

JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
IV. God's Call For Impartiality In Our Relationships
(James 2:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. Though the Epistle of James offers little formal structure and is less concerned about theological concepts than other New Testament works, it is intensely practical, explaining how to be "doers" of God's Word, James 1:22.
- B. A significant quality in a truly righteous Christian life is impartiality in one's relationships, what James 2:1-13 teaches. We thus view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. God's Call For Impartiality In Our Relationships, James 2:1-13.

- A. Having written on the believer's need properly to relate to the Word of God, James taught that such a proper relationship leads one into a proper relation to other believers in Christ. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 824)
- B. Accordingly, believers in Christ must not show "respect of persons" (KJV), better rendered in the New International Version as "Don't show favoritism," James 2:1; Ibid.
- C. To illustrate, James presented a hypothetical case of a wealthy man who showed up in the church meeting wearing extravagant clothes and a gold ring, what often signified "wealth and social distinction" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to James 2:2) and also a poor man who showed up wearing "shabby clothing" (Ibid.), and the believers present invited the wealthy man to sit in a place of honor where they told the poor man to stand somewhere or be seated under someone else's footstool on the floor, an inferior place, such favoritism was evil discrimination based on financial status, James 2:2-4! (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.)
- D. To prove that this discrimination was ungodly, James clarified how God had chosen those who appeared to be materially poor but are rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom that is promised to those who love Him, James 2:5. [The infinitive "to be" that is written between "poor" and "rich" in the ESV does not exist in the Greek text (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 782), so this verse cannot be used by Calvinists to prove God chose people to receive a special gift of faith to be saved! The thrust of the argument is that **God** (the word *Theos* for "God" is in the emphatic position, Ibid.) accepted the poor who are rich in faith and who are heirs of the kingdom that He has promised, making discriminating against those God has chosen evil!] James' readers had apparently committed this sin, so he admonished them for dishonoring materially poor believers, James 2:6a.
- E. Furthermore, James added that the rich were those who generally oppressed his readers, the ones who dragged them into court and blasphemed the honorable name of Christ by Whom they were called, James 2:6b-7. Thus, their favoritism of the wealthy was all the more inconsistent with what was righteous!
- F. James asserted that if his readers fulfilled the royal law of the King of kings according to Scripture of "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," they did well, but showing partiality was to commit sin and left them convicted by that law as transgressors, James 2:8-9; Ibid., p. 824-825.
- G. Besides, whoever keeps the whole law of God but disobeys it in one point becomes guilty of the entire law, James 2:10! James illustrated this point, noting that since God prohibited adultery as well as murder, though one might not commit adultery, were he to commit a murder, he would still be guilty of transgressing God's law since both commandments came from the same God, James 2:11.
- H. Thus, believers in Christ were to speak and do what was right in showing impartiality to others, for they would be judged by God's law of liberty, a law that brings true freedom because of its wise constraints, James 2:12; Ibid., p. 825. God's judgment will be without mercy to those who have shown no mercy in ungodly prejudice, but showing mercy in impartiality "exults over" (*katakauchatai*) judgment, the blessed route to take in the Christian's relationships with others, James 2:13; Ibid.

Lesson: *Showing partiality in relating to other people especially as based on the criteria established by the world's value of showing partiality to the rich and socially elite over the poor is sin, and it is not to be practiced by believers in Christ. Rather, we believers should show impartiality, exulting over unrighteous partiality that God will judge.*

Application: *(1) May we not show partiality toward the rich and socially elite over the poor. (2) However, other criteria the world system has that we must not use in deciding whether to relate well or not to people would include showing partiality over (a) race, (b) ethnicity, (c) gender, (e) language, (f) occupation, (g) physical size or appearance, (h) clothing, (i) age or (j) education. (3) If we ourselves have faced sinful prejudice from other professing Christians, may we claim Ephesians 1:6 ESV where we read how God has blessed us in His Beloved Son, and rest in God's full acceptance of us regardless of the false criteria others use to show prejudice against us.*