

## **Sermon or Lesson: James 2:8-11** (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

**TITLE:** God Has A Big Problem With Our Showing Of Favoritism

**INTRO:** Have you ever experienced situations in which people mistreated you, and you regarded their mistreatment of you as being a big offense whereas they regarded their mistreatment of you as being minor and not a big problem? Why did there exist such a huge disparity in the degree of seriousness between how you regarded their mistreatment of you and how the offenders regarded their perpetrating of mistreatment upon you? Difference of perspectives, positions, and opinions can account for huge disparities, but whose regard is right?

As we will discover in the studying of this passage, the same kind of huge disparity can exist between how we regard our behaviors and how God regards our behaviors, specifically in the area of showing favoritism. Let's see how serious God regards the behavior of showing favoritism.

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**READ:** James 2:8-11

[Lesson Question: Does verse 8 have a relational connection with verse 9, and if so, how?]

**SECTION POINT:** The law of "Love your neighbor as yourself" in verse 8 has a relational connection to showing favoritism in verse 9.

- - These two verses are connected by the contrasting word "but".
  - - Therefore, showing favoritism is contrary to the command to love your neighbor.
  - - The word "really" (v.8, *NIV*) or "however" (*NAS*) indicates that showing favoritism is not really keeping the law to "love your neighbor as yourself".
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[Lesson Question: How is showing favoritism contrary to "loving your neighbor"? (v.8)]

**SECTION POINT:** Showing favoritism is contrary to "loving your neighbor". (v.8)

- - Loving your neighbor involves always tangibly extending positive regard towards everyone, even if and especially if they are difficult to love. This is opposite to showing favoritism, which involves tangibly extending positive regard selectively towards only those who are easy or advantageous to love and extending disdain to those who are regarded as being unworthy to receive our positive regard.
- - Loving your neighbor involves frequently operating outside of your comfort zone, whereas showing favoritism involves always operating within your comfort zone.
- - Loving your neighbor naturally generates new or more opportunities to inclusively extend hospitality (Romans 12:13) and ministry outreach, whereas showing favoritism rigidly promotes only opportunities to exclusively extend hospitality and lesser ministry outreach.

- - Loving your neighbor encourages the proliferation of freedom, creativity, and activity in helping others ("like looking after widows and orphans in their distress" (v.1:27)), whereas showing favoritism encourages the proliferation of restrictions that limit the helping of others.
  - - Loving your neighbor potentially broadens your social interconnections, whereas showing favoritism severely narrows your social interconnections and effectively terminates many potential interconnections.
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[Lesson Question: Why is the Law described here as being "royal"? (v.8)]

SECTION POINT: The Law is described here as being "royal", worthy of our highest respect and obedience in its entirety. (v.8)

"royal" = Strong's #0937 "a royal; regal (in relation), i.e. (literally) belonging to (or befitting) the sovereign, or (figuratively) preeminent"

- - Being referred to as 'royal' indicates that the law inherently possesses qualities and characteristics that make it 'royal'.
  - - By implication, the 'royal' law is comprehensively royal, meaning all of it in entirety is royal (v.10) and thereby worthy to hold a position of highest respect and obedience.
  - - God expects us to hold the law or His commands in preeminent or highest priority as guide for our thinking and behaviors.
  - - By implication, we honor the sovereign or preeminent One from which the 'royal' law came when we obey it in its entirety. Likewise by implication, we dishonor the One from which the 'royal' law came when we disobey it in any way. (v.10)
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[Lesson Question: Why is the concept of keeping the law, starting in verse 8, brought into the discussion in James 2 so far about showing favoritism?]

SECTION POINT: The concept of keeping the law, starting in verse 8, is brought into the discussion in James 2 so far about showing favoritism because showing favoritism is a serious sin and issue to God.

- - In verses 9 and following, a main point being made here is that showing favoritism is regarded by God as being a serious offense, and it is not minor or insignificant.
  - - The showing of favoritism is committing a "sin". (v.9)
  - - Committing the sin of favoritism makes us a "lawbreaker" (v.9), a "violate" (Strong's #3848) of the very law we are trying to keep.
  - - Committing the sin of favoritism incites the law to "convict" us (v.9), or "reprove, confute, admonish" us (Strong's #1651). This carries the meanings of pronouncing us guilty, proving us to be in the wrong, proving us to have transgressed or have gone beyond the limits that the law has established, rebuking us, bring "shame and disgrace" upon us, and correcting us. (Zodhiates #1651)
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[Lesson Question: How does God regard the degree of seriousness of the sin of showing favoritism in comparison to other sins that are in the law, as recorded in Scriptures?]

SECTION POINT: God regards the sin of showing favoritism to be just as serious as the other sins listed here of adultery and murder. (v.11)

- - Committing the sin of favoritism makes us "guilty of breaking all of [the law]", not just part of it. (v.10)
  - - God has established that all parts of the law are important (vv.10-11). He expects us to keep the "whole" law, and He regards our failure or "stumble at just one point" as making us "guilty of breaking all of it". (v.10)
  - - Thereby, we do not have permission to pick and choose which parts of the law we are going to keep and which parts we are going to transgress or violate. (v.11)
  - - By mentioning the sins of adultery and murder within the discussion of showing favoritism in these verses, the sin of showing favoritism is being given equal importance, status, and guilt-rendering results as these other cited infractions of the law possess. (v.11)
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BIG IDEA: God regards the showing of favoritism as a significant sin, a major violation of His law.

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#### IMPLICATIONS:

- - The natural tendency of us believers is to perceive ourselves as righteous, but the reality is that we are lawbreakers in God's sight.
  - - We tend to minimize our own sins and exaggerate our own righteousness, "think[ing] of [ourselves] more highly than [we] ought". (Romans 12:3)
  - - We tend to focus on narrow and direct application of individual commands in the Scriptures and ignore the broader more inclusive application of them that God intends.
  - - In other words, we try to minimize the commands of God so that we are obligated to meet merely a lower standard of conduct than what God intends.
  - - For example, we think we are fulfilling the law to "Love your neighbor" by not outwardly displaying any hostility towards our fellow church-attenders we do not like, but yet we readily bad-mouth (speak against) them privately to others and discriminate against them in subtle or covert ways. (see James 3:9-10)
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#### APPLICATIONS:

- - When you show favoritism, do you regard that as being a sin?
- - To what degree of seriousness do you regard it when you show favoritism?
- - Do you justify it in your mind?
- - Do you assume that it is not serious to God?

- - Do you ignore that it is a sin because you are consumed with trying to accomplish your agenda by your showing of favoritism?
  - - Does showing favoritism play a role for you, accomplishing some agenda or purpose for you?
  - - Do you realize now that your showing favoritism is contrary and damaging to keeping the law of loving your neighbor as yourself?
  - - Now that you have gained a fuller understanding about how God regards the showing of favoritism, what are you going to with this understanding?
  - - Are you going to highly value, prioritize, and practice the royal law of loving your neighbor as God desires?
  - - Or instead by default, are you going to continue to highly value, prioritize, and practice the showing of favoritism, which God says in these verses is a major sin and a violation of the law to love your neighbor?
  - - What are you going to do?
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