

# Book of James



## LESSON 3

### Scripture

*James 1:26-2:13*

*26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 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," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: 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? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? 8 If you keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"[a] you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery,"[b] also said, "You shall not murder."[c] If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. 12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

## The Big Idea

The main theme in the book of James is the deception of the heart. It deals with someone who thinks they're religious because they may be doing some outward observances of religious things, but they don't bridle their tongue. In Matthew 12:36-37, Jesus says, "...but I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

With the backdrop of deception, James tells us what true devotion is. True devotion, the kind of devotion God wants us to have, is to be pure and undefiled before God. To have the character of God that is holy and pure, ministering to the fatherless, orphans, and widows. James addresses partiality or prejudice, that our relationships need to reflect who we should be as the first fruits of God's new creative order. Our devotion to God should be seen as we identify with even the lowliest of our society, the widows and orphans.

God humbled Himself and become man, how could we show prejudice? In James 1:7-8, he says they're hypocritical in their love for God because they still serve riches or the love for money. Therefore, if we judge another based on money we are judging, as James would say, with evil thoughts. James is saying, if you're trying to fulfill the royal law, "love your neighbor as yourself," (the law of liberty), you wouldn't be prejudice toward the poor man. If we're truly living the law of love, we're going to have mercy, and in doing so, we would reap mercy.

The Jews at the time were apt to regard the law as a series of detached injunctions, and that to keep one of these laws or injunctions was to gain a kind of credit, and to break one was to incur a debt. James says the law of God is one whole. If you break one law, you are breaking all of it. Rabbinic thought was, "Whoever fulfills only one law, good is appointed to him. His days are prolonged, and he will inherit the land." However, James contends that if one is infringing on God's will then it's rebellion against God, and it's sin.

## Conversation

1. What are some things in your life that you need to get rid of so that you are keeping yourself unstained from the world?
2. Do you find yourself being partial to a certain group of people, and not concerned about another group?

3. Do you tend to justify certain “sins” in your life?

## **Take Away**

Devotion to God is more than simply being “religious”. There needs to be action in the way we treat one another, the way we live in our relationships, and the concerns we show for those that God is concerned about.

James makes a strong case against prejudice. How could we be so hardened in our spirit as to not love those people that God Himself loved so much that He died for? We are to love others as we love ourselves.

All of us are sinners, the Bible says, and all of us need to be forgiven for our sins. We shouldn't get so proud because we haven't done this or that. Let us not be people that just talk a lot, but live the life that God called us to live.