

Testing for Genuine Faith
No Partiality (James 2:1-7)
Law of Liberty (James 2:8-13)
James 2:1-13

Introduction

Where we have been in James Chapter One

An Old Illustration with an important point.

I. Partiality as a Test for Genuine Faith (James 2:1)

A. My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. (vs 2:1)

1. "My brethren" (or, "my beloved brethren" appears 15 times in James.
2. The phrase means at least three things
 - a. James loves them and identifies with them.
 - b. James is their shepherd and as their shepherd he must warn them in his love for them.
 - c. It may be obvious but worth stating James is concerned with what is going on in his church; not the world; or even the church next door. He's the pastor of the of the Jerusalem church and that's his focus.
3. "do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ"
 - a. do not is clear enough and simply means don't have, don't possess an "attitude of personal favoritism" (or partiality)
 - b. Why? Two reasons
 - (1) "Partiality" as practiced by Christians is a manifestation of inconsistent love for other people. We do not love some people as we should when we show favoritism.
 - (2) By using the glorious James conveys the notion that the Lord Jesus is the glory and thus makes a connection between the Old Testament Shekinah glory and the New Testament where Jesus is the glory. Isaiah 42:8 (NASB95)
 - (3) James means to illustrate that showing partiality or favoritism is contradictory to having faith in our Lord who alone is worthy of glory.

B. Old and New Testament

1. These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good. Pro. 24:23 NASB95)
2. You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. Lev. 19:15 NASB95
3. And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. Eph. 6:9 NASB95
4. For there is no partiality with God. Rom. 2:11 NASB95
5. “with an attitude of personal favoritism”
 - a. favoritism or partiality means to judge superficially or in a biased kind of way
 - b. the judgement is based on externals like social status, wealth, popularity and so on.

II. The illustration (James 2:2-4)

A. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, (vs 2:2)

1. The vast majority of Jewish believers in the Jerusalem Church were poor.
2. The man in the shabby clothes was wearing rags and most likely had a hygiene issues
3. The rich man is described as “gold-fingered” which means he had multiple rings of gold
4. He has fine clothes, “shining white robes” perhaps with purple or crimson trim-the marks of a wealthy Jew

B. and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” (vs 2:3)

1. The rich person is fawned over, sucked up to and given close, personal attention

2. You can easily imagine him being personally escorted to a seat by a leader in the church who wants to make a good impression because the rich guy is who we would want in the church

a. the shabby guy gets the “over there” treatment and certainly receives no escort

b. the other option is to sit by my “footstool

C. have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? (vs 2:4)

1. James uses a question (have you not) here to get them to think.

2. James wants them to consider motivations

a. Are they being motivated by externals, worldly things or the heart of fairness and justice that God commands

(1) You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. Lev. 19:15 NASB95

(2) You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s. Deut. 1:17a NASB95

3. Two Basic Sinful Mistakes

a. The leader wondered what the rich fellow might do for the church if he received preferential treatment.

b. The leader was concerned with what they could get from the rich fellow rather than what the church could impart to the rich fellow. (see Mark 10:45)

III. The Logic (James 2:5-7)

A. Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (vs 2:5)

1. “Listen” think about it (pay attention)

a. "My beloved brethren" spoken as a father, a loving pastor concerned for their godless attitude

b. "did not God choose the poor"

(1) The word "choose" says something about sovereign election.

(2) God does not choose the rich man to get his money for the kingdom.

(3) God does not choose the poor man because of his poverty.

(4) God's choice is completely based on His grace and purpose (Romans 9:11-16)

c. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut. 7:7-8 NASB)

(1) James' Jewish church would have understood that God redeemed them from slavery-hard to be more poor than being a slave; yet they were loved by God who looked down on their helplessness

d. For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 1 Cor. 1:26-27 NASB

2. "rich in faith"

a. Although economically poor they have trusted in Christ and this are rich in faith

(1) These poor Jews who are being persecuted have spiritual riches in Christ through God's sovereign, gracious choice. Paul argues this in Eph. 1:3-14.

(2) It is God's choice that makes them heirs to the kingdom in vs. At the moment of their salvation they come under the reign of Christ in their hearts (Col. 1:13-14)

3. "heirs of the kingdom" refers to the kingdom now but also the fulfillment of the kingdom when Jesus returns (Matt. 25:31-34)

a. citizens of the kingdom refers to the day they are with Christ, objects of his love and loving Him in return

B. But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? (vs 2:6)

1. "you" is emphatic, you have dishonored the poor man

a. the question-is it not?

2. oppress: the rich are exploiting the poor in Jerusalem in an attitude of arrogance that the wealthy often have.

3. "drag you into court" personal experience, the rich are exploiting the poor esp widows and orphans (1:25-26)

C. Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? (vs 2:7)

1. As a class in general they blaspheme the name of Christ seeking to dishonor it

a. The rich not only typically oppose Christians, they also typically speak against Christ ("blaspheme the fair name"). This was as true in James' world as it is in ours. It is inconsistent to give special honor to those who despise the Lord—whom believers love and serve! To "blaspheme" or slander (Gr. *blasphemeo*) means to mock deliberately, or to speak contemptuously of God. Dr. Constable

D. Matt. 25:34-46

Questions for CGs

1. What stood out to you in the sermon? Did you think of a time when you perhaps made snap judgment in church regarding someone and thus are guilty of showing favoritism?

2. How is showing favoritism a type of idolatry? What does idolatry mean?
3. How should we view visitors to our church? Do you make it a point to greet people you do not know? (Mark 10:45)
4. For further study read and discuss Matt. 25:34-46. How does the passage relate to kingdom values practiced?