

FAITH IN ACTION

Playing Favorites, James 2:1-13

Favoritism

James 2:1 (NLT) 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?

- James continues his writing to believers about temptation, but it's a temptation that is common to *all believers*, but we may overlook or ignore
- What does it mean to show favoritism, partiality, to discriminate or to have respect of persons?
- It means to favor some people over others or pay special attention to a person because of their wealth, social status, position, authority, race, popularity, gender, looks, or influence, etc.
- James charges believers to not show favoritism and give several reasons why we shouldn't
 1. We're all brothers and sisters in Christ
 2. Everyone that claims to have faith in Jesus Christ bows before Him as Lord
 3. Everyone that claims to have in Jesus Christ believes He is the Lord of Glory
 4. Jesus left the glory of heaven and *humbled* Himself to come to corrupt and dying world to save all mankind
- If we truly believe in Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, we must not show favoritism, partiality, discrimination, or respect of persons
- Can we *really* claim to have faith in Jesus if we favor some people over others?

What Favoritism Looks Like

2 For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes.

3 If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well, 4 doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

- To give us a clearer understanding of favoritism, James gives us an example of what favoritism looks like *in the church*:
- Two people come to church; one person is dressed in designer clothes and wearing expensive jewelry and the other person is obviously poor and is dressed in ragged and dirty clothes
- The well-dressed person is displaying *outward signs* of wealth, status, influence and importance
- The poorly dressed person is displaying *outward signs* of poverty, distress, and great need
- What happens when these two people come to church?
 - The rich person gets *escorted to the front* and gets one of the *best seats*
 - The poor person is told to "stand" or "sit" away from everyone else
- The favoritism exhibited in this example reveals our evil thoughts that are *evident* by our actions of favoritism, partiality, discrimination or respect of persons
- To show favoritism shows:

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- We care more about the outward appearance than we do about the heart **1 Samuel 16:7 (KJV) "...for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."**
- We misunderstand who is important and blessed in the sight of God
- There is some selfishness in us

Favoritism is Against the Heart of God

5 Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? 6 But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? 7 Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

- Showing favoritism to the rich discriminates against the poor; a people truly loved by God
- It's easy for us to be partial to the rich, but God isn't partial to the rich
- God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and inherit the kingdom of God
- The poor have more opportunities to trust God and as a result they may be more rich in faith than a rich person
- The rich *may* trust God, but the poor *must* trust God
- For some who are rich, it is their wealth is the obstacle to living for Jesus **Matthew 19:24 (KJV) 24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.**
- When we show favoritism, it shows a disgraceful attitude because it dishonor and humiliates the poor
- We are to welcome everyone with open arms and open hearts
- James reminds his readers that it's often the rich that oppress them and take them to court
- The rich have the power to trample over the rights of the poor or litigate against the poor if they attempt to fight for what's right
- The rich and powerful often speak against the name of Jesus by denying, ridiculing, persecuting neglecting, ignoring or rejecting him as the Savior of the world
- The church should not show favoritism or partiality to anyone

Favoritism is Against the Word of God

8 Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 9 But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

- James says if we live by the royal law of the scriptures, we do well **Leviticus 19:18 (KJV) "...but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself..."**
 - It's the law of God's kingdom and reinforced by Jesus **Matthew 22:39 (KJV) 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**
 - This commandment leads to eternal life **Luke 10:27-28 (KJV) 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy**

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neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

- James anticipated that some would say they are favoring the rich because they were obeying the scripture, “love thy neighbor as thyself”
- The issue is not that a person is nice to someone who is rich, the problem is when we show *favoritism* to the rich and are *not nice* to the poor
- **Showing favoritism to others is a sin**
- The poor person is just as much *our neighbor* as the rich person
- As believers, we are to love people, not show favoritism, because showing favoritism is a sin

Obey ALL God’s Commands

10 For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God’s laws. 11 For the same God who said, “You must not commit adultery,” also said, “You must not murder.” So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law. 12 So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. 13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

- The word of God is to be obeyed in its *entirety*, not *selectively*
- We can’t say I’ll abide by the command not to murder, but I’ll ignore the command against adultery because “I don’t like it” and I’ll toss it to the side
- Obeying *all* of God’s word is important to God
- We are either living by God’s word or we are not, every law is given by God
- The whole law must be kept if we are to be justified by the law
- If we keep all the laws *except one*, we are guilty of breaking *all* the laws
- If we show favoritism, we are *guilty* of breaking God’s law
- What should motivate us not the play favorites?
- *Facing the judgment of God* – We must speak and act like people who will stand before God and give an account of how we have lived
- *We will be rewarded based on our behavior* – God is going to treat us exactly the way we treated others
- Luke 6:38 is a passage that is often quoted when the church is receiving tithes and offerings. The context was about *mercy*, not *money*
- ***Luke 6:38 (KJV) 38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.***
- We must be merciful to escape the judgement of God