big component of the presentation. But secondly, it is a reminder that we are not isolated.

Our decisions, both our successes and our failures affect others. We have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ. And it is amazing to see how an entire group can be moved in one direction or another by the example of a few.

This is why in our day, we have people who call themselves influencers. They hope to attract the attention of people that have shared interest, shared enthusiasm, and have their attitudes and their reactions, their investigations have an effect on those who watch them, who follow them, who subscribe to them. So don't miss the word brethren.

Every time we see it, and we have seen it frequently, we're going to see it frequently. It is a reminder that it isn't just a matter of, if I fail today, I'll miss out on blessing. I won't lay hold of God's righteousness by faith.

I will have not redeemed the time. Every time you see the word brethren, it is a reminder, we affect those around us. We are connected.

We are related. We are a body. When you injure one part of your body, when one part of your body is sick or afflicted, it has an effect on the entire rest of your operation, as we all know.

When you see brethren, it is an encouragement to take whatever precepts, whatever understandings, whatever doctrines and principles are being communicated, and remember their effect through a group. So, no surprise that chapter two begins with, my brothers, my brethren, my family. And that's how this would have been received in the ancient day.

My family, listen, I've got something important to share with you. My family, my brothers and sisters, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you'll notice the Lord is in italics.

There is a string of genitives here for those that love grammatical parsing. The genitive in Greek

has that word take on the meaning of, of, or from. So if you have the love of Christ, the agape to Christu, is that our love for Christ? Or is it Christ's love for us? If it's a possessive genitive, the love of Christ is Christ's love.

If it is an objective genitive, then love of Christ. Christ is the object of the love. So these genitives are important and there's an unusual string of them here because it says, my brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord, of Jesus, of Christ, of glory.

And there's been a lot of discussion and debate about what does glory modify? What role does it play? And I think the, the lack of clarity on exactly where it goes is intentional. Every part of this speaks of glory because what follows is some very inglorious behavior. It's not in keeping with the Lord of glory.

And you'll remember that it is mentioned in Acts that if the Jews had known what they were doing, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And so the Lord is certainly glorious. I'm sorry, that's not Acts, it's Paul, but it's 1 Corinthians 2, verse eight.

None of the rulers of this age knew for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And it's doxe, we get doxology from this as a modifier. So again, James is choosing his words very carefully.

We've seen why he introduces it with my brethren. Then he's going to talk about faith and it is faith that we hold, faith that we possess. So why does he say hold the faith? Echo is the word in Greek to have or to hold.

So you possess it. It's the standard word, meaning you've got it and it belongs to you. But if you have the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ of glory, there is glory associated with that faith and its object.

This ought to be a glorious life. We should be reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus. Other places, the Lord Jesus himself said, "Let your light so shine before men that they see your good works." James is going to be talking about works.

"And glorify your father." Glorify, there is glory associated with the life that we lead. So what's on the line here? Why do we care what James has to say here in this second chapter? Glory is on the line. The righteousness of God partakes of and reflects his glory.

And if we misuse God's grace, if we take it for granted, if we don't trod the straight and narrow, it's like Moses looking at God at Mount Sinai with a glowing face and then that glory fading. Difficult to bear the fruit of the spirit if God's glory has faded out of the picture. Where's my motivation to love or to have joy or to experience the peace of God that passes all understanding if the glory of God has left the building? You remember our trip through Ezekiel where the glory lifts up from over the mercy seat and travels through the veil, through the holy place, out of the temple, across

the courtyard, out the gate, across the Kidron Valley, up the Mount of Olives, pausing at the Mount of Olives for a last look back and then goes out among the nations.

The glory of God departed Israel with tragic consequences for them, but it is going to return in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who is going to appear at the Mount of Olives and is going to come back the same way the glory left. And this is going to inaugurate the millennial kingdom. Don't underestimate the glory.

It permeates this entire introduction. Do not hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. Do not hold the faith of our Lord, the glorious Jesus Christ.

Apply it anywhere you want. It is purposely a monster man. It'll modify anything in this sentence.

It's a glorious faith. He's a glorious savior. He's a glorious Lord.

If you hold that faith, don't lose the glory. It's a question we can ask ourselves when we suddenly come up for air in circumstances and situations, we realize we've gotten immersed in our task. This is the benefit of entertainment that occasionally has a commercial break.

People say, I'm gonna pay extra and have no commercials. Commercials, in my view, if they are limited in number and duration, provide a much needed void, a gap, a chance to leave the theater seat and get refreshments, take a comfort break, do something to remind ourselves there is reality beyond this immersive experience. And with our technology, entertainment can be very immersive visually and the sound and so on, 5.1 sound and ultra high def 4K pictures.

It's good to stop. Remember what is real and what isn't. Entertainment can change your mood, can affect us viscerally.

And the more immersive it is, the longer lasting that effect can be. We need to stop and look for God's glory. This is why prayer three times a day is a good minimum to set for ourselves.

A conscious effort to set aside a few minutes and spot the glory. Look for the glory. Remember the glory.

Do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with its glory. Then it says with partiality. This is a mouthful in Greek.

I'm not even going to try to give it to you. It literally means to lift up the face. And this means you're going about your business.

Suppose you are in your life somewhere, somehow, and someone that you dearly love, but they are at a geographical distance. You've got a sister or a brother or a cousin or an aunt or an uncle or a parent or whoever it may be, somebody that you really love. You're busy.

You look up and they're standing there. It's a surprise and a pleasant one, a joyful one, an

exciting one. That's what lift up the face means.

It can be a very positive thing. You spot someone and here's a good thing. This is a welcome opportunity.

It can be a bad thing when it is misdirected, just like so many other wonderful things. Love is a wonderful thing to feel, to express, to exercise, but we have to be very careful about the object of our love. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Love your enemy. Love those who are outside.

Love not the world or the things that are in the world. So the object of love. Love is a wonderful thing, but it can be unwonderful if it is expressed toward the wrong object.

The same with faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. He that comes to God must believe in Him, that He is and that He benefits those who diligently seek Him.

But we can place our faith in a bad object. The merit of faith is in the object. The merit of love is in the subject.

You can think about that set of linked concepts for quite a while. The merit of love is in the subject. Who is doing the loving? The merit of faith is in the object.

What are we believing in and trusting and counting on? Where is the merit? Well, when you lift up the face, what are you lifting it up for? I gave a very positive example. A dearly treasured loved one shows up. We lift up the face and we are immediately, come in, sit down, relax, converse.

Can I get you something to drink? Is that chair comfortable? How long can you stay? Do you have something I can bring in from your car? You know, we're focused entirely because we have lifted up our face and our focus of attention and our desire to make this person as welcome and comfortable and pleased as possible is in view. So this is kind of a strange thing that James says here. My brethren, do not hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with lifting up of the face.

Well, I need to know the object. It hasn't been given to me in this first verse. There are times when lifting up the face is a wonderful thing.

Lift your eyes under the hills from whence cometh your salvation, your strength. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

The things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. So this is an attention getter. My family, my brothers, my sisters, this glorious Lord Jesus Christ, we hold fast to our faith in him, but don't do so with this lifting up of the face.

Well, I've got to hear more. Four, now we're going to have an example. If this is a third-class condition, he's acting as though this is a, maybe this would happen and maybe it wouldn't, but as we progress, this is another case of James's tact.

We're going to find out that this is actually happening, but he's going to couch it as though, suppose this were to happen. When James knows it actually is happening and he has seen it happen, but let's just take an illustration. And you know how it is sometimes we go to the word of God, we see illustrations and we think, wow, that was aimed directly at me.

That has stepped on my toes and punctured all of my self-defense. That's what is about to happen here. So he says, suppose there should come into your assembly.

Though the word assembly is amazing here. This is after the Lord Jesus has gone to glory, right? So we're in the church age, Pentecost has happened. We have the faith of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, but this doesn't say ecclesia.

This doesn't say if someone comes to your church, your Christian assembly, universally spoken of as ecclesia in the New Testament. Guess what this word is? Sune a goge, your synagogue meeting. Sune with a goge, this is to gather.

So you're gathering, but it's the Jewish form. This is another piece of evidence as an aside, why I believe that James, John's brother, the son of Zebedee, one of the two sons of Thunder wrote this, this is extremely early. They're not even regularly referring to their assembly as church.

They're in the transition from going to synagogue to going to a Christian assembly known as church. So when someone comes into your assembly, now a lot of things happened at the synagogue. Not only were there readings of scripture and what should have been genuine worship services, there were also adjudications that took place there.

People would come to the elders or those who led synagogue worship to have disputes settled and there could be decisions made. I could give you scriptures for this, but it isn't clear what the nature of this gathering is. It's a sune a goge meeting.

So they have come together as brothers, as brethren, and it is an example of holding the faith of the Lord Jesus. So I personally think this is a worship service. There may have been some settling of disputes or discussion of differences, but primarily it's just very early, very early in the transition from the age of Israel to the age of the church.

Why is this important? Watch. If there should come into your synagogue meeting a man with gold rings, it's funny because the word in Greek just means gold finger, like the Bond book and movie, with gold daktoulos. Daktoul is the Greek word for fingers.

If gold finger comes in, but he's not a criminal. He's someone wealthy, but this is symbolic of

someone who is important. Gold rings, there's not a word for rings.

It just means he's got gold on his fingers. And it says fine apparel. The word fine means shiny.

This is somebody that is important, not just wealthy, but influential. Influential people were marked out by their clothing, and it wasn't just wealth, but influence, importance. So these gold rings, this puts you in mind of a signet.

You can seal a decision. You can seal a contract. And shiny clothing as someone who might be in government or in some other place of great influence.

He comes in, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes. One of these words is a word that you know, because we've already had it in James. Can you spot it? It starts with phil and ends with the.

Filthy. Remember what we are supposed to set aside, lay aside in chapter one, verse 21, all filthiness. Hruparos was the word, H-R-U-P-A-R-O-S.

It's one of those weird combinations of consonants we don't typically encounter, H-R, hruparos. It is the same word here. Notice, just like with lifting up of the face, there are different kinds of filthiness.

Some of it we should lay aside and separate from. So we lay aside moral filthiness in chapter one, verse 21, but here is someone who comes in with a kind of filthiness. And remember, this was the same word used of the clothing of Joshua, the high priest, back in Zechariah.

And they said, take off his filthy robes. It wasn't Joshua's fault that he had the filthy robes on, but they needed to be removed and replaced so that he could perform the priestly function. And much as with us, we are priests after the order of Melchizedek with the Lord Jesus as our high priest, another glorious opportunity and occupation, but we have to lay aside filth and the overflow of wickedness.

The same word is here. Now a poor man comes in and he's got filthy clothing. There is a difference in rejection, depending on what kind of filth it is.

Heaven help us if we are in trouble, such as the man who gets waylaid and the good Samaritan comes by and sees him, a victim of robbery and beating, and others pass on the other side of the road and reject him because there's something wrong there that he must've messed up somehow. The safe thing is to pass along on the other side of the road. The Samaritan comes along and sees his distress and comes to him.

Maybe he's bleeding. Touching blood is ritual defilement in Israel, right? But defilement wasn't always a sin. There was monthly defilement that came on every mature woman in Israel.

You couldn't help accidental bleeding or other injuries that might result in liquids that under the law constituted defilement. You could be defiled and it's not necessarily your fault. People can be poor and it's not necessarily their fault.

Notice there is no hint of whether this person is deservedly poor or unaccountably poor or undeservedly poor, but they're poor and for whatever reason, they've not been able to wash their robes. This can be emblematic. Maybe this is someone who has not yet learned how to wash their moral robes in the blood of Jesus Christ and make them white.

Maybe this is someone who's got some lifestyle issues. What is the response? Note the detail. Do you see it? In verse two, there should come into your synagogue, come into your assembly.

They have come. This can represent seeking. They haven't been dragged there.

You haven't gone out and done your job. You haven't captured them from some far off place. They have come to the assembly.

This is the assembly where the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ should be in view, be celebrated, be a cause for worship and thanksgiving. And these two individuals have come to the assembly, both of them. One, influential, very well off.

The other, as uninfluential as you can be, influential only in the sense that if the clothes smell bad, it may influence people to create distance. And in some cases, create a substantial distance. That's what James is about to talk about here.

So, comes in in filthy clothes, huparas. And you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, sit here in a good place. And you say to the poor man, you stand there or sit down at my feet.

Take an appropriate place for your station. I have judged this guy needs a good seat. You can have a cheap seat.

Have you not shown partiality among yourselves? Now, remember in verse one, chapter two, verse one, we saw the word partiality and it was lifting up of the face, right? This is the same English word, but it is a different Greek word. And you will recognize it. This word is diakrino.

That's the verb. This is the noun form. Diakrino.

Diakrino. Remember the part of chapter one that we read at the beginning? The part about the man who asks doubtfully, he who doubts. The word for doubt in verse six of chapter one.

Doubting and doubt is diakrino. Diakrino. This is double-mindedness.

This is instability of thought. This is being of two minds. You go to God and ask for wisdom, but

then you're not sure he's going to grant that request.

Give that gift. You need to ask in faith with no doubting, with no diakrino. No.

With he who diakrinos is a wave of the sea, driven and tossed. He's unstable in all of his ways. So guess what? In chapter two, if you treat the influential person differently than you do the poor man, based on the way they're dressed, you are back to chapter one.

You are the double-minded man. You are the wave tossed by the wind. You are unstable in all your ways.

You're not going to get the gift of wisdom because you are a doubter. You're a diakrino thinker. It's the same word.

Exact same word. It's not really partiality. It's, are you not double-minded? Are you not unstable? Are you not using two different standards of judgment? Well, I know what God says, but this is the way the world works.

Doubting. This is such, how many times have I said it? This is so beautifully constructed. Concepts are introduced and then they are referenced.

And this is another one. So what does this mean? We fix this problem. We prevent this problem by paying attention to verse one.

Do not hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ of glory with misplaced enthusiasms, with wrong judgments, with misapplied priorities, respecting people and thinking people are going to be the answer. If I ask God for wisdom, I'm looking for the wisdom from God. I'm not going to suddenly say, oh, here is my deliverance.

It's this person. It's their idea. It's their fix.

If you're going to hold the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, our enthusiasm has to be for the glory, not for an opportunity when someone comes into our periphery and we think, ah, this is going to benefit me. Why would you favor an influential person except that you're hoping their influence is going to create an advantage? So we need to curate our attitude as people enter and come into our periphery. What is our attitude toward them? Are we starting to think, well, good old boys club.

We're alumni from the same institution. We're in the same fraternity. We have the same background.

We've got something in common. This person, this is an advantageous relationship. That this is going to do me some good to cultivate this in terms of a friendship or a relationship.

Bad, bad idea, James says. He has a lot more to say about this and we're going to see it when

we come back from the break.