

## Authentic Christianity

### **Favoritism**

James 2:1-13

September 27, 2020 am

HDBC

**Please open** your Bibles to James 2:1-13. Continuing our study of the letter written by James, the pastor of the early church in Jerusalem. In it he offers very practical and convicting instruction on what it means to be an authentic Christian.

**Here** we find some things that we are to be and do. And we find other things that we are avoid and reject. In each case the goal is to honor Christ with our lives and to make a difference for the kingdom of God. This morning we are going to look at a sin that must be resisted not only **individually** but also in the life of the **church**. It is a sin that quietly and insidiously begins on the inside but works its way to the outside in obvious and destructive ways.

**If you find** yourself treating some people differently than others because their economic condition you are likely trapped in this sin. If you find yourself making assessments about people based on the color of their skin you have probably fallen prey to this sin. If you treat some people better than others because of their money, status, power or position, you are definitely committing this sin.

Talking about the sin of **favoritism**. James jumps right to the heart of the issue, so let's do the same.

**Read James 2:1-13**      4 things

#### **1. The Imperative (1)**

James continues his assault on casual Christianity with a direct attack on the sin of **favoritism**. **Partiality and prejudice** are other words that come to mind when describing this sin. Each may have a different shade of meaning but they are all found in the same family of sin that has no place in the life of an **authentic Christian**. It was a problem then and remains one today.

**Prejudice** comes from a Latin word that means to prejudge someone causing us to make a decision about them before we really know them. That prejudgment can be based on all kinds of things, mostly external. Race, education, money, power, physical beauty, preferences and more.

**Favoritism** literally means to lift up one's face with the idea of judging them by their appearance and then showing them special treatment or respect over that of others. Respecting some over others for superficial reasons.

**Partiality** (9) speaks of showing favoritism for any reason.

**James is not** condemning discernment which comes through careful observation and divine enablement. He is speaking of the tendency to show favor to some people over others based on external factors, that have nothing to do with character, moral purity or spiritual condition. So, let's make sure we get this before moving on. Where you think of it in terms of **partiality, prejudice or favoritism . . .**

**There is no place in the believer's life for this sin!**

If you find yourself doing this, stop it! Just stop!

## 2. The Illustration (2-4)

There is nothing like a good illustration to cause biblical truth to come alive with relevancy. Jesus was the master of using illustrations, often in the form of stories to drive home His truth. James does so here.

**Imagine being** the usher in one of the synagogues in James' day. Mt 23:6 makes it clear that seats were assigned in most synagogues according to status. Some seats were better than others and were generally given to important people. Premium seating. We see it in many areas.

Football stadiums have **premium seating**. Special Treatment. Airlines have **first-class seating**. They are treated differently. But this is warranted because they have paid for those better seats. No problem with that. But imagine airline attendants looking over passengers and making their own assessments about who deserves to be in first class based on how they look, their skin color or the way they talked. That would be a problem.

**We don't** have to think up hypothetical illustrations. We can look at our history. **The sin of favoritism** led to separate water fountains in public places, separate schools in our communities, separate waiting rooms at doctor's offices and separate seating on city buses for African Americans. Tragically this favoritism found a home in too many churches, as well.

**Back to James' illustration.** Imagine two men enter at the same time. Mr. Have and Mr. Have-not. One decked with rings and expensive clothes. The other in dirty hand-me-downs. You are the usher and have the responsibility for greeting and seating. What will you do?

**If you** show more attention to the wealthy man and place him in the best seat, while leaving the other man to sit in the back corner, you have committed the sin of favoritism. This was acceptable in Jewish synagogues, but was to have no place in the fellowship of believers. As Christ-followers, we have a higher calling that rejects **favoritism**. Two things clarified here.

1) **One who commits** this sin is acting in the place of God. *Judges*  
To show favoritism is to assume you know as much as God knows and that you are able to adequately assess the other person's life. Therefore you are qualified to decide who has the best and who does not.

2) **One who commits** this sin is revealing evil motives.  
The ultimate reason we show favoritism is we think it will result in personal gain. I'll favor them and they may then favor me. Selfishly we are hoping to gain from our sinful actions. It is selfish!

### 3. **The Motivations (5-11)**

James digs a little deeper and offers three things that should motivate us to avoid the sin of showing favoritism. James illustrates it by using wealth and poverty, but the sin is bigger than that one issue. When tempted to show favoritism we should remember . . .

#### **A. The example of God (5)**

Favoritism is inconsistent with what God does. God made a point of going after those who were poor in this world to bring the good news of the kingdom. They would be heirs of the promise. **I don't believe** God was giving preferential treatment to the poor over others. That's not the point. The point is that God refused to ignore them simply because they were poor.

**The Gospel is especially** dear to the poor, who have such little in this life. They are more apt to embrace it. From God's perspective, the condition of the soul is what is important.

## B. The practice of sinful people (6-7)

James keeps it real in verses 6-7. Not only are you dishonoring the poor when you favor the wealthy, but you are actually favoring the very ones who tend to oppress you! These are the ones who take you to court and ruin your lives. I can hear James saying, “what are you thinking?”

**Not only that**, but these are the very ones who persecute you for your faith and blaspheme the name of Jesus.

**This seems** like an indictment of wealthy people. It is not. There are some incredibly godly men and women who have been blessed with great financial resources and who are doing a great job of impacting the kingdom. James is simply reflecting on the tendencies of human nature. It is seldom poor and destitute who oppress others.

**When you** see oppression happening, the oppressors are seldom poor and powerless. They tend to be powerful and often wealthy. When we show favoritism we are assuming that some are good and therefore worthy of our favor. It fails to realize the universal nature of sin.

## C. The law of love (8-11)

James brings in the law, but starts with the **royal law**. He quickly makes sure we understand what that law is. It is the law of loving others. By the way that phrase could literally be translated **law of our King**. That has some bite. This the kingly law, the primary law, that superior thing that should guide our lives. If you show favoritism you are ignoring this grand law which teaches love for neighbor.

**Wouldn't it be great** if all relationships were governed by the law of love? Unfortunately, they are not. We all have certain hidden prejudices which must be resisted. Race, Economics, Appearances, Politics. When these are allowed to flourish, they cripple the church's effectiveness to reach new people and to help those already saved to grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus.

**To break the law of love** is just as serious as violating any of the Old Testament commandments. To break one is to be a law-breaker. It does not matter which one it is. James picks too that were considered

extremely serious as a way of driving home his point. They were careful not to break those two laws, but were ignoring the law of love.

**We tend** to look at the commandments of God individually when James would have us look at the law of God in its entirety. **Not like bowling pins when can be knocked down a few a time. Didn't get them all but you got some. Law is more like pane of glass. It is broken at one point the entire pane is broken.** Favoritism breaks the law of love!

#### 4. The Appeal (12-13)

James then appeals to his readers to live out this truth. Avoid favoritism. He offers two important keys.

##### A. Let love be our guide

James reminds us that we should choose our words and actions in light of the reality that we will be judged. God is watching and will deal with us in some way based on how we treat others. He has already appealed to the law of love. Now he appeals to the law of liberty. I agree with Charles Swindoll that this is simply another reference to the law of love, that we should love our neighbor as ourself.

In all of our interactions with others, the first filter over our thoughts should be love for that person. In fact we are to love them with as much love as we have for ourselves. Love must be our guide.

##### B. Let mercy be our standard

Strong statement about the consequences of not showing mercy. Then a simple but powerful statement of truth. ***Mercy triumphs over judgment.***

**Praise the Lord for this truth.** I'm so glad for mercy, aren't you? I'm grateful for the mercy of the Lord Jesus that led to my salvation. Because I have been the recipient of mercy how can I not show mercy to others?

Have you been a recipient of God's mercy? If not, trust Him today.

If you have, and you are still showing sinful favoritism, you are ignoring the mercy you have received and are sinning against God. Confess and Repent.