

e-concepts

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Do Not Practice Personal Favoritism James 2:1-12

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My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism (James 2:1) James said that we should not hold our faith with an attitude of personal favoritism, in terms of showing favor about certain characteristics like rank, wealth, etc., Literally it means “to lift our face.”

He then gives an example of a man with a gold ring coming into your assembly (the word for “synagogue,” either the church met in a synagogue or their meeting was considered a synagogue, which means “assembly”—in chapter 5 he calls “them” a “church”—that is, the meeting he calls a synagogue and then he calls a church) *for if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes (v. 2). Someone else comes into the assembly in dirty (filthy, foul, unclean) clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes (v. 2). ...and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool” (v. 3). With evil motives, have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives (v. 4)?*

- On the elder board of your church, are there as many poor people as rich people?
- In parties and social activities, are there poor people?
- Does your church have a dress code—not written, it is just understood?

If you are making distinctions among yourselves on outward appearances based on wealth, you are being judges with evil motives. What would that motive be and why would it be evil? He’s talking about favoring them in the gathering of believers. Why is that evil? **The motive is for social or financial gain in our religious meeting.** The real result is so the rich and influential will honor our organization. The reason that is evil is:

- (1) It puts the institution over the individual
- (2) It puts the earthly over the heavenly
- (3) It puts the short-term over the long-term

He says in verse 5 that God did not do that. *Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?* He chose the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom because the poor are not as likely to have their values tied to this world. All true believers, by definition, are poor in this world because they place no value on the riches of this world, whether they have them or not. Being poor is a mindset, an attitude, as well as possessions.

Throughout history, the rich usually got rich by dishonest means, therefore, they oppress others (v. 6). They are also the ones who blaspheme the name of God (v. 7). If you value the Law, you will love your neighbor as yourself (v. 8). If you show partiality, you will be convicted (v. 9). The thing about the Law, though, is if you break one part of it, you are guilty of breaking it all (v. 10). He illustrated it with adultery and murder (v. 11). It is an interesting observation of the early Jewish thinking of the Law. The Mosaic Law gives us liberty; in the same way it did for David in Psalm 119. It gave you the true boundaries, which gave you liberty within those boundaries (not talking about grace) (v.12).