

James

Impartiality

September 18, 2011

I. Introduction

A. **James 2:1-9** . . . My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. [2] For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, [3] 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," [4] have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? [5] Listen, my beloved brethren: 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? [6] But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? [7] Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? [8] If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. [9] But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

B. Prayer

II. There Is To Be No Impartiality, Prejudice, Discrimination In The Church

A. **James 2:1** . . . My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

1. Pride is one of the primary enemies of our Christian life. And here in **James 2**, God is warning those who belong to Him against pride, against an ungodly sense of superiority, or as stated here, against a false sense of personal favoritism. Why? Because such attitudes and beliefs are anti-God, they allow for double-standards, and they drive prejudice, discrimination, and racism.

a. Now there is no question that prejudice or discrimination ought not to exist anywhere in our world. And yet it does. For example, in our country, the Caucasians discriminate against the Afro-Americans, Latin-Americans, the Native-Americans, and the Muslims. The lighter skinned blacks discriminate against the darker skinned blacks and Hispanics. The Hispanics discriminate against blacks and against each other – depending on the country or region they are from. The Gentiles discriminate against the

Jews, and the rich look down on the poor – just to name a few examples of prideful, ungodly prejudice in our world.

- b. However, within the church and among God's people there is to be no such prejudice, discrimination, or any feelings of prideful superiority. I am never to think that God made me superior to you, or that I am "more special" to God than you, or that God loves me more than you. Of all the people in the world, we Christians are to be humble and impartial toward one another.

- (1) As the scripture says: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus" (**Galatians 3:28**).

- (2) And in **Colossians 3:11** we read: "There is to be no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, for Christ is all, and in all."

- (3) And once more: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (**I Corinthians 12:13**).

- 2. Now beyond the humble impartiality that is to be the norm within the Body of Christ and among the people of God, we are to practice our humble impartiality outside the church as well. Listen to these Old Testament statements from God concerning this matter.

- a. **Leviticus 19:15** . . . You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.

- b. **Deuteronomy 10:17** . . . For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.

- c. **II Chronicles 19:7** . . . Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.

- 3. The point here in **James 2:1** is that within the church and among God's people there is to be no prideful thinking, no arrogant attitudes, no inflated sense of superiority, no prejudice or discrimination of the kind that treats some of God's people as superior and others inferior.

- B. To help us see how this truth is to be applied within the church, God gives us an example: **James 2:2-4** . . . For if a man comes into your assembly

with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, [3] 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," [4] have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

1. Before looking at the main point of this example, I want to clear up the intended meaning of the word "motives" as used in the NASB. This is a hard word to translate in a one-for-one word translation.
 - a. The literal translation of the Greek word into English is "reasonings," or what the dictionary defines as "the rationale behind our choices and behavior."
 - b. So when God says our prejudice gives evidence to the fact that we have become judges with evil motives (NASB) or reasonings (literal), He is saying we have become judges who base our discriminatory actions on evil reasons and principles.
2. Now the main point is this – judging the worth, and therefore how we will treat a person who comes to church by their outward appearance – or popularity or position or apparent riches or charisma – is not only wrong, it reveals the presence of evil reasoning and principles within our heart and mind.
3. So what are some evil reasonings and principles that might drive this kind of discrimination? Let me give you two examples.
 - a. First, pride – thinking we are among those who are to be esteemed more highly than others, and thinking that our basis for judging others is better than God's basis as revealed by His Word.
 - (1) Jesus said: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (**John 7:24**).
 - (2) Paul wrote: "Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation" (**Romans 12:16**).
 - (3) As an example of dealing with those who hold important positions within the church, Paul said: "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. [20] Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. [21] **I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels**, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality" (**I Timothy 5:19-21**).

- b. Second, holding to a self-serving double-standard – thinking it is somehow justifiable in the sight of God to be proud and partial in relation to our treatment of others while claiming to love and worship an impartial (single-standard) God. However, scripture speaks against this kind of double-standard.
 - (1) Jesus said: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these” (**Mark 12:31**).
 - (2) John wrote: “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. [21] And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also” (**I John 4:20-21**).
 - (3) Jesus said: “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (**John 4:23-24**).
- 4. As we can see, partiality is an offense to God and sin for us. But before moving from this example to the next verses here in **James 2**, I would like to read you some scriptures that direct our attention to the clothing or appearance that counts with God and therefore ought to catch our attention when we are looking others over to get a sense of who and what they are.
 - a. **Isaiah 61:10** . . . I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
 - b. **I Peter 5:5** . . . You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
 - c. **Ephesians 6:14-17** . . . Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; [16] in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. [17] And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- d. **Colossians 3:14** . . . Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.
- 5. In summary, judging the worth of any Christian by their outward appearance or popularity or position or riches or charisma, and using that judgment to determine how we will treat him, is not only wrong, it reveals a foundation of evil reasoning and ungodly principles. Such discrimination is to have no place in us or in the church.

III. Conclusion

- A. **I Peter 1:17-19** . . . If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; [18] knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, [19] but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.