

January 28th, 2006
“The Brotherhood of Man”

Reverend Darryl R. Curtis

James 2:1-4

1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

2 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,

3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,”

4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

The Roman Empire of the First Century was not a very homogeneous place. The Roman war machine, one of the most efficient fighting forces seen in the world up until this time, conquered without regard for the characteristics of the people that they conquered. The only consideration that the Romans had was geography, and they wanted to conquer the most geography that they could. All racial and ethnic considerations were secondary.

The Romans are the fourth of four great military waves to come through Palestine. The first, of course, were the Jews, who, under Moses and Joshua, were given the charge by God to eradicate the Canaanites that were indigenous to the Palestine, as God knew that if the Jews allowed the Canaanites to coexisted with them in the Land, the Canaanites would entice the Jews into worshipping their idol gods. The Jews failed to follow God’s charge, fell into idolatry as God predicted, and were themselves conquered by the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

The Assyrians and the Babylonians kept control over their kingdom by displacing conquered peoples. The Babylonians deported the Jews out of Palestine to various areas of Eastern Europe, while bringing people from the lands to which they deported the Israelites into Palestine. The people who were bought into the Palestine were called Samaritans, and were still in Palestine at the time of Jesus Christ.

The third great military wave was that of the Persians and the Greeks, who conquered the Babylonians to take control of Palestine. The Persians and the Greeks allowed the two southernmost tribes of Israel to return to the Palestine, introduced Persian and Greek culture into the Palestine, but did little to affect the ethnic makeup of the Palestine.

The fourth wave was the Romans, who made the Palestine part of the Roman Empire, and brought the residents into contact with the various cultures of the world because of the increased availability of travel throughout the Empire.

So, during the time of Jesus and the New Testament, the Palestine is an ethnically diverse place. Jews and Gentiles of all descriptions meet one another in the Land. The Jews have traditionally endeavored to keep themselves separate, or “pure” from the other ethnicities with which they come into contact because of God’s initial charge to the Jews for them to do so.

When the Christian Church began after the ascension of the Risen Savior into Heaven and the descending of the Holy Spirit from Heaven to indwell men, the Church had a distinctly Jewish flavor. Jesus’ parents were Jewish, as Matthew chapter 1 traces the lineage of Jesus through Joseph back to Abraham, and Luke chapter 3 traced the lineage of Jesus through Mary back to Abraham, Shem, and Adam, all the way back to God.

Jesus was a Nazarean Galilean Jew, and his twelve disciples were Jews as well. Jesus grew up in the Galilean town of Nazareth, whose poor reputation among most Jews is reflected in Nathanael’s comment to Philip, in **John 1:46**:

46 And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

After Jesus fed the 5000 with the two fish and the five loaves of bread, the reputation of His miracle ministry grew. People began comparing Jesus’ deeds with the works of the Christ prophesied in the Old Testament.

The predominant reason for Jesus’ rejection by the Jewish leadership was that fact that Jesus was a Galilean. **John 7:40-43** records:

40 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, “Truly this is the Prophet.”

41 Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Will the Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”

43 So there was a division among the people because of Him.

As the discussion continued, the Jewish leadership sent soldiers from the Temple Guard to bring Jesus in for questioning, but Jesus talked His way out the arrest warrant. When the soldiers returned to the leadership, the discussion turned once again to the place from which Jesus came. **John 7:45-49** records:

45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why have you not brought Him?”

46 The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!”

47 Then the Pharisees answered them, “Are you also deceived?

48 Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?

49 But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.”

Some concrete statement that Jesus made to the officers caused them to change their mind about arresting Jesus. The Pharisees did not evaluate that which Jesus said; as a matter of fact, they did not even ask what Jesus said, but simply reverted to an argument to their own

authority, which is least convincing type of argument. Nicodemus, the one Pharisee that had actually heard and spoken to Jesus tried to stick up for Jesus, in **John 7:50-53**

50 Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them,

51 “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?

52 They answered and said to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.”

53 And everyone went to his own house.

The Jews judged Jesus, not by His Word, and not by His Works, but by His birthplace. The most interesting thing about the whole situation is that although Jesus came from Galilee, He was not actually born there. If you remember the Christmas story, Jesus’ father was of the house and lineage of King David the Bethlehemite. As Mary was in the last stages of carrying her child to term, her husband Joseph had to return to their ancestral home to register in the Roman census. Jesus was born in Bethlehem during Joseph’s trip to register. Joseph and his family then went to Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod, and then, when Herod died, Joseph took his family back to Nazareth. So, although Jesus grew up in Nazareth, He was not born in Nazareth, and, had the Pharisees decided to investigate, or even ask this man who was healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons and feeding the poor, they could easily have acquired this information. Since it was obvious that Jesus was not part of the Pharaiscal power structure, the Pharisees rejected Jesus without a proper investigation of Jesus’ bona fides.

Our text, **James 2:1** tells us:

1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

Partiality, as used here, can be defined as judging someone based upon some item of personal status rather than on their actions or performance. The Pharisees judged Jesus as ineligible to represent God because He was from, as they say, the wrong side of the tracks.

I recently read a book upon the recommendation of my son about a similar situation in the Church. The book is entitled Radical Reformation by Mark Driscoll, which says this about the traditional church in the 21st century:

Some churches are more into their church and its traditions, buildings, and politics than the gospel. Though they know the gospel theologically, they rarely take it out of their church. This is classic fundamentalist Christianity, which flourishes most widely in more independent-minded, Bible-believing churches.

The success of these churches lies in that the members love the church and often love the other people in the church. Their failure is that it is debatable whether they love lost people in the culture as much as they love their own church. Pastors at these churches are prone to speak about the needs of the church, focusing on building up its people and keeping them from sinning. These churches exist to bring other Christians in, more than to send them out into the culture with the gospel. Over time, they can become so inwardly focused that the gospel is replaced with rules, legalism, and morality supported with mere proof

texts from the Bible. Fundamentalist Christians are commonly found to love their Lord and their brothers, but not their neighbors.

Driscoll says that the fundamentalist churches exist to bring other Christians into their church, which is not exactly the same as that which the Bible defines as evangelism. Bringing other Christians into the Church is more like what we used to call “sheep stealing” than evangelism, as we try to get Christian members from other churches. The reason that “sheep stealing” is more satisfying to many church leaders than evangelism is that the sheep that we steal have similar ethnic, occupational and Christian characteristics as ourselves, and most of us are more comfortable with people that are like ourselves than we are with people who are different from us.

This is the crux of partiality.

Most people are more comfortable with people that are like them than they are with people who are different. When we see someone who is different, we have a much more difficult time embracing them. The more strongly that we identify with the characteristic that differentiates us from another person, the less welcoming that we generally are to accept them into our fellowship. **James 2:2-4** gives us the example:

2 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,

3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,”

4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Hold it, James.

A poor man in filthy clothes? In our church? Are you serious? I would tell him to stand over there or sit on the ground because I don’t want the pews in the church messed up. If the man is filthy, how can we welcome him into our church? Shouldn’t he go home and dress up and come back when he gets himself straight?

Listen to what the Bible says in **Luke 5:27-32**:

27 After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.”

28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.

30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

31 Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Tax collectors like Levi were of the lowest social status among the Jews, although they generally had money. They received their money by collecting money from their Jewish brethren to give to the Romans, and part of the incentive that they had to collect as much as possible was that they were able to keep a percentage of that which they collected. Not only that, but tax collectors were generally considered no better than thieves, because they had the tendency to

collect more than they were supposed to from individuals and then keep the difference, rather than turning it in to Rome. So, in the eyes of the Jews, a tax collector was a fellow with pretty poor character.

Jesus, in our example, sought out this tax collector to be in his group of disciples, which did not endear Jesus to the Pharisees any more than the fact that Jesus was ostensibly from Galilee. The difference between Jesus and the Pharisees is similar to that between Samuel and God expressed to us in the **1Samuel 16:6-7**. Samuel was sent by God to Jesse's house to anoint the next King. The Bible says:

6 So it was, when they came, that he [Samuel] looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!"

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Samuel looked at Eliab and decided that Eliab looked like a king. The Pharisees look upon what a man does for a living, especially if he is a tax collector. The Pharisees look upon where a man is from, especially if he is from Galilee.

The Pharisees look at the outward appearance, and, in some cases, they do not do their due diligence to ascertain whether their assumptions about a man based upon his outward appearance are true. God, on the other hand, has the power to judge a man more deeply, based upon his inward intellectual and emotional characteristics, such as courage, intellect and moral fiber, in other words, what is in his heart.

In **Luke 5:30-32**, Jesus responds to the scribes and the Pharisees:

30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

31 Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

This is the reason that Jesus is called the "Great Physician". He describes Himself as the one who was sent by God to those of us that are sick, not just meaning physical illness, but also sin sickness. Our sin sickness makes us unable to get along with others because we judge them based upon outward appearance. We sometimes listen to what people have to say and ascribe ulterior motives to them, which may or may not be correct. We sometimes hate people because they look differently than we do, or because their ancestors did something mean to our ancestors in history, or because they are of a different religion than we are. Some call this "self-defense", but the Bible calls it sin. **James 2:8-9** tells us:

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;

9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

After we meet the Lord, our attitudes about people should begin to change. They may not change overnight, but listening to the words of the New Testament should teach us that God is the creator of all people, and that, as **2Peter 3:9** tells us:

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is

longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God wants all, meaning everyone, to come to repentance, that is, to become a member of His Family, the Church. We are not to judge that someone, because of their outward appearance or their personal characteristics, cannot come to repentance, and is condemned to life outside of the Christian fellowship. James says that we should embrace even the filthy man, and he uses the words “filthy man” for a very specific reason, which is given in **Isaiah 64:6**:

6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

In the sight of God, your clean, pressed suit is just as much of a filthy rag as the poor man’s dirty clothing. In our last lesson, I mentioned that we need to evaluate the Word of God recognizing the fact that we are rank sinners ourselves. We need to take ourselves off of the pedestal and recognize that our position in Christ is not a result of our own goodness, or because of our own righteousness, but because of the imputed righteousness given to us by Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary. **Galatians 2:20** tells us:

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

No, my life is no longer about me. Yes, I have personal concerns and personal desires, but, as a Christian, I need to decide that if that I desire is not pleasing to God, I need to abandon it, because it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, which means that although I am still the one drawing breath, I am no longer the one setting the agenda.

I have, by faith, decided to follow the agenda of Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Jesus gave Himself for me on Calvary, and I received righteousness because of His sacrifice, and that righteousness tells me to make the conscious decision to no longer judge others with partiality because of outward physical characteristics or associations, but to be as a beggar that has found the place in which bread is being given away, and is letting all of the other beggars know, regardless of their race, creed, color, religion or national origin, where they can go to find bread. Yes, they may be starving in sin, but they can go to the place where the bread is being given out and feed their sin-sick souls. Yes, they may have disgusting, filthy habits, but they can go to the place where the bread is being given out and receive something that will change them on the inside and cause them to put their disgusting, filthy habits away even as we have put our disgusting, filthy habits away.

The context of the passage of Scripture in Galatians 2 has to do with a conflict between Paul and Peter over their association with the Gentiles of Antioch. The Jewish ceremonial law forbade the Jew from breaking bread with Gentiles, as they were unclean before God.

Nonetheless, when Peter came to Antioch, he ate with the Gentiles that had accepted Christ as they were all Christians. However, when some Jews came from the Church at Jerusalem that were more insistent that the Jews remain separate from Gentiles even though the Gentiles were Christians, Peter gave in and stopped eating with the Gentiles. **Galatians 2:11-13** records:

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they

came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

Paul confronted Peter about the hypocrisy of behaving as a Christian until the Jews came from Jerusalem, then forsaking the Gentile Christians to appease the Jews that wanted to keep the ceremonial laws intact. Paul said, in **Galatians 2:14-16**:

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Paul made it clear to Peter that there is no difference between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. Both Jews and Gentiles gain access to God by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the Old Testament laws of Moses have no effect on our faith relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that the Mosaic Law was simply a temporary learning device to specify our sin for us, but really had no power to save, and that Judaism was a schoolroom and the Mosaic law was analogous to a schoolmaster preparing students in school until the student have completed their courses and are ready to matriculate into the real world of Christianity. **Galatians 3:23-28** tells us:

23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the [Mosaic] law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

24 Therefore the [Mosaic] law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith [in Christ] has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

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

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The distinctions were all eradicated on the Cross. Jesus died for the sins of all men, regardless of their ethnic group, their racial heritage, their national origin or the religious affiliation. Jesus Christ is the great common denominator between men; He is the one by which we all must be saved, as **1 Timothy 2:1-5** tells us:

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

One God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ. Peter testifies similarly to the authorities after he, by the power of Christ, healed the lame man at the Beautiful

Gate, in Acts 4:9-12:

9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

11 This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

The crux of Christianity is the history of the life of the Christ, His death, burial and resurrection, and the teaching of the apostles in the Scriptures tells anyone who will review them that there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved other than Jesus Christ. The good works that we do are done in the power of His Name and in accordance with His Word, and we deserve none of the credit. Peter healed the man at the Beautiful Gate by the power of Christ, but Peter did not do anything to create this power; Peter was not even able to stand by Jesus and watch as Jesus was going to the Cross. Peter’s gift of healing, like all other spiritual gifts, was given to him by God, in spite of Peter’s lack of righteousness, because of God’s mercy.

So, since that which we have is ours because of God’s mercy, let us not arrogantly imagine that we are better than the fellow in the filthy clothes. Quiet as it is kept, I just took my filthy clothes off to come here, and I hope that you don’t look too hard at me, because you may see that I still have some of the filth on me. As we conclude this lesson, let us listen to Paul, as he explains our equivalence to one another and our interdependence on one another, even as various organs of our bodies are interdependent. **Romans 12:1-5** admonishes us:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

To God, all of us in the Body of Christ are all members of one another. We are members of the Body of Christ not because of our righteousness, because of God’s grace. Let us not fail to extend the grace of God to other that may wish to join the body, and let us not treat one another or anyone that we come into contact with partiality, but with love and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Reverend Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church