

Favoritism in the Church? James 2:1-13

Introduction

- Favoritism is not a new issue in the church or any institution for that matter.
- This error can be very dangerous, and we need to keep a careful observation of our treatment of one another.
- Read James 2:1-13.
- Now James begins to get specific and direct in his admonishment and instructions.
- He was obviously displeased with the inconsistencies among the believers and will 'attack' the attitudes being displayed towards others and their failure to act.

Courtesy to all (2:1-4)

- QUESTION: How common is courtesy anymore in our society?
- (v. 1) James transitions in this verse to a new depth of specifics – first, do not show favoritism – Why is favoritism a serious problem?
- Does God show favoritism? See the following verses:
 - Romans 2:11
 - Ephesians 6:9
 - Colossians 3:25
- James condemns prejudice and preferential treatment – I don't think this was just a first-century Church issue...
- (v. 2-3) This is illustrated for clarity.
- (v. 4) What does this mean: Have you not discriminated among yourselves?
- The question in Greek assumes an affirmative answer – meaning, yes, you are committing evil acts by preferential treatment.
- James even goes further (and rightfully so) to consider these discriminatory practices to bring about division(s) including assuming the role of judges with evil thoughts or partiality.

Compassion for all (2:5-9)

- (vv. 5-7) Here James explains why preferential treatment is wrong in four questions:
 - 1 Those poor materially and rich spiritually will inherit the Kingdom.
 - 2 The rich are often the oppressors and blasphemers.
 - 3 The rich are dragging 'believers' into court and causing hardship.
 - 4 The rich at times slander Jesus's name.
- (vv. 8-9) Simply put: love is right and favoritism is sin.
- The 'royal law' is to love your neighbor (Matt. 22:39) and reflects the Latin *lex regia* as a law known throughout the empire and obedience was not optional.
- Love is the answer to the evident disobedience to God's law through preferential treatment.

Consistency in all (2:10-13)

- QUESTION: Why do people often minimize the damage (both individual and communal) of prejudice and discrimination?
- (vv. 10-11) James does not see prejudice as a minor error that can be considered 'trivial' – breaking the law of God is breaking the law.
- (vv. 12-13) Believers must 'speak and act' in light of God's law which is perfect. God's law brings perfect liberty because it's wise constraints.
- Just as love triumphs over prejudice, mercy triumphs over judgment. 'Triumphs' is used only here, in 3:14, and in Romans 11:18.

Closing

- QUESTION: So, what is at stake when we consider obedience to God's law?
- ANSWER: Spiritual Maturity! Walvoord notes: "God has ordained unalterable laws. Complete and consistent obedience is required if spiritual maturity is to be attained. The believer is commanded to accept his brother with courtesy, compassion, and consistency."