

Partiality

Due to weaknesses of the flesh, Christians are at times tempted to manifest a spirit of partiality. James 2:1-10 was specifically written to Christians who were showing partiality between the poor and the rich. This article will look at the text and offer some comments to help Christians be unbiased toward others.

In vss. 1-3, the conditions are set forth: *"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 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; 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."* Favoritism was being shown towards the rich and the poor were being shunned. "Partiality" is the idea of having respect to someone's position, rank, wealth, popularity, or other circumstances instead of their intrinsic conditions. Perhaps we have done this not only in our treatment of members of the church, but in our treatment of those who need to be taught the gospel.

In vss. 4-7, the charge or accusation is given: *"Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 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? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?"* These people had become judges based on wealth. Although James speaks of wealth, favoritism can be shown in other ways, such as skin color. Have we ever made decisions based on this factor? The poor are more likely to be rich in faith than the wealthy. Riches have the ability to make one weak in doctrine and morals. It is why Paul said, *"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Timothy 6:10). The poor were being despised and oppressed, and James condemns these Christians for those actions.

In vss. 8-10, the correction is specified: *"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* All of God's rules are to be kept. This includes the rule to love one's neighbor as himself. James then specifically calls parti-

ality a "*sin*" and the one who commits it a "*transgressor*." The final verse under consideration is often used to show the seriousness of violating God's will. James uses it to show that partiality, which is usually not held in high regard among men when it comes to sin, can condemn one.

We should not show partiality in any respect toward others. Whether it is the wealthy and influential member of the church or the non-Christian in the depths of poverty, all are the same in the sight of God. All deserve the same level of respect. Acts 10:34-35 says, "*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*" When we teach the gospel, we tend to only teach those who are like ourselves or higher in socio-economic status. This is showing partiality and is wrong. Look at mankind the way God does: a soul who desires to follow the Bible.

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