

WHY PARTIALITY IS WRONG

James 2:1-13

One of the glories of the New Testament church is that we are a family that loves and values all peoples (Col. 3:11). The makeup of the local church should baffle the world. The world should not be able to explain how people of different races, economic and social levels, and age groups can come together in love and harmony.

James was very concerned that favoritism not be practiced or tolerated in the churches to which he wrote.

FAVORITISM IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

This principle is rooted in the character of God, who does not show partiality, and who commands His people not to do so, either (Lev. 19:15; Deuteronomy 10:17-18).

In verses 2-4 James gives an illustration of favoritism in the church.

Two men come into a church gathering (here called "synagogue," reflecting their Jewishness). One is obviously wealthy, as seen by his gold ring and fine clothes. The other is obviously poor, as seen by his shabby clothes. Someone in the church directs the wealthy man to the best seat in the house, whereas the poor man is told to stand out of the way, or to sit down on the floor. Deference is paid the rich man because of his wealth, but the poor man is met with disdain because of his poverty. Such treatment, James says, is evil.

IN FAVORING THE RICH, WE ACT CONTRARY TO CHRIST.

When our Lord came to the earth at His incarnation, He came to heal the sick and to save the lost; He came to those who were needy (Isa. 61:1-2). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus blessed the poor (Luke 6:20-23).

If we discriminate against the poor, we humiliate those whom God has chosen to bless. To discriminate against the poor and to favor the rich is to act in a way that is contrary to our Lord.

In verses 6b and 7, James further explains that to show partiality toward the rich flies in the face of their experience and common sense. In light of the abuse and persecution suffered at the hands of the rich, James points out it makes no sense to favor them.

FAVORING THE RICH IS CONTRARY TO ALL GOOD REASON.

Remember that James is writing to Jewish Christians who have been scattered because of persecution. Hebrews describes their suffering at the hands of the wealthy (Heb. 10:32-34).

The rich were quick to drag them into court. They could afford the legal costs and could also influence the outcome of the trial. As a rule, the rich were not a friend to the Jewish saints; they were their enemy. Why, then, would anyone show favoritism to their opponents? And if this personal abuse were not enough, the rich were also those who were blaspheming the name of Jesus.

In verses 8-11 James emphasizes that favoring the rich violates God's law.

FAVORING THE RICH VIOLATES GOD'S LAW.

In verse 8, James acknowledges that not all congregations were guilty of favoring the rich. Some congregations were fulfilling God's law to love their neighbor as themselves. Their neighbors included the wealthy and the poor. We must love our neighbors with the same level of concern and care that we have for

ourselves. But in addition to meaning that we must love our neighbors and ourselves equally, James insists that we must love each of our neighbors equally, not treating one neighbor better than another.

To favor the rich and to disrespect the poor is to break God's law. And to break God's law in this one matter is to become a violator of the whole law. These Jews to whom James wrote were no doubt scrupulous in keeping other parts of the law, but James says that this is of no value if the law is broken in this matter of favoring the poor. Thus, we may not be guilty of breaking the law by committing adultery, but if we murder, then we are lawbreakers anyway. To break the law at one point is to break the whole law. Those who favor the rich over the poor violate God's law.

If favoring the rich violates God's law it's no surprise that those Christians who do so will be rebuked at the Judgment Seat of Christ according to James 2:12-13.

FAVORING THE RICH WILL BE REBUKED AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

If we do not show mercy to people who are in need, then we should not expect Jesus to be merciful to us in our day of judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But if we show mercy to others, we ourselves will be treated with mercy on the day of our judgment (Matt. 5:7).

Favoritism or partiality as it is called in the text of any kind is not compatible with our faith. In this historical case it was showing partiality to the rich over the poor. But making value judgments between people based on race, socio-economic status, education, gender or any other external criteria is not compatible with Biblical Christianity.

EVERY PERSON IS OF INTRINSIC VALUE BECAUSE EVERY PERSON IS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD (GEN. 1:27)

EVERY PERSON IS OF INTRINSIC VALUE BECAUSE CHRIST DIED TO REDEEM EVERY PERSON (JOHN 3:16; 1 JOHN 2:2, 4:14).

May we live out these truths both individually and corporately by doing good to those in our sphere of influence black, brown or white, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, male or female. May we bring healing where the sin of partiality has brought hurt.

VOM January Donations: heavy duty light colored tarps (8'x10") / financial donations for tarps / band aids.

Baptism Class: Sunday February 6 & 13.