

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON THE LETTER OF JAMES

JESUS CAME TO SAVE ALL SINNERS

James 2:1 “My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?” (New Living Translation) [Read James 2:1-13]

The message of the Gospel is so simple, but profound. Colossians 1:26-31 says, “God chose the foolish. . .weak. . .low. . .so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. . .let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” Jesus died for all. This truth would suggest that the Christian church should be very diverse in its membership. And, it is true the Bible says that those who will be in heaven are from every tribe, nation and people group. Yet, here in chapter 2, James writes an almost startling exhortation, “. . . how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?”

In spite of God’s love for all people, Christ’s death for all and God’s desire that “all men should be saved,” Christians and Christian churches do not always reflect this fact in how strangers are welcomed. I recently read this quote, “How many of you would be heirs of the kingdom of God if God would act as you do?” James, in chapter 2 addresses an embarrassing issue that existed in the early Christian church and still does today, “selective fellowship.” This means welcoming those who speak the same language, have the same skin color, are socio-economically similar, etc.

Christian churches often have a sign prominently displayed saying “all are welcome.” Is this really true? Is it not true most Christian congregation members are quite similar to one another in race, color, socio-economic status, etc.? Researchers say this is true even of entire religious denominations.

Jesus’ disciples said of Him, “You (Jesus) are not swayed by appearances.” (Matthew 22:16) In Leviticus God, through Moses said to Israel, “You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great. . .” James writes in 2:8-9, “it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin.” (New Living Translation) Partiality to one kind of people vs. another is

incompatible with the love God has for all people. Jesus calls us to “love one another; even as I have loved you . . . ” (John 13:34)

Prayer: Work in my heart, O Lord, a love for all people, showing no favoritism but embracing all people with the good news of your love for them in Christ Jesus. In His holy name. Amen.

The saints in Christ are one in ev'ry place
To serve the Gospel of His costly grace;
From those first days to this, our hope the same:
The love of Christ, one Lord, one saving name.

In chains for Christ! His pris'ners love to sing,
For slaves and free rejoice to praise our King;
What though the Church on earth still suffers wrong?
The cross of Christ remains our pilgrim song.

To live is Christ, for us, to die is gain;
Where then shall be our hunger, danger, pain?
Our joy to preach good news to rich and poor,
Then be with Christ, to live forevermore.

Lord Jesus Christ! Heav'n's praise let earth repeat;
The work that You began, You will complete.
By grace let ev'ry foe become Your friend;
Your day, O Christ, shall down and never end.
(LSB 838)