

James: The Problem of Partiality

James 2:1-13

Partiality (v. 1-4)

- James addresses the issue of showing favoritism within the context of the Christian community
 - Favoritism (*prosopolempsiai*):
 - lit. “to receive the face” of someone
 - To judge someone based on their appearance
- He proposes a scenario where a well-dressed & poorly-dressed person enters a worship setting
 - If preference is shown to the well-dressed over the other, discriminatory judgment is being practiced
- Since the word for favoritism is plural, it means that the example given is just one of many ways that favoritism can be shown

Poor vs Rich (v. 5-7)

- James reminds us of Jesus’ teaching that the faithful poor are heirs of God’s kingdom (Matt 5:3; Luke 6:20b)
- The rich are more likely to exploit others
 - Even using their wealth to commit legal injustices
 - These actions are in direct contrast to the character of God
 - Thus, they blaspheme His name
- God does NOT hate the rich
 - But their wealth & self-reliance often gets in the way of them understanding their need for Him (Matt 19:23-26)

The Royal Law (v. 8-13)

- Our attitude & behavior should be based on God’s perfect law, which is summarized in the command: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18b; Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14)
 - James calls it the royal law or the law of the King/kingdom (see v. 5; Gal 6:2)
- To show favoritism contradicts the law of love and is sinful
 - To be disobedient to the core element of the Law would be the same as breaking the whole thing (Gal 5:14)
- Our speech, actions, & attitudes should reflect mercy because we want to be shown mercy (Matt 7:1-2)
- If we have Christ as King of our lives, we will treat others the way He treats us:
 - Loving them because He loves us (1 John 4:19)
 - Showing them mercy because He has shown us mercy (Matt 5:7)
 - Accepting them because He accepted us (Rom 15:7)

So What?

- Do we show partiality by judging others without mercy?
- Or do we practice the royal law by loving others as we have experienced God’s love through Jesus?

Meditation Verse: *James 2:8*