

James | Faith and Favoritism (James 2.1-7)

Outline

- I. The Command: Don't show partiality (v. 1)
 - A. Faith in Jesus Christ is inconsistent with Showing Favoritism
 - B. What is Partiality?
 1. Literal meaning: "To receive one according to their face"
Making judgments on the basis of outward appearance or factors (wealth, power, positions, appearance, race, ethnicity, etc.)
 2. Our definition: Two people or groups that deserve or are owed the same honor and respect: but we treat one better than they deserve and another worse than they deserve simply because of some bias based on their class, position, race, background, appearance, fame, etc.
- II. An Example: Preferring the rich over the poor (v. 2-4)
 - A. The context: his concern is favoritism in the church among the people of God
 - B. What does partiality look like here? Both created in the image of God/of equal value before God; They receive different treatment because of class difference
 - C. Where do we see partiality in the church?
 1. Honor and Shame dynamics then
 2. Self-Affirmation/Celebrity Culture now
 - D. Result: Many pushed out, pressured to conform, overlooked, neglected
- III. The Rationale: (v. 5-7)
 - A. Who are the poor and rich in this passage?
 1. The poor: equated with those who love God and are rich in faith
 2. The rich: equated with those who oppress God's people and blaspheme
 - B. James is addressing why the kind of favoritism he just described is inappropriate
 1. God has chosen to honor the poor by choosing them.
 2. Why then would you choose to dishonor them? If God values the poor, shouldn't we? Why would you choose to favor those who oppress you? Why elevate those who slander your Lord?
 - C. Is God showing partiality by choosing the poor and not the rich?
 1. Partiality: being inconsistent and unfair in the way you treat two parties that deserve the same thing, withholding what someone is due.
 2. Election: choosing to show favor or grace to someone who doesn't deserve it. It is a right of the giver to be generous to whoever they wish.
- IV. Connecting to the Gospel
 - A. We are all attracted to external beauty, success, distinction, because that's what we want to be. What God cares about is the heart and that is what He sees.

- B. He redeems us by taking upon the form of servant, humbling himself, shrouding his glory and strength and in weakness and poverty on our behalf.
- C. God is not impressed by externals and neither should we. Jesus treats us all the same, looking past the outside to the inside and offers love, acceptance, and restoration. And he is teaching us to do the same with one another. We find this cleansing and new life by making him Lord.

V. Application

- A. Identify where you/we are showing partiality: For most of us this is an unconscious thing so we need others to tell us when we are doing it.
- B. Understand why you shouldn't show partiality: All people are made in God's image and so deserve a baseline level of respect.
- C. Learn to value the way God does

Reflection Questions

- **Are there any types of people in the church that I have overlooked?**
- **What ways am I devaluing those that God values?**
- **What ways am I seeking the favor of the corrupt for our own benefit?**
- **What ways am I honoring those who dishonor Christ because I esteem them higher than I ought to, or because I want to be like them?**

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Discussion Questions

1. Introduction: James exposes the issue of partiality and favoritism.
 - a. How would you define partiality?
 - b. What are the consequences of partiality?
 - c. How do you know whether you are being partial or impartial towards others?

2. The people James was writing to lived in an honor and shame culture. Similarly, we live in a celebrity cult and self affirmation culture.
 - a. What cultural influences on the church back then is James pointing out ?
 - b. What are expectations you have from the church that might be influenced by the world's culture and not God's?
 - c. Who are the people that get overlooked because of this?

3. Even though partiality is a sin, it exists even in the church.
 - a. What example has God set for us in not showing partiality?
 - b. How have you experienced partiality either in your benefit or against you?
 - c. How have you contributed to the partiality that exists in the church?

4. James' series of questions in v 5-7 leaves us with similar questions to wrestle with.
 - a. What groups or types of people do we tend to elevate in our church? Are they those that God elevates?
 - b. Are they honored at the expense of others?
 - c. Do you show partiality to those who actually perpetuate injustice and oppression in society?
 - d. Do you show partiality to those who oppose Jesus and/or slander his name?
 - e. What can you do to make sure you are falling into the sin of partiality?