

FAVORITISM FORBIDDEN

JAMES 2:1—13

Introduction:

1. The most famous story of favoritism found in scripture is located in the 37th chapter of Genesis. Here is how it reads: **Gen. 37:3,4** . Playing favorites in family relationships is very destructive to peace and harmony in the home. Joseph's brothers hated him to the point they could not even speak a kind word to him. Certainly doesn't sound like “brotherly love.”
2. In the text we are going to read, the prohibition against showing favoritism is plainly stated. I'm going to read this passage and I would like for you to mentally note the **reasons** James gives for not showing favoritism in our relationships with and to others. His reasons are sprinkled throughout the text. **James 2:1—13**
3. Transition: Before we look at the illustration James uses we note in verse one the **principle** and **prohibition** he lays down—“My brothers, as **believers** in our **glorious Lord Jesus Christ**, don't show favoritism.”
4. The principle is you are believers—you are Christians—you are followers of Christ—and since that is true here is the prohibition—don't show favoritism. Favoritism is to look with favor on a person because of their external circumstances. Be it looks, wealth, power and position or their standing in society.
5. One of the things some of us have a tendency to do is to judge other people based on their outward appearance—men may be inclined to open a door more quickly for an attractive woman, than for one not so pretty—hitchhiker with long hair—short hair—those who dress nice and those who don't and how we might cater to one over the other—Samuel and his next choice for King of Israel—1 Sam. 16:7 Treating people with special attention because of some outward circumstance is not becoming of a Christian.
6. The first reason James gives for not being a respecter of persons—for not showing favoritism—is because it is not what Christians do. Perhaps we would do well to remind ourselves what God is like. Listen to these verses: **Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9 ; Col. 3:25 ; Acts 10:34 ; Luke 20:21** God does not show favoritism. He is impartial when it comes to each of us. He does not treat us a certain way because of our outward circumstances, therefore neither should we treat people in a special way because of some outward condition.
7. The example he gives is that of favoring the rich, because they are rich and despising the poor, because they are poor. Two men come to church. One rich, the other poor. One is wearing a three piece suit and a gold ring and the other is wearing hand me downs the third time over.
8. The greeter for the day simply operates the way the world does. He honors the rich man with the best seat in the house and he despises the poor man with the “standing room only” seat or the “on the floor” seat. When this was done James asks this question: “have you not discriminated among yourselves and becomes judges with evil thoughts?” Yes and yes. Favoring the rich and despising the poor is both discriminating and judgmental.

9. As a Christian, our treatment of people is **not to be** based on any outward circumstances—this is never easy—it's difficult to look past the glitter and gold—the torn and shabby to peoples hearts. **Robertson's**
10. At times we must make judgments about peoples character and actions, but at no time are we to treat the rich with more kindness than the poor. We may think if we treat the rich kindly, they may treat me well. With the poor, we may think, they can't do anything for me so it doesn't matter how I treat them.
11. Favoring the rich and despising the poor is not becoming of a Christian, it is discriminating and its judgmental. James gives two more reasons why we should not favor the rich and despise the poor. In **verse 6** he says Its' **insulting** . . . to the poor.
12. To treat the poor based on their outward circumstances is another slap in the face. It's a total disregard for who they are on the inside—a person made in God's image. To favor the rich and despise the poor according to v. 9 is **sinful** —**v. 9** it's breaking God's **law of “love for all men”**. It makes us guilty before God.
13. So far James has said: favoring the rich and despising the poor:
 - a.) Is not how a Christian should treat people
 - b.) Is discriminating
 - c.) Is judgmental
 - d.) Is insulting to the poor
 - e.) Is sinful—because we are breaking God's law of love
14. Transition . . . In verses 5—7 James contrasts God's treatment of the poor with the way the wealthy treat the poor

II. **GOD UPHOLDS THE POOR WHILE THE RICH ABUSE THE POOR 5-7** Generally speaking . . .

A. **God Offers the Poor More Than He Offers the Rich**

1. 1. When Jesus spoke at the synagogue in Nazareth he opened the scroll to Isaiah and read these prophetic words: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor . . .”
2. Most poor people know they are poor and they have needs they believe that God can help with—therefore many turn to God—scripture says the “common” people heard Jesus gladly. They had a need for Jesus—they had a need for faith. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth he described their outward circumstances this way . . . “Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.” (1:26)
3. The poor in this world, and Jesus said you will always have the poor with you, the poor may be so . . . materially . . . but spiritually they can be rich in faith and they will be among those who will receive the kingdom God has promised to those who love him.
4. This doesn't mean the wealthy can't be “rich in faith and inherit his kingdom”. There are plenty of materially rich people in scripture who were men and women of faith. Yet, it was our Lord who declared that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven—why?--because

he doesn't have much of a physical need for anything, which may also carry over into his spiritual life. "I've made all this without God, who needs Him?" God upholds the poor but it is . . .

B. The Rich Tend to Abuse The Poor

1. The rich exploit the poor, perhaps they don't pay them a living wage, the rich sue the poor and the poor have no way to defend themselves—they have no money—they can't hire a good lawyer, and the rich have no regard for God, in fact they slander the name of Jesus. Sounds like today, doesn't it?
2. If this is generally true, then why would anyone want to favor the rich or treat them special? Not all rich people are like this, but some definitely are.
3. Transition: How then . . . are **we to treat people** whether they are rich or poor? The way we should treat people, rich or poor, is based on another principle—the royal law of love. The 2nd greatest commandment according to Jesus. That commandment is found in **v. 8**

III. LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS OURSELVES (Lev. 19:18,34)

A. Rich Or Poor, Most People Love Themselves

1. 1. If we don't have some amount of self-love, we won't be loving other people. When people hate themselves they normally aren't very loving towards other people.
 2. I believe James' point here is that if we love our neighbor as our self, it doesn't matter if they are rich or poor. Outward circumstances won't affect how we treat people. We will treat them all alike in the sense that whether rich or poor, black or white, legal or illegal immigrants, heterosexual or homosexual, we will **love them as we love ourselves**.
 3. God is impartial in his love for mankind—he sends the rain and sunshine on the **just and the unjust**. (Mt. 5:45) We must strive to be like him.
3. And then there is a final principle found in **verses 13, 14**

IV. LET MERCY TRIUMPH OVER JUDGEMENT

A. A Day of Judgment Is Coming . . .

1. And we will be judged by God's Word. He has told us in His Word what to do to be saved and he has provided the necessary sacrifice for our salvation.
 2. God has provided the perfect and sinless person of Jesus Christ to cover our sins. In providing this perfect sacrifice he's covered our sins, offered us forgiveness and made it possible for mercy to triumph over judgment.
 3. Rather than getting "what we deserve" his mercy and grace have triumphed over judgment! However, there is a principle in scripture, which applied at judgment, goes something like this. If you don't show mercy to others, God won't be showing mercy to

you. (“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” Matt. 5:7) If you don't forgive others, neither will the Father in heaven forgive you. (Mt. 18:21—35) The parable of the unmerciful servant.

4. What does mercy triumphing over judgement have to do with the rich and the poor and not showing favoritism?

B. Compassion Rather Than Contempt Should Have Been Shown to the Poor

1. God is impartial with each of us and so we should be with others, regardless of their outward circumstances.
2. To favor the rich and despise the poor is to discriminate and judge people wrongly.
3. To despise the poor is insulting to them and it is sinning against God.
4. To love all men equally, regardless of outward circumstances, is God's royal law.
5. Compassion rather than contempt should have been shown to the poor.
6. The way we judge others is the way we will be judged by our Father in Heaven, come Judgment Day.