



## “The Evil of Favoritism & the Godliness of Impartiality” (James 2:1-13)

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Intro:

1. Favoritism: The showing of special favor; partiality
2. The example (vv.2-4)

Chrysodaktylios: gold ringed, adorned with gold rings.

Rings were customary among the Jews in this culture; Remember when the prodigal son came home, and the father had a ring put on his finger? But gold rings were not very common because of their expense. So the guy in our example is “loaded.”

Lampros: shining; brilliant; splendid, magnificent; luxuries or elegancies in dress or style.

This guy is dressed to kill!

Power point photos of Liberace: Wladziu (or Władziu) Valentino Liberace; May 16, 1919 – February 4, 1987), best known as Liberace, was an American pianist and vocalist of Polish-Italian origin. In a career that spanned four decades of concerts, recordings, motion pictures, television and endorsements, Liberace became world-famous. During the 1950s–1970s he was the highest-paid entertainer in the world and embraced a lifestyle of flamboyant excess both on and off the stage. He always denied being a homosexual during his lifetime, and sued those who accused him of it. Towards the end of his life his chauffeur sued him for "palimony". He died of an AIDS-related illness in 1987.

Ptōchos: reduced to beggary, begging, asking alms; destitute of wealth, influence, position, honour.

Power point photo of beggar: You cannot get a more stark contrast than the one God is presenting to us here. One person comes into church with rings all over their hands, dressed to kill, and another man comes in that same church service who is a beggar wearing shabby clothes, filthy, and no doubt with an odor about him that was anything but pleasant.

God had a lot to say in the Bible about favoritism; God does not want favoritism toward the rich or the poor (Ex.23:3; Lev.19:15); So it is wrong to get an attitude toward the rich guy just because he's rich. There was nothing wrong with offering him a good seat, as long as you are willing to offer the beggar the same courtesy. The irony of this example is that they were showing favoritism toward the rich, and it was the rich who were exploiting them, dragging them into court, and slandering the name of Jesus. This of course does not mean that every rich person was doing these things, only that if you check out human history, and specifically the history of the people of God, it is the poor who make up the majority, and the rich and influential who generally despise, persecute, and take advantage of them. The majority of people in the church have been (and are) poor people, common people; See I Cor.1:26.

Why is it we tend to cater to the rich and despise the poor?

Proverbs 19:6 Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts.

Prov. 14:20 The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends.

The rich usually have the greater means to either harm us, or benefit us in some way.

Generally speaking, we want to be friends with the best looking and most popular people. I just came from the 6:4 national conference, and at conferences like this, everyone wants to hob nob with the most popular people – Jim Cymbala, Francis Chan...

God was careful to instruct OT leaders concerning favoritism (Deut.1:9-17a; 16:18-20; Prov.24:23); God brought judgment on Israel as a result of them practicing favoritism (Mal.2:9).

God is just as concerned with favoritism in the NT (I Peter 1:16-17; Rom.2:6-11; Eph.6:9; Col.3:23-25; I Tim.5:21 (context). And of the course the text before us in James today.

Why is this such a big deal with God? Because he never shows favoritism (Deut.10:17; II Chron.19:4-7). Favoritism/partiality is not a part of God's nature.

Heb.1:3a; This is the character of Jesus, and even his enemies recognized it (Matt.22:15-16). See Luke 18:35-43; Jesus reached out to people that even his own disciples tended to shun. He calls Matthew, a chief tax collector, as one of his first disciples. You talk about someone who was shunned in that culture! He even went to a party at Matthew's house and hung out with

people that the religious elite would have nothing to do with! And Matthew becomes one of the twelve apostles! Jesus treed Zacchaeus, then went to hang out at his house, and Zacchaeus as a result of this openness to him and acceptance of him by Jesus, was saved! He reached out to lepers, demoniacs, the most outcast and ostracized people in that society. And at the same time you see him on more than one occasion accepting an invitation to dinner from a Pharisee, loving a rich young ruler, speaking to a political ruler like Pilate in an attempt to save his soul.

Illus: A woman in India with leprosy (very hard for me); USA Today article on Tony Porta.

This is why James opens this subject as he does in verse 1 of our text. If I claim to be a believer in and a follower of Jesus Christ, it means I am striving to be like Him. Jesus Christ is my human example of how to treat other human beings. As His follower I am called to be like Him. I so want to be like Him!

A person's education, economic status, looks, wardrobe, social relationships, job, fame, prestige, earthly honor, all of those collectively and individually mean absolutely nothing to God. They are non-issues.

### THE TREMENDOUS ENCOURAGEMENT THIS ASPECT OF GOD'S CHARACTER SHOULD BE TO US

- God does not treat us differently based on how rich or poor I am materially/financially, how good looking I am, how popular I am, what I look like, what the color of my skin is, what country I live in or come from, or what my IQ is.
- God does not show favoritism against rich people, but at the same time he has a special place in his heart for the poor; Examples of God's heart for the poor, the outcast, the abused.
- One mark of genuineness as a believer is a heart that reflects God's heart (Ex: Zacchaeus).
- We are all poor spiritually, in our natural selves; See II Cor.8:9; And what God has done he has done for the whole world, not just the Jewish people.

### THE TERRIBLE MISREPRESENTATION OF GOD WE COMMIT WHEN WE ARE NOT LIKE HIM...

- Not to mention vv.6-7 (inconsistent, and illogical!)

## THE CHALLENGE WE FACE

- v.8 “the royal law” = the “supreme” law; See Matt.22:34-40; Keeping this law means I could in essence drop the last five of the ten commandments (See Ex.20:13-17); last part of this verse translated “you are doing right = excellently, nobly, commendably. So how do I do this?”
- We are not naturally like God (Prov.28:21; Acts 12:19b-22).
- Even genuine people of faith tend toward favoritism (Acts 10:34-35; Gal.2:11-13; I Samuel 16:6-12).
- See Luke 10:25-37; What would have to happen for this expert in the law to go and begin to do what is exemplified in this story Jesus told? His heart would have to be changed.

## THE HOPE WE HAVE (vv.12-13)

The irony of vv.8-11 is that we are all lawbreakers, but despite this God reaches out to us in love, mercy, and with the offer of salvation/eternal life! Not all sins are equally horrible. Not all sins are equally heinous. Not all sins are equally damaging. But they all shatter the unity of God's law and they turn us into violators, rebels and transgressors. Lawbreaking is not like bowling. You can't just hit a few pins and leave the rest standing. Lawbreaking is like hitting a window with a hammer, you may only hit it in one spot but it will shatter the whole thing.

God changed the character of a Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus (Gal.2:6). And so he can change our character as well. Saul of Tarsus as a Pharisee was proud, bigoted, and extremely self-righteous (Phil.3:3-7). Saul was once like the Pharisee of Luke 7:36-47. But once Saul's heart was changed through faith in Jesus Christ, and once the Holy Spirit took control of his life, he would live out Jesus' teaching found in places like Luke 6:27-36.

We all deserve to be shunned by God. In our natural way of thinking, there is absolutely no reason for Him to want to hang out with us, be kind to us, etc. (Rom.3:10-18, 23; Isaiah 6:5).

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Mercy triumphs over judgment because the one who shows mercy manifests evidence of a transformed life, of a relationship with God, of being a genuine follower of Jesus Christ.

## CONCLUSION

So James brings us to the climax of a great argument. Favoritism is inconsistent with the Christian faith because the Christian faith is consistent with the nature of God and God never shows favoritism, a truth we see not only repeatedly in Scripture, but exemplified in the life of our glorious Savior, Jesus Christ. Favoritism is inconsistent with the purpose and the plan of God in choosing the poor of this world to be rich. And favoritism is inconsistent with loving your neighbor as yourself.

O Lord, forgive us for the times we fail to rightly represent you in our church gatherings, and in the world. Change our hearts that we might be more like you...