

### Going to go through chapter 2:13 – but we'll just start here for now

**Jas 1:26–2:13 (ESV)** If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. <sup>(27)</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

1. **James purpose in this section is to teach us what the marks of true religion are**
  - A. There is always a concern with a Pastor that there are some in the church that aren't genuine
    - 1). Those who think they're OK because they're in church – but they are not IN Christ
      - a). They have merely become religious
  - B. So Pastor James in this section picks up his pen and addresses this issue
    - 1). He loves the people he write too and wants to awaken those who think they're believers but aren't
  - C. He actually started this at the end of chapter 1 – self-deception of hearing the Word but not doing it
    - 1). Now he moves to some distinguishing marks that each believer should see in their lives
2. **Here is our outline: Characteristics of a genuine believer**
  - A. A **controlled** speech that displays a changed heart (1:26)
  - B. A **concern** for those in need (1:27)
  - C. A **consecration** to God (1:27)

## I. A CONTROLLED SPEECH THAT DISPLAYS A CHANGED HEART

**Jas 1:26 (ESV)** If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Won't spend too much time here – James speaks of this later in his epistle in more detail

1. **Notice: James speaks of “religion” which is a term many view in a negative light**
  - A. Nothing more than cold set of rules and rituals performed by cold, overly critical individuals
  - B. But James corrects our skewed view of religion – and says true religion is very positive
    - 1). It is marked by a control of the tongue – characterized by loving, kind words – v. 26 (this verse)
    - 2). It is marked by a concern for those in need – a willingness to sacrifice – v. 27 (next verse)
2. **James says true religion touches the tongue *because* it changes the heart**

**Mt 12:34 (ESV)** You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? *For out of the abundance (the overflow) of the heart the mouth speaks.*

  - A. The tongue will always – eventually – expose what is in the heart
    - 1). If the heart is sinful – the words will be bitter, hateful, prejudiced, prideful, lustful
    - 2). If the heart is godly (changed) the words will be loving, kind, merciful, gracious

**Transition:** The first mark of the believer in this passage is a change in the words you speak

  - A. You may have been like me – gutter mouth – saved and *my vocabulary naturally changed*
    - 1). Why? Because my heart *had been* changed – my tongue was a reflection of that
  - B. James adds if there is no change in the way you speak you have deceived yourself thinking you're OK
    - 1). IOW True salvation always effects the words we use
  - C. And your “religion is worthless”
    - 1). It has done nothing to change your heart – hasn't brought you into a saving relationship with God

A control of your tongue

## II. A CONCERN FOR THOSE IN NEED

**Jas 1:27 (ESV)** Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction...

## 1. Saying the believer who claims to follow God will be somewhat like Him

- A. Again because of the changed heart - there will be to some degree a family likeness
  - B. See this in the word the Spirit chose in this verse *“Visit”*
    - 1). It can be defined as a willingness to seek out those in need and provide care - help
    - 2). Same word used for how God sought us out to help us – to meet our needs
- Lk 1:68 (NKJV)** "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has *visited* and redeemed His people,  
**Acts 15:14 (NKJV)** "Simon has declared how God at the first *visited* the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

**Point:** God is concerned and compassionate – aware of those in need and willing to do something about it

- A. When we are saved He changes our heart to be like His – that is sanctification
- B. He still reaches out to those in need – now He uses our hands and feed – incarnation continues

**Summary:** So the believer at salvation will see a change in the words they speak

- A. They will see a change in how they view others in need – there is a compassion that wasn't there before

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A control over the words they speak – a change in the compassion they have

## III. A CONSECRATION TO GOD AND HIS WAYS

**Jas 1:27 (ESV)** Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, *and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

### 1. There is a purity that must characterize the life of the believer

- A. True salvation calls us to God and calls us out of the world
 

**2 Co 6:16–17 (ESV)** What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”<sup>(17)</sup> Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,

  - 1). Not – run into a monastery – but choose to live differently – have different goals

Watch out for the idols of this world – guard your affections – who you worship

**Point:** There is no such thing as being saved but remaining unchanged

**2 Co 5:17 (ESV)** ...if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- A. The old has passed away – the power of sin has been broken - we have come out of the world
 

The new has come – we now have a new nature that desires to follow God
- B. This is James main point in this letter – the proof God has done a saving work = a changed life

**Transition:** James says be unstained – unpolluted from the ways of the world

- A. Now in chapter 2 he goes on to identify one of the ways the world pollutes us
  - 1). It is in the sinful attitudes and actions of prejudice – favoritism and partiality based on externals
- B. James paints a powerful picture of how this occurs in the church

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**Jas 2:1–4 (ESV)** My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. <sup>(2)</sup> For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, <sup>(3)</sup> and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” <sup>(4)</sup> have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

### 1. The scene: Church has gathered when two men arrive simultaneously

- A. One is obviously a man of means – everything about him shouts “Money” “Power” “Influence”
 

The other is obviously a man whose outward appearance shouts “Poverty” “Need”
- B. Both are met at the back door – the man of means is ushered to a seat of honor

While the poor man isn't offered a seat at all

**The sin:** By outward appearance alone – one is treated with honor and the other with contempt

## 2. Let's make it more contemporary

- A. We're standing at the door surveying the parking lot – when two men drive up
  - 1). One in a brand new Lexus – gets out with his Tommy Bahama shirt – sporting an Apple watch  
The other in a 92 Toyota Celica held together with duct tape – His clothes are tattered
- B. Lexus Boy (LB) is immediately greeted warmly – “Great to see you...where you from... Come in!”  
Mr. Duct Tape (DT) is ignored and barely noticed
- C. After the service – everybody approaches LB “We have snacks – love to get to know you better”  
But let's not tell DT – he looks hungry anyway – I bet he'll wolf down ALL the snacks!
  - 1). So he stands alone – neglected – until he finally slips out unnoticed – hope HE doesn't come back

## 3. Why is this SO sinful? It is so unlike God – it is so self-centered

- A. Let's be honest – why do we treat the man of means so kindly and neglect the other = *selfishness*  
**James 2:4 (NLT)** doesn't this discrimination show that you are *guided by wrong motives?*
  - 1). The motive is ME! I treat the man of means with respect because I might gain something from it
    - a). If I know a man like this! Who knows how it might benefit me!  
And if he starts tithing to the church! “Hey how you doing... great to have you!”  
Might be better to be honest “Hey how you doing...want to use you!”
  - 2). So we slobber all over this guy – phony love that is really only self-love = ugly and sinful
  - 3). AND Our heart is really exposed by how we treat the other man
    - a). Can't do anything for me – why waste my time...  
He probably is needy and will just want to use me. You mean like you with...

**Question:** Do you see why James would move from the command not to be polluted by the world to this?

- A. This is so polluting and it is so prevalent! In individuals and the church – it must be dealt with

**Transition:** I see four different ways that James deals with this sin in v. 5-13

- A. It is by focusing on the right person and remembering the right truth

## IV. THE DEFEAT OF FAVORITISM AND PARTIALITY

**First: Be captivated by the glory of Christ (This will change how we look at the rich)**

**Jas 2:1 (ESV)** My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*.

**James 2:1 (NIV)** My brothers, as believers in our *glorious Lord Jesus Christ*, don't show favoritism.

### 1. As we are captivated by the glory of Christ our view of others is corrected

- A. You'll no longer be overly impressed with somebody else's wealth
  - 1). I've been fellowshiping with the one who paves His streets in gold – owns it all

**Thought:** So I no longer feel *the desperation* that turns me into a phony – fawning over them

- A. Hoping a crumb from their wealth – influence somehow falls my way
- B. This doesn't mean just because they have money I treat THEM unkindly  
It means that I can now just treat them like an ordinary person I'm not trying to use – it frees me
- C. I have the promises of the Lord of Glory – He will take care of me – He's willing AND able

**Point:** First thing to defeat this ugly sin of partiality that can lead to a phony kind of love

- A. Be captivated by the glory of Christ – His beauty – His majesty – His promises
  - 1). That allows you to be genuine with others – loving them because God does – not to use them

**Transition:** That takes care of how we look at the rich – how about how we look at the poor

## Be Gripped By His Grace (How to change how we look at the poor)

**Jas 2:5 (ESV)** Listen, my beloved brothers, has not *God chosen* those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

### 1. The emphasis is on God's choosing = Grace

- A. This helps to take us back to remember who we were when He chose us and gave us the gift of faith
  - 1). We were the poor – absolutely destitute and bankrupt spiritually – deserving only hell
  - 2). But He didn't treat us with contempt – He visited us – reached out to us – draw us to Himself
- B. We are here only because God was not repulsed by our ugliness – He came to us – loved us
  - 1). I've been treated so kindly – when God saw nothing but ugliness – sin – willful rejection

**Point:** when I know who I am and how God has treated me – that **MUST** affect how I treat others

- A. “Yeah, but they're so different than me!” “A Boston Celtic Fan!”  
Are they more different than you - than you were from God? – Not even close
- B. God has set the example in how we treat others – treat them like I treated you

**Col 3:13 (NIV)** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. *Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

**Jn 13:34 (ESV)** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: *just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

### 2. James reminds us here - outward appearance can portray a very distorted picture

- A. The rich may be very poor in what really counts – faith towards God  
While that poor man may be extremely rich in what really counts – faith towards God
  - 1). They may love God with all their hearts – He may be everything to them  
Which is evidence that He chose them! He saved them – they are HIS CHILD

**Thought:** But notice how powerful this sin is – who it can make you pander too – for selfish reasons

**Jas 2:6–7 (ESV)** But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? <sup>(7)</sup> Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

- A. It causes you to dishonor – insult the poor man – while favoring the wealthy
  - 1). James says even if the wealthy man is a persecutor and blasphemer – actually happening?
- B. This is how powerful this ugly sin is. Watch out for it

**Transition:** Now James moves on to the law of God – the commandments show how serious all this is

## Don't Forget the Truth (The commandments)

**Jas 2:8 (ESV)** If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.

### 1. He calls the law of love as the royal law of Scripture

- A. It is defined as loving our neighbor as ourselves
- B. Scripture commands us to treat others like God treated us – and like we would want to be treated

**Mt 7:12 (ESV)** “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them...”

- 1). Would you like to be treated with contempt because of your looks – your nationality  
Happened every once in a while in England – it felt terrible – why would they treat me like that?
- 2). I want to be treated with dignity and respect – so I treat others with dignity and respect  
I want to be loved – so I treat others with love – kindness – mercy - caring

**Transition:** James strengthens his point – *how seriously God takes this*

**Jas 2:9 (ESV)** But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

## 1. Treat people like this and you are sinning in God's eyes

- A. You're not only treating them with contempt – you're treating Him with contempt!

He said "Don't do this but you say – I don't care what you said – I'm doing it anyway!"

**John Bunyan:** Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power and the contempt of his love.

**Thought:** Now just in case we try the old – I do the rest alright – just this one thing I fail at – no biggie

**James adds: Jas 2:10–11 (ESV)** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. <sup>(11)</sup> For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

- A. God doesn't grade on averages – succeeded more than you failed – C+ BUT STILL PASS! No problem

**Point:** This sin of partiality is a failure of love – this command is just as important as any other command

- A. **AND it is as offensive to God as any other command – it is a sin against Him**

**Transition:** if we choose to act like this – when we know we shouldn't there will be consequences

- A. He says if you love "you do well" – if you sin though – you are a law breaker = consequences

## Remember That Sin Always Has Consequences

**Jas 2:12–13 (ESV)** So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. <sup>(13)</sup> For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

### 1. The law of liberty – the law for the NT believer is a law of liberty

- A. The OT law commanded you to love your neighbor but didn't provide the power to do so

- B. Under grace you have the same command but are given the power to live that life of love out

- 1). The power not to be in bondage to this phony kind of affections – and partiality

**Point:** If you're a believer you have the power to love like you should

- A. James says choose to speak words of love, kindness and mercy – act in loving, kind and merciful ways

**Transition:** Now he tells us why – remember he's talking to brothers here – believers

**Jas 2:12–13 (ESV)** So speak and so act **as those who are to be judged** under the law of liberty.

- A. This is a difficult one – what judgment? Here is my thoughts – many believe this

### 2. This is speaking of that meeting we will have with our Lord in glory

- A. So speak and act like you really have salvation – have really been changed

Because you are going to be judged under the law of liberty (NT commands)

- B. There is a meeting every believer is going to have with Jesus Christ when we are with Him in glory

**Rom 14:12 (NIV)** So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

- 1). We will talk over how faithfully we lived for Him

How faithfully we used the resources He gave us – Time. Money. Talents. Words. Etc

- C. This meeting has nothing to do with salvation – **only the saved will be there**

- 1). This is all about **rewards** given or lost – and about **rank** and **responsibility** in God's kingdom

**Thought:** Let's see if the Scriptures teach that our faithfulness will determine our rank and responsibility

- A. Luke 19 Parable of the Minas (small amount of money)

- 1). The master (Jesus) is going away to a far country (glory after resurrection)

- a). But promised one day He would return (Second coming)

- 2). Before he departs he gives 10 servants a small amount of money (resources)

- a). Told them to be resourceful with it – put it to work faithfully until He returns

- 3). Eventually He returns and calls each servant to give an account of his faithfulness

**Lk 19:16–19 (ESV)** The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' <sup>(17)</sup> And he said to him, **'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a**

*very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'* <sup>(18)</sup> And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' <sup>(19)</sup> And he said to him, '*And you are to be over five cities.'*

- a). That is that meeting we will all have with Him
- b). Their faithfulness determined their *rank* and *responsibilities* in heaven – their *rewards*
  - 1a). It will all be good – but faithfulness WILL BE rewarded

B. It matters how you live now – “What you weave now you will wear for eternity”

**Point:** I believe James is saying – live in a way you’ll be prepared for that meeting

**Transition:** I don’t want to move past this without thinking about how sin also matters now

A. It will matter when we have that meeting – *it also matters how we enjoy our Christianity now*

### 3. Sin affects us now

A. If God is pointing this out to you right now – and you don’t repent – what will happen

**Is 59:2 (ESV)** ...your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

- 1). It breaks fellowship with God – our prayers are not heard – our spirituality dries up
- 2). We may be saved but we are not enjoying it at all – life is hard – joy is gone
  - a). This is God’s discipline – love - it is meant to turn you from that sin back to Him

B. When I allow sin – I can’t pray – I don’t read my Bible – it affects my relationship with God

- 1). I can’t stand that! God is to important – that drives me to repentance
- 2). I need God to listen to my prayers – I depend upon answered prayer

**Transition:** We’re running out of time so quickly the next one

### 4. The unbeliever

**Jas 2:13 (ESV)** For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy...

A. James is trying to open the eyes of the deceived – look what He says in v. 13

- 1). He is saying the true believer controls his tongue – has concern for those in need  
AND is not partial – doesn’t treat people with contempt over outward appearances
  - a). They have God’s heart in them and His heart of mercy produces mercy in us

B. But if you’ve *never had this mercy* – this is evidence there has never been that change

- 1). If your life is characterized by a prejudice and contempt over others because of externals
  - a). James says this is serious! Do something about it! You lack the evidence of salvation
  - b). Where is that change that always takes place? Open your eyes!
- 2). It doesn’t matter if you’re in church if you’re not in Christ
  - a). How do I know I’m in Christ – James would say “You need to see a change in your life”

**Transition:** But now James closes with a word of comfort – the Pastor’s heart

## V. CLOSING WITH A WORD OF COMFORT

**Jas 2:13 (ESV)** For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. *Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

### 1. I think James knows some with super-sensitive consciences will read this

- A. Even though they are saved – this is going to rip them apart – all they will do is focus on their failures
- B. The truth – James is not expecting perfection - We are going to fail in these things

**Question:** Again. Have you seen a change – you’re not perfect YET but you’re not like you used to be

- A. Now you want to live for God – you want to please Him – you don’t want to be like this
  - 1). You look back on a time when your words were always ungodly – that’s changed but not perfectly
  - 2). You had no concern for the hurting before – now you do – though there is still some failure



- 3). You were filled with prejudice – hatred – you judged people by the way they looked – you treated certain nationalities – color of skin – social status with contempt
  - a). You’re no longer like that – though you may still struggle at times with those feelings
  - b). But you’re willing to put them down to live for Christ’s glory – let Him deal with it
  - c). You know you’ve been treated so kindly – so you’re willing to treat others in the same way

**Point:** James says for you – who see the change but are bothered by the failures that still occur

You relate to Paul – I don’t always do what I want – I still do what I don’t want to do at times

“Oh wretched man that I am! Who can free me from this body of death”

- A. The answer that calmed him is the same answer that will calm you

**Rom 7:25 (NIV)** Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!...

**Rom 8:1 (NIV)** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

- B. I believe James is saying the same thing here *“Mercy triumphs over judgment”*

- 1). We all see so many failures – but we all see a change too – we’re not who we once were

- a). God has done something in us – He has visited us – drawn us

- 2). And on the basis of Jesus receiving all your sin – paying for every one

God can now have mercy on you – *His mercy will triumph over judgment*

**Point:** So take these things seriously

- A. The words you choose to use
- B. The compassion you have towards others
- C. Keeping yourself unpolluted from the things of the world
- D. But be comforted in this – when there are failures – and there will be
  - 1). We will be met with mercy – we enter heaven on the basis of Christ’s merit alone
    - a). God will view you through the merit of His Son

No anger – that was poured out fully – exhausted on Christ

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## CONCLUSION

### 1. The marks of the believer

- A. Our words reflect the reality of a changed heart
- B. Our compassion and concern for those in need gives proof of a saving work of God
- C. Our treatment of others – even when they aren’t like us – it may be their financial status
 

The color of their skin – their ethnicity – nationality – accent – looks – tattoos

The length of their hair – color of their hair (blue)

  - 1). The Christian treats others with kindness – dignity – respect
 

Because that’s how God treated us

### 2. In all these things we will discover imperfection

- A. For the believer on the journey – in the end *mercy will triumph over judgment*
  - 1). God is so good!