

# ***The Sin of Playing Favorites<sup>1</sup>***

(James 2:1–13)

## **WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO?**

People play favorites, but God does not. Christians must not discriminate for or against anyone because it is rebellious to the ways of Jesus Christ.

**1.) The Warning:** Christians do not discriminate against others as you hold faith in Jesus Christ! (v. 1)

**2.) The Illustration:** Christians should not discriminate against the poor in favor of the wealthy. (v. 2–4)

- Jesus, God's unique Son, chose to identify with the poor and helpless during His ministry on earth. His attitude is the model for every believer. When a Christian plays favorites, he's at odds with his Lord.<sup>2</sup> Rich or poor, believers must obey God and love Him.

**3.) The Rationale:** three reasons discrimination is wrong (v. 5–11)

- Disregards God's choice of the poor (v. 5–6)
- Disregards the conduct of the rich (v. 6–7)
- Disregards the law of love (v. 8–11)

**Note:** Poor believers are often spiritually rich in *the glorious faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory* (v. 1,5).

**4.) The Conclusion:** Christians should obey Christ and live life knowing the coming judgment of God (v. 12–13).

- God will liberate those who do His will (v. 12)
- God will condemn those who break the law of freedom (v. 13)
- God's mercy triumphs over judgment (v. 13)

## **APPLICATION:<sup>3</sup>**

- Would a poor person feel welcome in our church? Would a rich person feel welcome in our church?
- What can we do to be completely free from being impressed by the wealth or power of others?

- In our church, people may not be ushered to good or bad seats, but in what other ways might we be favoring the rich or discriminating?<sup>3</sup> Other forms exist besides wealth.
- In what ways do we consciously or unconsciously favor some people over others? May it never be that cliques exist w/Christians.
- How can our ministry reach out to all people without a hint of bias?

## **WHO ARE THE POOR?<sup>3</sup>**

- The poor are those who have little money and those whose simple values are despised by an affluent society like ours. Perhaps these "poor" people prefer serving rather than managing, human relationships rather than financial security, and peace rather than power.
- The principle is not that the poor will automatically go to heaven and the rich to hell. Poor people, however, are usually more aware of their powerlessness. Thus, it is often easier for them to acknowledge their need for salvation.
- One of the greatest barriers to salvation for the rich is pride.
- For the poor, bitterness can often bar the way.
- Don't allow plenty or poverty to keep you from God's gift of eternal life.

## **OTHER REASONS THAT SHOWING FAVORITISM IS WRONG:<sup>3</sup>**

- It is inconsistent with Christ's teachings.
- It results from evil thoughts.
- It insults people made in God's image.
- It is a by-product of selfish motives.
- It goes against the biblical definition of love.
- It shows a lack of mercy to those less fortunate.
- It is hypocritical.
- It is sin (rebellion against God)
- Because impartiality is an attribute of God (Deuteronomy 10:17; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25); impartiality was an attitude Jesus practiced (Matthew 22:16; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21); Scripture had warned against favoritism (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; Psalm 82:2; Proverbs 18:5).

<sup>1</sup> Blomberg, Craig L., and Mariam J. Kamell. *James*. Vol. 16. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008. Exegetical outline adapted from p.104.

<sup>2</sup> David R. Shepherd, *James, Shepherd's Notes* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1998), Jas 2:1.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce B. Barton, David Veerman, and Neil S. Wilson, *James, Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 45, 48.