

James 2:1-13  
Don't Show Favoritism

**Introduction:**

**1) I should treat everyone in my church with grace—2:1-7**

a) A potential guilty verdict—2:1-4

i) The command—2:1 <sup>1</sup> *My brothers, show no partiality/favoritism, bias based on external appearances as you hold the faith in* (perhaps better “of”, which comes from) *our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.*

(1) He is repeating the essence of Lev. 19:15.

(2) Note the transformation of James' heart concerning his half-brother Jesus. He is recognizing His glory as God!

ii) The hypothetical—2:2-3 (If ...)

• He is not condemning them for something they are necessarily doing in the synagogue. He is attempting to keep them from doing such a thing.

(1) Hypothetical situation—2:2

(a) **Rich:** <sup>2</sup> *For if* (3<sup>rd</sup> class, probable) *a man wearing a gold ring* (lit. “gold-fingered”) *and fine clothing comes into your assembly/synagogue* [sunagwgh,],

(i) Some Romans wore up to 6 rings on one finger!

(ii) “Synagogue” used nearly 60x in the NT. Later he uses the term assembly [evkkhisi,a] in 5:14.

(b) **Destitute:** *and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in,*

(2) Hypothetical responses—2:3

(a) **Respect** the rich: <sup>3</sup> *and if* (3<sup>rd</sup> class, probable) *you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,”*

(b) **Disrespect** the destitute: *while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,”*

iii) The application question—2:4 (... then ...) (assumed “Yes” answer)

(1) **Segregation:** <sup>4</sup> *have you not then made distinctions* [diakri,nw] *among yourselves*

(2) **Sin:** *and become judges* [krith,j] *with evil thoughts/reasonings* [dialogismo,j]?

(a) The church may be tempted to pass judgment based on evil motives, or to use unacceptable standards in judging. (FSB)

b) A trio of pointed, convicting questions—2:5-7

i) Regarding the poor—2:5-6a

(1) **Rhetorical question:** <sup>5</sup> *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?*

(a) There IS a sense in which God righteously discriminates in favor of the poor man.

- (i) It does not say that **ONLY** poor people can be saved, which is a far cry from the bad doctrine of Liberation Theology.
- (ii) Nor does it say that **ALL** poor people will be saved.
- (2) **Verdict:** <sup>6</sup> *But you* (emphatic) *have dishonored the poor man.*
  - (a) They were not accurately reflecting the image of the God who honors the poor. God is impartial. (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25)
- ii) Regarding the wealthy—2:6b-7
  - (1) **Legally:** *Are not the rich the ones who oppress/exploit you, and the ones who drag you into court?*
  - (2) **Spiritually:** <sup>7</sup> *Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

## 2) I should be obedient to God's Word—2:8-13

- a) Genuine **obedience** on the one hand—2:8 <sup>8</sup> *If* (1<sup>st</sup> class) *you really* [me,ntoi] *fulfill the royal* (kingly) [basiliko,j] *law according to the Scripture*, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*,” (Lev. 19:18) *you are doing well.*
- b) Genuine **disobedience** on the other hand—2:9-10
  - i) **Verdict:** <sup>9</sup> *But* [de,] *if* (1<sup>st</sup> class) *you show partiality*, **If ...**
    - (1) The guilt that accompanies failure to meet God's standard: **then ...** *you are committing sin* [a`marti,a]
    - (2) The guilt that accompanies the deliberate violation of God's standard: *and are convicted by the law as transgressors* [paraba,thj].
    - (3) Definition of sin: the lack of perfect conformity to the holy will of God, either in our **actions** (what we do), **appetites** (what we desire), **attitudes** (what we think), **affections** (what we delight in) or **nature** (what we are).
  - ii) Explanation of the indivisible unity of God's Word: <sup>10</sup> *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.* (cf. Gal. 5:3)
    - (1) <sup>11</sup> *For he* (God) *who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.”*
    - (2) *If* (1<sup>st</sup> class) *you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.*
  - iii) God's Law, because of its wise constraints, brings true **freedom** (cf. 1:25). Disobedience to God's Law brings bondage; (J. Ronald Blue)
- c) Demonstrate repentance—2:11-12 (two commands)
  - i) **What** areas of my life should demonstrate genuine repentance?
    - (1) Our **speech:** <sup>12</sup> *So* **speak** and our **actions:** *and so* **act**
  - ii) **How** am I to demonstrate genuine repentance?
    - (1) *as those who are* (about) *to be judged* (evaluated) *under* [dia,] *the law of liberty.*
    - (2) The world promises freedom but delivers only slavery.
  - iii) **Why** am I to demonstrate genuine repentance?

(1) Not showing mercy: *13 For judgment [kri,sij] is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.*

(a) Mercy is not merely a feeling of concern but also an action to meet the needs of those in misery.

(b) Failure to show mercy means a failure to understand God's mercy.  
(FSB)

(2) Showing mercy: *Mercy triumphs over judgment [kri,sij].*

**3) Things I need to remember:**

a) Receiving God's mercy obligates the recipient to show mercy to others.

b) Prov. 14:31, "*Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.*"

c) We should not make decision about people based on external factors—clothing, money, skin color, or other physical appearance.