

Scripture (NKJV)

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.

Lesson

James opens with a warning to *remember, in considering the faith of the Lord, not to forget Whom we are dealing with*. He goes the extra mile by twice pointing out that this is 'our Lord Jesus Christ' and 'the Lord of Glory'. We must beware of any complacency, leading to 'partiality'. God despises partiality (favoritism) because it is our own judgment on another's value and worth. When we do so it is with self-serving motives, wrongly putting one person above another.

In James' scenario, *two men arrive, one the world and our sinful heart loves, the other the world and we shun*. The 'beautiful' or 'important' person – 'with gold rings, in fine apparel' – is shown to a preferred seat because of a preferred place in our heart, while the 'poor man in filthy clothes' is shown no help or respect.

'Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?' – *If we allow ourselves into this scenario, we are convicted not only of judging someone, but worse yet as a corrupt judge with an evil heart*. God despises this also. In (*Lev 19:15*), God's instructions through Moses condemn any partiality like this, which comes from our heart's judgment of one another. In that verse He does not allow favoritism in judging any man, even if he is flat broke and destitute, because in judging a matter on it's merit of right or wrong, a state of wealth or poverty makes no difference in the eyes of God. Justice in Truth is a non-negotiable issue with God, because He is Just and True. All things must in the end be judged against God's Truth. That is why the Gift of Jesus is so incredible – He has satisfied the debt for us, which God's Justice demands, yet at the same time He can be forgiving of us without bounds. Both God's characteristic of Justice and His characteristic of Love are met in Jesus. So, when we judge another, 'the poor man of this world' who is 'rich in faith and an heir of the Kingdom' as one who 'loves Him', *we are working in opposition to the work of Jesus*.

Here we have made the 'rich man' favored in our heart. But **God is a Jealous God, and demands to be first in our heart. (Exod 20:3)** Worse yet, the 'rich man' in this illustration does not appear to be Saved – he has no reverence for the Lord or His people, he is quick to accuse them and try to do wrong against them, and he slanders 'that noble name by which you are called.' 'But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors' – If we turn to a person like this, and in doing so reject another, **we have rejected one of God in His Spirit and embraced one who stands up against Him.**

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, God also calls us to show love and respect towards our neighbor. 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' (Acts 10:34), and we are very fortunate for this. It is only because of His choice that anyone is Saved, and it is never based on one's value, choice, or character. So, as He has shown He hates favoritism, and since He has treated all of us in a perfect measure of Justice, then **any manner of dealing with one another must be nothing more or less than His Perfect Standard.**

'So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty' – each of us will stand before Jesus' Judgment, where our life will be examined and we will be compensated accordingly. The Judge will show us the same consideration we have shown to others in this life – beware! Or, if we each treat our brothers and sisters with compassion and love – be glad! 'For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.' **Our Lord delights in lavishing His Blessings of Mercy on us (Mic 7:18) and will do so, just as we do so. 'Mercy triumphs over judgment';** so then it is, we must strive to show mercy and not favoritism, that we might also be shown Mercy. (Lk 11:4)

Cited Scripture

Leviticus 19

¹⁵You 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.

Exodus 20

³You shall have no other gods before Me.

Acts 10

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

Micah 7

¹⁸Who 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.

Luke 11

⁴And forgive us our sins,
For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.