

Scripture

¹ My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. ²For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," ⁴have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? ⁷Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; ⁹but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. ¹¹For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

¹²So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Commentary

Remember, in considering the faith of the Lord, not to forget Who we are dealing with, nor should we allow ourselves to pervert what the faith encompasses. As believers saved by Him, **'do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.'** James is being sure to awaken us to any complacency in our hearts by twice invoking the reality of the terrible Glory and Position of the One to Whom we entrust our souls. Do not disregard the substance (the faith) which embodies our whole association with the Son of God. Surely do not do so **'with partiality'**, neither adding to nor taking away from this faith – God's Holiness and Righteousness needs no help from us! It stands above all as the Perfect Standard. God despises partiality, even in judging the poor and lowly. Partiality is an attempted shortcut to false Justice; a crutch, a handicap – the faith in Jesus Christ needs no such 'help'. It stands on It's Own; we cannot treat It lightly.

James next poses a scenario surely common to the assembly of believers, even today. Two men arrive, one the World and our sinful heart loves; the other, we shun. And in acting upon this, the beautiful person – **'with gold rings, in fine apparel'** – is shown to a preferred seat because of the preferred place in our heart, while the **'poor man in filthy clothes'** gains no favor but is instead directed to (note, not given) any other available place to occupy.

'Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?' – Taking part in the scenario, we are convicted of not only judging someone, but worse yet as a corrupt judge with an evil heart. And this the LORD despises. Not only must we refrain from judging others, but this scenario worsens as we become impartial judges. In **(Lev 19:15)** the LORD's instructions through Moses condemn any impartiality rooted in this very thing. It is our love and hate; our heart's judgment on another, based on their material or societal standing; a self-appointed judgment, adding to the one with favoritism, while denying the other in falsely rooted discrimination.

Further revealing the futility and sin of this, James next points out to anyone, already ensnared in favoritism, that they are in opposition to God. **'Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?'** How can one with a saving faith in our Lord Jesus hold anything, including riches of both pride or money, above Him? God is a Jealous God, and demands to be first in our heart. It seems clearly His design in our Salvation to typically use the lowly and foolish things in the eyes of this world, to advance His Kingdom. And it follows that God is not inclined to favor the so-called high and mighty of anyone in this world. He has no use for the proud, and he resists them; it is a meek heart which shall gain when all of the world has been lost. God has declared that the **'poor (in the eyes) of this world (shall) be rich in faith'** and thus rich in Him and His rewards.

Therefore, as God has made it clear that He despises impartiality, and further that He loves the meek in heart and despises the haughty, James' scenario paints a bleak picture for the evil judge and his actions. Offering the rich man a favored position, though he has no reverence of the Lord and thus no Salvation; and that he, outside of your show of preference in this assembly, is quick to accuse you and attempt wrong against you; and that he also has the foolish, damning audacity to slander and blaspheme the Highest name to which we ascribe and owe our Salvation to – who then is the greater transgressor of the Law and of God? **'But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.'** Turning to this haughty slanderer and slighting a child of God, if

we are believers in that same God, is nothing less than shameless prostitution. At that point we have chosen to reject one of God and His Spirit in exchange for the embrace of one who stands against Him. Is there anything much more wounding to the heart than this sort of betrayal and abandonment? It should cause us to weep. And all the while, we not only honor this person, but also grieve God by dishonoring the poor man who is the real child of God. In breaking God's Law in this, one becomes an offense to the whole law and stands guilty. **'For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.'**

However, there is the call for love and respect towards our neighbor, as deemed so by God. If this rich man is treated so in fulfillment of God's **'royal law'** to **'love your neighbor as yourself'**, there is no sin. A show of love and respect for a neighbor or figure of authority, neither in judgment nor at the expense of another's worth in the eyes of God, is a righteous thing.

God is no respecter of persons, and wonderfully so for us! If He were, none of us would stand a chance. It is only by His Choice and Grace He has deemed us worth Saving, and His Mercy makes it possible. If God has done this, His show of impartiality in Judgment and Mercy, and as our Lord has made it clear on how He deals with us, then any manner of dealing with one another must be nothing more or less than His Standard, lest we accuse him of wrongdoing. But follow His example, and be blessed.

For each will stand before the Lamb's Judgment, to be examined in the actions of his life, and will be compensated accordingly. The Judge will show us the same consideration we have shown others in this life – beware! Or, if we treat our brothers with compassion – be glad! Our Lord delights in lavishing His Blessings of Mercy on us (**Mic 7:18**) and will do so, just as we do so. However, the hard heart which denies the Lord and His own, dealing with them wrongly and injuring them in doing so (**Job 22:6**) will find a like response from the Judge as they cry for Mercy. So then it is, we should strive to show mercy, that we might be shown Mercy. (**Lk 11:4**)

Key Summary

We are not to err in taking the Faith, our Savior Jesus, lightly.

While it is easy to show preference to 'important' people, we can only do so in 'loving our neighbor'.

Our actions in dealing with others will be applied to us by the Lord when He Judges our compensation in Heaven.

Study Questions

Who are the two basic people illustrated in this passage?

Why are we to be careful in examining our motives in this sort of a situation?

What are the implications of this on each of us when Jesus examines our life?

Cited Scripture

Leviticus 19:15

You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

Micah 7:18

Who is a God like You,
Pardoning iniquity
And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights in mercy.

Job 22:6

For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, And stripped the naked of their clothing.

Luke 11:4

And forgive us our sins,
For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.