

The Letter of James

Lesson 3

Partiality with Evil Motives

In the first chapter of James, the author reveals that the "testing of your faith" should yield positive results. The three tests that are very common for every Christian are trials, temptations and response to the Word of God. Now in James 2, he will use another practice which is common to all men to reveal that faith in Christ is contradictory to certain bad conduct.

Read James 2:1-13

1. Based on James 2:1, what audience is James addressing? When Christians act this way, what can they be likened to (1 Cor 3:1-3)?

2. What specific conduct did James admonish them for (James 2:1-3)? What is the real problem (James 2:4)?

3. Consider the concept of judging a book by its cover, or a man by his clothes and wealth. What small rural town was Jesus born in (Matt 2:1)? What small rural town was he raised in (Matt 2:23)? How did people feel about Nazareth (John 1:46, 7:41)? What was Jesus' occupation? Who did Jesus say was the greatest of all men (Matt 11:11)? What clothes did John the Baptist wear (Matt 3:4)? What does this say about judging on a superficial level?

4. James uses "personal favoritism", "special attention", "made distinctions" and "partiality" in a very negative way. Is making distinctions between people always wrong? Why is it wrong in James 2:4? How fair is a "judge with evil motives"?

5. Before Christ, there were extreme divisions between Jew and Gentile - man and woman - slave and free- poor and rich. Did Christ break down the barriers separating those groups (Gal 3:26-29, Col 3:11)? How should we treat people in spite of our differences (Col 3:12-13)?

6. Try to imagine yourself in the culture of the first century, a wealthy man of influence could find himself rubbing elbows with a slave or even be under a slave who was an elder. What new recognition or regard should we have for people (2 Cor 5:16-17)? What contrast between poor and rich does James use to illustrate this principle (2:5)? Define "rich in faith". Is there partiality with God (Romans 2:6-11)?

7. A paraphrase of James 2:6-7 could be, "instead of honoring the rich in faith you give honor to the economically rich who would just as soon sue you as look at you. In putting money first, you blaspheme God". The Bible never condemns money or the rich, but frequently condemns the love of money (1 Tim 6:10).

8. What does Lev. 19:18 say? Why did Jesus quote it (Matt 22:36-39)? Why did James quote it (2:8-9)? His audience no doubt kept the major commandments about murder, theft, adultery, etc. Did they have a false sense of righteousness (James 2:10)? If you keep the major commands, can you just let the small one's slide?

9. How do you want to be judged, mercifully or strictly? Do you desire to be treated graciously or harshly? James 2:12-13

Principle: Since you are to be judged with mercy and grace, Treat others with mercy and grace.

10. In the world we live in it is difficult, if not impossible, to not show partiality with selfish motives. In the first century it was believed that wealth was a sign of divine favor. What revolutionary concept did Jesus teach and serve as an example of (Matt 5:3,8,20; 6:19-21; 9:10-13,36; 18:1-5; Matt 19:29-30; John 13:12-16; Luke 13:30)? How did Jesus ultimately prove His love and impartiality to all sinners (Rom 5:8; 1 Jn4:10)?