

Favoritism Forbidden

For the last several weeks, we've been looking at practical Christianity from the inspired words given to James, the brother of our Lord. In **James 2:1-13**, James tells us that Christians who please God do not show favoritism.

Favoritism, as defined by Webster, is "the showing of special favor" with a synonym of partiality. In layman's words, it is making distinctions between people and showing one person or group special treatment. These distinctions are many, and people tend to pick one person or group over another and show partiality to that person or group.

James says it plainly in **verse 1**: **"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism."** A Christian must treat all people the same, regardless of anything that might distinguish them from others. James then tells the story of a church treating someone who is rich better than one who is needy. **"Here's a good seat for you,"** is said to the wealthy church-goer, but to the not-so-well-dressed person is said **"You stand there"** or **"Sit on the floor by my feet."** James says this is discrimination, plain and simple.

James says that discrimination is a violation of the "Royal Law:" **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** He then says in **verse 9**: **"But if you show favoritism, you sin..."** One who does this is guilty of prejudice—pre-judging based on appearance alone. In James' example, the personal material wealth was used to determine the effectiveness of one's spiritual wealth. In today's society, we often treat guests in our assemblies based upon what they can do for us financially, not spiritually.

Jesus taught God's love and offered grace to all: tax collectors, prostitutes, Samaritans, even those who were guilty of crucifying Him. In Paul's letter to the **Galatians, chapter 3, verses 26-29**, he reemphasizes the fact that we are all alike in God's eyes:

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

When God looks at us, He sees Christ, not differences in race, color, gender, or nationality. We are all sinners, Paul says in **Romans 3:23**, and all need God's mercy and forgiveness. I thank God that He makes no distinction, and neither should we.