

PLAYING FAVORITES Sunday School- February 9, 2014

Unifying Topic: TREAT EVERYONE EQUALLY

Lesson Text

I. Showing No Partiality In The Church (James 2:1-7)

II. Obeying The Royal Law (James 2:8-13)

The Main Thought: Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (James 2:5 KJV).

Unifying Principle: People show partiality toward others for a variety of reasons. How can we avoid favoritism? James reminds his followers of the importance of justice practiced through taking care of the poor and loving their neighbors as themselves.

Lesson Aim: To emphasize the importance of Christians' avoidance of showing partiality.

Life aim: To help Christians learn not to discriminate in the world against any group of people, but rather show love to all people.

- 2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.
2:2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;
2:3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:
2:4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?
2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?
2:6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?
2:7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?
2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:
2:9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.
2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.
2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.
2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.
2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

HISTORY:

Chapter 1:19-27 Following the admonitions to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath will put us in right order to overcome temptations, thereby hearing God speak first. Doing what the word says supersedes just hearers only. There is a religion that seems to be right in our own eyes, however, if we fail to bridle our tongue, it is in vain and we deceive ourselves. There concludes a difference between religion that is useless and that which is pure and undefiled before God.

INTRODUCTION:

This passage begins a new section in James; a discussion of various temptations and trials that are common to all believers. One of the strongest is that of showing partiality or favoritism; discriminating against people in the church. Evidently, some of the congregations were developing into social cliques in which the poor were given to understand that they were not wanted or at best tolerated.

LESSON:

James 2:1-7 Showing No Partiality In The Church

2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. James once again calls them brethren as God treats us all equal. None is more than the other. In the KJV this verse seems to be asking a question without the question mark or the "you" is understood. They don't have the faith they claim to have in the Lord Jesus Christ in respecting other people. This is important for them to know because God is the originator of faith and everyone who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ considers Him as Lord. "*He is the Lord of glory*", who came down from heaven, laying aside His glory for the sake of the sinner in which He has placed that faith within us. Because "*we all sin and came short of the glory of God*" Rom.3:23, He would then show us how to get that glory back that was lost in the garden with Adam. He respects and looks after us, and we in turn ought to respect everyone as the same; not putting one above another. This is what James is telling the brethren and us, you cannot be a Christian simply by affirming the rights. Your good works are the evidence of true faith.

2:2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;— James didn't want them treating anyone more than the other or less than the other. Therefore, he gives the scenario of a man coming into the assembly wearing a gold ring, gorgeous apparel and then a poor man coming into the same assembly with vile clothing. Most of the time you perceive he's poor by the clothing he's wearing. These men may be unbelievers or they may be believers, but they are differently contrasted. You can't tell who lives in their hearts. You knew there was a difference in the rich man than in Lazarus. We only perceive the outer appearance. The point is: What happens when these two men come to your church? Who will come to them and what will their actions be?

2:3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:— He further says you will respect the man wearing the gorgeous apparel and allow him to sit up front in a good place; the best seat; while you tell the poor man to stand or sit under your footstool (low stool in which you rest your feet). He is treated no better than a servant who sits at the footstool of a slave master's feet. We're looking for the rich man to give financially and help support the church, for they already can see that the poor man has nothing to give.

2:4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?— The question presented to them is, are you partial, showing favoritism and becoming judges, having wrong motives? This is a clear illustration that dismisses all excuses that they may come up with. By being a believer and having faith meant that they were not to show partiality or favoritism. Just as there is not to be partiality between men and women! There are five things wrong with showing partiality and favoritism:

1. **Showing partiality sets one up as the judge of men.** It makes one as God; it says who can worship God and who cannot, who is acceptable to God, and who is not. Only God can determine who He will accept and not accept.
2. **Showing partiality reveals evil thoughts.** The person focuses on mundane and changeable things; temporary things. Such thoughts are corrupt because they neglect the person entirely. It means that the things a person has are more important than the person himself. We need to look at can we bring him to Christ?

2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?— The question is asked, Listen, haven't God chosen the poor; didn't He come all the way from heaven for the poor of this world who possess secret riches both in their present faith and in God's eternal kingdom? Hallelujah, don't you know that we are rich in faith and are heirs of His kingdom which He has promised to those that love Him. So therefore,...

3. **Showing partiality discriminates** against the poor and lowly; the person who are loved by God. God also cares for the rich and high, but He also cares for the poor and lowly— which is showing no discrimination.

2:6 But ye have despised the poor.— James makes it well known that they have despised the very people God loves.

4. **Showing partiality shows a disgraceful attitude** . It dishonors, humiliates, shames, disgraces, and insults the poor and lowly person. No believer is to ever make a person feel unwelcomed or of little value and worth.

2:6b Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?— Two things are said about the rich:

1. The rich and high usually oppress the poor and they readily grab what they can, using the very laws of the land to do it. The idea is that they use the law unjustly in order to protect and increase their wealth and power, thereby, oppressing the poor.

2:7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?—

5. **Showing partiality shows foolish behavior.** They foolishly think they don't need anything; they think little about needing anything and their behavior shows it.
2. The rich and high usually blaspheme the name of Christ. They blaspheme His name by denying, mocking, ridiculing, persecuting, neglecting, ignoring, and rejecting Him as the Savior of the world.

The point is: For the rich man the list goes on and on of their deception and foolish behavior, but, why would the church and its believers show partiality to such people over the poor of the earth? Why was partiality to the rich man in the assembly who are the very ones who oppressed the needy of the world shown favoritism over the poor man? So there is no reason for them to respect the rich more than the poor. Rather they should welcome and look after both.

James 2:8-13 Obeying The Royal Law

2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:— Well, what is the royal law according to the scripture?— "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" It is the Lord's command; the law of love. It was given by God Himself and reinforced by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He came to earth. If a

person loves God and loves his neighbor as himself, he will automatically obey. It is the very commandment that leads to eternal life. They would do well just to fulfill it. Matthew 22:40 *"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

2:9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. There are three warnings of showing partiality:

1. **Showing partiality is sin.** It violates the royal law of love.
 - a. James is saying, if you adopt this method: play-up to these rich important people or fawn all over them for what they can do, you are committing sin; you violate the law.
 - b. Also, ¹not to respect the poor insults those whom God has chosen. Those who do this to the poor people insult the God who made them.

This makes the guilty Christian no better than those who insult the name of God. We must treat all people as we would want to be treated. Believers are to love people, not show partiality, discriminating against some for what they can do for us or offer us while ignoring the poor who can offer little or nothing. It is sin and makes us a transgressor of the law.

2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. How is this possible?

2. **Showing partiality makes a person guilty of the whole law of God.** Every law has been given by God. They form a whole pattern; a whole package. Take it or leave, huh? No, if you follow God you can't take out some laws that don't appeal to you and follow what you want. You would be a transgressor of the law by breaking only one. So thereby offending in one area; breaking one law, we are guilty of breaking the whole law; all the laws. We must be forgiven by God just as much as any other transgressor.

The law of God has many commands but it is one law.

2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. Don't sleep with someone else's spouse and don't kill. So, the person who fails to obey just one part of the law, even if you don't commit adultery, but you kill someone, is guilty of failing to keep the whole law. I say again, you would be a transgressor of the law by breaking only one.

3. **Showing partiality is just as serious a sin as adultery and killing.** "Partiality" is a sin that selects and favors one person over another or selects one law over another. It is the same root, the same cause, the same selfishness, the same lust, the same sin as killing.

2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. "So" completes all the verses before this one. So speak and do what is right; practice what you preach as if judgment might come at any moment by the rule that sets you free. Our words and our deeds will be judged because God examines the heart. We cannot sin lightly and serve faithfully. But we have that liberty to repent and confess our sins and God forgives us. We are forgiven. ²We are righteous in the sight of the Father, because we have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ and made righteous. We have taken on His righteousness in exchange for our sin. That's a freedom we don't take lightly. Being under the law of freedom; ***the law of liberty***, gives us the freedom to choose freely to love and obey willingly. ³Do not treat being forgiven as a license to sin. Satan often uses God's grace in order to tempt us, by saying: *"Don't worry. Go ahead and sin. God will forgive you anyway."* It has a serious warning to all those who do not obey it. God will judge all by this rule. The nature of that of our liberty should cause us to be kind to all people. Christians are under the law of liberty which is our freedom in Jesus Christ.

2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. No mercy shall be shown to them that had not shown mercy. God will treat us exactly as we have treated others. There is only one thing that will rejoice victoriously over judgment and that is mercy. Our only hope against the burning fire of God's judgment is mercy.

SUMMARY:

James' teaching here is that he can't understand why the believers are showing favoritism in the church; treating rich visitors with great respect and treating poor visitors with no respect. It was the rich who persecuted them and ridiculed their Savior. He exhorts them to obey the *"royal law"* in the Scriptures. There are warnings of showing favoritism. If they can keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, they are guilty of all; break this law they break all the laws and to show no mercy is to receive no mercy. Therefore, true freedom is to obey God and do what pleases Him. Talk and act like a person expecting to be judged by the rule that sets him free.

APPLICATION:

Start by asking God what's in your heart. A life lived in love and mercy has no fear of God's judgment.

¹ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/james-lbw.htm>

² <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/james/03.html>

³ http://www.scripturestudies.com/Vol1/A4/a4_nt.html

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>