

## The Sin of Partiality (James pt. 4; 2:1-13)

Michael L. Riddle

1. James continues with a similar theme seen throughout chapter 1 – our relationship with God’s word / application
2. Ch. 1 left of (Js. 1:27) with ‘pure and undefiled religion’ = visit the orphans and widows (part of the ‘poor’ brethren [Js. 1:9]; who are seen as victims of the rich [Js. 2:6])
3. How we live and how we treat others relates to how we handle the word of God and apply it in our lives
4. If we show partiality, we are not keeping/doing the word of God.
5. A major problem in the first century:
  - a. Rich/poor; slave/free; Jew/Gentile; Greek/barbarian
  - b. Gal. 3:27-28; Col. 3:11
6. Still a major problem today that we need to be aware of. God’s word is always relevant to every generation.
7. He Gives a specific example here, but it applies generally.

Discussion:

### I. SHOWING PARTIALITY (James 2:1-7)

- A. Do not hold the faith with partiality (:1)
  1. The faith – the object of faith, the gospel (Rom. 10:17)
    - a. The perfect law of liberty (Js. 1:25)
    - b. That which leads to pure and undefiled religion
    - c. Part of that includes “love your neighbor as yourself” (Js. 2:8)
  2. Don’t hold it with partiality
    - a. We can’t pick and choose who we treat as the gospel (the faith) tells us to!
- B. Example of this partiality (Js. 2:2-4)
  1. Follows the thoughts in Chapter 1 concerning the lowly and rich brother & visiting those in need (the orphans and widows in their trouble)
  2. A Rich man and poor man who come into an assembly of theirs
  3. The rich man: his clothes/jewelry show that he is very wealthy
  4. The poor man: wearing filthy clothes (like a homeless man)
  5. Their response: (Js. 2:3)
    - a. Tell the rich man to set in a good place
    - b. Tell the poor man to stand over there or sit at my footstool
- C. This was an obvious instance of partiality and unfair judgment, showing personal favoritism/ respecter of person (Js. 2:4)
- D. There are many forms of partiality/prejudice today that we ought to be watchful for and never be guilty of any:
  1. Racism, Sexism, Ageism, Nepotism, Education, Financial Status, Cliques, Background
  2. We need to be vigilant that we aren’t guilty of partiality/prejudice!
    - a. There is no excuse for partiality of any kind
    - b. Our upbringing, etc. does not give us a free pass

## II. THE PROBLEM WITH PARTIALITY (James 2:4-7)

- A. We become judges with evil thoughts (**Js. 2:4**)
  - 1. They were judging based on appearance and not judging with righteous judgement (based on God's word) (**Jn. 7:24; Mt. 7:1-6**)
  - 2. They knew nothing of these two men's character
  - 3. Judging by any standard other than God's word = evil. (**Js. 4:11-12**)
  - 4. They were judging based on appearance who to fulfill the command to love your neighbor with
- B. He brings to light the irony of their particular judgement/partiality (**Js. 2:5-7**) – it is generally the rich man who was oppressing them
  - 1. Concerning the poor:
    - a. God has chosen them to be rich in faith/heirs (**Js. 2:5**)
    - b. Generally: the ones who answer the gospel call (**1 Cor. 1:26-30**)
    - c. Relatively easier to make it to heaven (**1 Tim. 6:10; Mt. 19:23-24**)
  - 2. Concerning the rich:
    - a. Oppress and drag you into the courts (c.f. **Mt. 18:28-30**)
    - b. Blaspheme the noble name by which you are called (Christ)
- C. The irony – they were showing partiality to the class generally known for oppression and blaspheming Christ
- D. Need to learn to treat all men equal (love neighbor, Christ's golden rule – treat others how you want them to treat you)
- E. IF we are showing partiality = we are not doing the word!

## III. TRANSGRESSING THE LAW (James 2:8-13)

- A. Don't hold the faith with partiality (**2:1**) // if you show partiality you are not fulfilling the royal law and are transgressing (**2:8-9**)
- B. We are to live by the faith (the gospel) in full to all w/o partiality
- C. The "royal law" = love your neighbor as your self
  - 1. "Royal" because it is part of the 'greatest commands', second only to loving God; on these two laws hang all the law and prophets (**Mt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10**)
  - 2. If we are really fulfilling the law – we will not show any partiality. (They were not really fulfilling the law when they only showed love to the rich man)
  - 3. Who is my neighbor? All are – parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) –
  - 4. they should have loved both the rich and poor man
- D. We cannot break part of the law without being guilty of all (**Js. 2:10-11**) - We can't just keep the law when it is convenient!
  - 1. They stumbled in 1 point by treating the poor man without love => guilty of the whole law (:10)

2. Even if we are keeping all the other commands, breaking one = breaking all and become transgressors of the law – we cannot rationalize our way out of it.
  - a. He uses the example of adultery and murder
  - b. God sees both as sin and will hold us accountable
  - c. Can't pick which commands we want to keep!
- E. SO LIVE LIKE IT! – “so speak & so do” (**Js. 2:12**)
  1. We will be judged by the perfect law of liberty – so live with this knowledge (Can't pick parts to obey or pick who we will apply the law toward [ partiality])
  2. Look into the perfect law of liberty and continue in it -> blessed (**Js. 1:25**)
  3. The law benefits us IF we do it (**Jn. 8:31-32**)
- F. The role of mercy (**Js. 2:13**)
  1. Love your neighbor = showing mercy/compassion to them (esp. the poor and needy (**Js. 1:27**))
  2. If we fail to show mercy, God will not show us mercy (**Mt. 6:14-15**)
  3. Mercy triumphs over judgement

Conclusion:

1. We need to be watchful for the sin of partiality!
2. God shows no partiality! (**Ac. 10:34-43; Romans 2:4-11**)
3. We cannot keep part of the law, must keep all of it
4. Can't pick and choose to whom we keep the law either.
- 5.