

James 2:1-7 – True Faith Requires You Show No Partiality

PNT, TSK, Lexicon, Henry, Geneva, JFB, Vincent, Robertson, Trapp, Clarke, Reinecker, Family, Calvin, INT, Scott, Blomberg, Ellsworth, Gaebelein, Brothers and sisters in the Lord, you've probably **never** heard the term proso-po-lep-sia. But it is a serious sin. Proso-po-lep-sia is the sin of **showing respect to people because of outward symbols of affluence, usually to gain personal advantage**. Proso-po-lep-sia is usually **accompanied with ignoring the poor**, because they can bring no advantage. **Today you will hear God's warning against this sin.** This warning flows quite nicely from the previous verse which warned you to care for widows, orphans, and foreigners.

Our headings are:

Don't show partiality – A Definition

Don't show partiality – An Illustration

Don't show partiality – A Warning

Our goals are: **That you will ask God for his wisdom to show your faith by welcoming God's children equally and selflessly.**

Don't show partiality – A Definition

1 My brethren, **do not hold the faith** of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, **with partiality**.

1. Apostle James strongly stated that showing partiality was inconsistent with true Christian faith.

2. Let's review what partiality is: Partiality is giving preference to someone on account of his outward symbols of affluence - wealth, with the hope of gaining personal advantage.

Apostle James was **not saying** Christians didn't have to show greater respect to someone in a higher position, like the king, or a judge. They ought to! Higher offices were given by God and those in those offices should get a greater respect. What he was saying was **they were not to give preferences in a church setting-to someone because he was richer!**

3. Apostle James had to address this because partiality to the rich was most common in those days in order to ingratiate oneself to them and gain some future advantage.

Roman law showed **contempt for the poor and allowed slaves to be bought and sold**. **Girls**, who couldn't go to war, were routinely **abandoned at birth** as they were seen as less valuable. **Churches started reflecting the culture of the day**. Many of the **Christian churches were quite poor**, and seeing a rich man come into church created many opportunities in their minds.

4. But Apostle James did not want believers to show partiality, like the Romans, for the financial benefit of the church.

These rich men did not believe in Jesus. Jesus even taught it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. (Jesus wasn't saying the rich couldn't enter the kingdom, just that it was hard.)

Paying special attention to rich unbelievers and ignoring the poor, who are often more open, showed a lack of faith.

5. Knowing Jesus was the Lord of glory, there was all the more reason for Christians to live the faith so he would be glorified.

What glory would go up to God if the poor felt shunned? What glory would go up from the wealthy if he did not love God?

6. Lessons:

a. As a general rule, do not be partial to anyone in order to get some advantage while ignoring others who can give you no advantage. God decries partiality. All men and women must be treated with respect and dignity. We have too many of these injustices in society! (A poor man or a black man usually gets a longer sentence for the exact crime than a rich white man might get. There might not be a financial benefit to the judge, but there is a "social benefit." That is partiality.)

b. But the context here is the church and how it treats someone who comes through the door. A rich giver to the church must not be welcomed with open arms and the poor ignored. If someone comes to church in shorts, or old jeans, or t-shirt...don't condemn them and embrace the one who comes with a suit and tie. (Of course, there are extenuating circumstances where you may not welcome someone...like one who disturbs worship and robs other people of worshipping God.)

c. How you live your faith will determine how much glory goes up to the Lord. That's pressure, isn't it? But you can live your faith with God's help and not be partial. Ask God for his Holy Spirit to help you.

d. God's Holy Spirit and his Word show you that all men were made in the image of God and to disregard one because of God's providence is an affront to God who controls the world by his providence. To treat one with **partiality is to say that God's providence sometimes stinks**...that God's providence is unfair...that some man's color or condition is a curse...that a man or a woman's gender is a hindrance. Let God's Word straighten you out.

Don't show partiality-An Illustration

2 For 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**, 3 and **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,"** 4 have you not shown **partiality** among **yourselves**, and become **judges** with evil thoughts?

1. Since it was becoming normal to treat a rich man in a more special way than if a poor man came into church, Apostle James used an illustration to expose this insidious error.

He said: "If a rich man came into church with his gold rings (not one, but many, including his signet ring) and he has fine quality and stylish clothing, the leaders would pay him much attention, and give him the good seat in the meeting.

Partiality was the **Roman way**. More, the **Jews had a tradition** of seating men in their synagogues by rank. But there was Jewish law against giving priority to a man because he was better dressed. **Yet that law fell by the wayside among converts.**

At the same time, Apostle James said it was becoming common if a poor man came in with only his filthy clothes (he may only have had one set), the leader would give him little attention and give him the lowest spot, like at the feet of the leader, or tell him to stand at the back.

This Christian contempt of the poor reflected Roman culture which showed disdain for the poor. But it may the church did this injustice because **they wanted to gain the acceptance of Rome** by acting like Rome.

Christianity ought to show an openness and support for the poor. Christians had to treat every man equally who came in. **The Lord Jesus even acknowledged he had poor churches** (Revelation 2), and poor people in his kingdom, and it wasn't because they were sinful or lacked faith.

Matthew 11:5 "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and **the poor have the gospel preached to them.**

Lazarus, with all his sores and poverty, was described as a friend of Jesus.

2. In showing partiality and favoring the rich and famous, Christian leaders had convicted themselves.

They knew it was wrong but they still did it. And because they were in a position of leadership, this was a corruption of justice.

3. Why was this illustration so important?

a. A rich man might have inherited his wealth (or have stolen it) so he was not necessarily a better man who worked hard.

b. The poor man may have been poor because of poor health, or because he was **giving away his money to help others** in worse situations. Maybe he wasn't lazy! Maybe he had many relatives to help.

c. If the church needed money, they should have asked God. God has appointed proper means for the church to meet her needs.

So it was unfair to judge by clothes and not by character! The one who judges that way was setting himself up against God!

4. Lessons:

a. To choose to be friends with one Christian over another simply because he has a fancier car or has a more prominent position at work, which could work for your advantage, is to mock Christ. To do so is to show contempt for your faith.

b. If churches give advantage to the rich so he could financially benefit them, they are guilty of mocking Christ. They are also doubting Christ's ability to provide for his bride!

c. If churches ignore the poor because he would bring no advantage to the churches, they are guilty of mocking Christ. They are also mocking his children. **Who likes when someone mocks his child?**

Don't show partiality – A Warning

5 Listen, 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? 6 But **you have dishonored the poor man.**

1. Partiality to the rich and against the poor was a contempt of God's people because God's people, though they were often poor, were spiritually rich.

Now it is true spiritual needy ones are considered poor. (Mt 5:3) But the context here is this was referring to the poor who had no material things. These poor ones God made rich in spiritual things. (**The poor are often more open to the Gospel. This is a generalization, one used by the Lord!**) Look what the poor gets!

1 **Corinthians 2:9... "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,** Nor have entered into the heart of man **The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."**

2 **Timothy 4:8** Finally, there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The poor were more often rich in faith and were heirs to God's kingdom and were not to be treated

disdainfully. Some being financially poor, while being spiritually rich, was part of God's design!
So partiality to the rich and against the poor was contempt of God!

6...Do not **the rich oppress you** and drag you into the courts?

2. Partiality to the rich and against the poor was contempt of God's people because the rich were wicked and often dragged the poor to the courts to further take advantage of them.

The rich were often the crueler ones to the members of the church who were showing partiality to them! Amazing! (Apostle James was generalizing again, so don't take it as exclusive.)

It was further wickedness of the church to make someone feel superior on account of his wealth.

7 **Do they not blaspheme** that noble name by which you are called?

3. Partiality to the rich and against the poor was contempt of God's people because the rich who received preferential treatment were blaspheming the name of God – not the poor!

The rich claimed to be the Lord's but they weren't. They might have been baptized into the name of the Lord, but they blasphemed God's name. But the name of the Lord was too precious to be used scornfully by wicked men. Look how Christians viewed the Lord's name:

Psalms 52:9 I will praise You forever, Because You have done it; And in the presence of Your saints I will **wait on Your name, for it is good.**

Exodus 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, **for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.**

4. Lessons:

a. Understand God's election or you will treat men unfairly. If you understand election wasn't based on cleanness of clothes but on God's pure love, then you would understand that man adds nothing to his own character. It is all the grace of God.

b. Don't look down on those God has providentially allowed to be poor. Instead, help them. Give them ideas. Train them. Encourage them. Pray for them. They may not bring some advantage toward you, but they surely would bring glory to God. They are God's!

c. Be warned against showing partiality to the rich (or those who might work to your advantage. They will not help them to understand God's election. They may not learn how to be saved from their sins. They will not bring glory and praise to the Lord. They may think their money brought them their success!

Conclusion:

Partiality is showing preference to the affluent, usually for some personal advantage, whether it is financial, social, or political advantage! God warned Christians not to be partial to the affluent and ignore the poor. Apostle James illustrated why partiality was bad and then warned his readers to avoid it.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. You have all you need in Christ. So if you need something, ask him. You do not need to show partiality to gain some minor advantage, an advantage that will disappear in a short time. This is true for the church as well.

2. All Christians are God's children, whether rich, poor, old, young, man, or woman, and you must treat them as they deserve. You must not see them in light of what you can get from them.

3. If you treat others unfairly, you rob that person of his worth and you rob Jesus of his glory. Surely he wouldn't be pleased with that. And of course, **if you treat the rich preferentially, you confuse his mind of what sin is!** Would that bring glory to God?

Finally: God treats all men consistently. It doesn't matter what outward signs of affluence you have, if you don't have true faith in Jesus, you are done for. You have no hope. But if you want to be able to enter into the presence of God now and for eternity, ask God for faith so you can trust in Jesus.