

WHAT? ME PREJUDICED?

JAMES 2:1-7

Woman lived on wrong side of tracks; wanted to join fashionable church. Pastor urged her to go home & **think about it** for a week. When she came back he suggested, "Let's not be hasty. Go home and **read your Bible** for an hr every day this week. Come back to see me if you still think you should join. When she returned, he suggested that she go home and **pray** everyday this week, asking the Lord if He wanted her to join. He didn't see her for 6 mo. 1 day he saw her on the street & asked what happened. "I went home & did what you asked. 1 day while I was praying the Lord said, 'Don't worry about not getting into that church, I've been trying to get into it for 20 yr!'"

James writes to persecuted church; deals with issues related to suffering & attempts at self-preservation

JAMES' TWO FUNDAMENTAL PREMISES

Living faith endures tribulation 1:1-12

Living faith conquers temptation 1:13-27

Remaining chapters apply 2 premises to problems:

Living faith faces problems of suffering 2-5:6

Problem Sit. #1: Facing Powerful People

Living faith doesn't favor powerful people! 1-13

Summary: **1** *"My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory."*

He warns us of falling into trap of prejudice & favoritism based on wealth; **exhorts** us to avoid it:

Exhortation: don't play favorites! 1 Stop it!

Issue underlying problem: *What are we trusting?*

*“If we could win over wealthy neighbors,
they’d stop picking on us!”*

Glory of powerful people? Glory of Christ?

***If we have living faith in Christ,
we’ll trust GOD for our needs,
not our rich neighbors!***

Jesus is “glorious Lord!” If we trust *HIM*, we won’t place confidence in *people* who may help us escape! We’ll trust *HIM* to provide way of escape; NOT our neighbors!

Problem: illustration from real life 2-4

To point out implication of what they’re doing, he gives example of what goes on at church:

2-4 *“If a man wearing a gold ring & fine clothing comes into your assembly, & a poor man in shabby clothing comes in, ³if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing & say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves & become judges with evil thoughts?”*

More than hypothetical possibility. It’s happening!

How do *they* respond to powerful people?

They’re focusing on externals:

1 *“partiality”* <= lit., **“receive the face.”**

–evaluation based on ***what people look like***

Warns: Stop judging people on basis of **appearance**.

They evaluate *value* based on *wealth*.

Money = greatness.

NOT attack against rich people–*being* rich!

Problem: they're sinning against each other.

Because of pressure, they hurt one another. **v. 4 =>**

By judging each other, they reveal *evil motives*:

Favor rich people, to get special treatment

Instead of helping others, each looks out for own good.

They give rich people attention, to get them to be nice

They're scheming to save their own skins.

This was even happening at church!

How do *WE* respond to successful people?

We evaluate people by toys we own–cars, houses, boats, entertainment centers, etc.

We wonder why *Christians* are less fortunate than pagan wealthy. ***We confuse wealth with worth!***

Do *WE* commit same sin against each other?

Money isn't the only basis for discrimination.

We value people based on prestige/success

We ask: Who can help us get ahead?

We honor people who hold academic degrees.

Recognize people with “evangelical nobility”

Calvary does better than most churches!

Yet, tendency to visit with *important* people

If visitor looks sharp, we're sure to greet them

if they wear shabby clothes, speak another language, we let *someone else* talk to them!

If new kid at school looks like football player or cheer leader,
we reach out to them, but if they look strange, we let
somebody else greet them!

People haven't changed a whole lot, have they?

More notable, when pressure rises—we gather friends who
may help us when opposition comes!

We *DON'T* identify with someone we know is a *target*.

That's too risky. We'll just keep our distance!

Could James' comments about 1st C. be true of us too?

Explanation: what's wrong with that? 5-7

We try to get powerful people to help us.

Whom does GOD choose? 5-6a *"Has not God chosen those
who're poor in the world to be rich in faith & heirs of the kingdom,
which he's promised to those who love him? ⁶But you've dishon-
ored the poor man."*

Our preference is opposite God's!

God's method is *not* to choose rich & powerful people

They're often dogmatic in rejection—Don't *NEED* God!

God chooses

—simple people to confuse powerful people

—POOR people to make them RICH

He makes us rich in faith & transforms us into *His* heirs

World sees us as poor; God sees us as rich.

We're truly wealthy.

God's children are looking down on people God *chooses* to
make rich & He *declares* rich! **Who's right?**

Who persecutes God's people? 6b-7 *"Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, & drag you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?"*

Contrast between God's attitude, & that of His children who honor the rich at the expense of the poor.

We honor people who oppress us;
we reject people God chooses!

Rich powerful people persecute God's people

God isn't "out to get" the rich, as some suggest.

BUT, it's true: these rich people attack God's children.

They exploit us.

They drag us into court.

They blaspheme Name we identify with.

So, ***why would we count on them for support?***

We need different values than world uses

to establish prestige—this one's working against us!

They cling to system that opposes God & His people.

This isn't attack on wealth, but on world's philosophy, putting priority on wealth over other values.

James writes to *believers* who buy that philosophy.

—give 1st place to wealthy people of their generation.

They ignore the truly rich, honoring people who're poor, from perspective of eternal values.

***Showing partiality for rich people
puts down people God exalts
and exalts people who put down God.***

James' counsel to persecuted church:

Living faith doesn't favor powerful people

How do we make mistake they made?

Do we define value based on prestige and influence?

Or, do we see people from God's perspective?

Which is greater glory?

Glory of Christ => transforms simple into His image?

Glory of powerful people=>try to destroy Lord of glory?

MI CORONEL!

How do **WE** "escort people" to "preferred" seating?

Do we escort people to "back row"—far-side—seating?

His name was **Bill**. Wild hair, holes in jeans, no shoes. One day Bill decides to go to church. Walks in. Service has started, so Bill starts down aisle looking for seat. Church is packed; he can't find seat. People are looking uncomfortable; no one says a word. Bill gets closer to pulpit. He realizes there're no seats; so squats on carpet.

People are uptight; tension in the air is thick. From back, an elder slowly makes his way toward Bill. The elder's in his 80s, gray hair, 3-piece suit. A dignified man—He walks with cane. As he walks toward the student, everyone's thinking, how can you expect man his age to understand college kid on floor?

It takes long time to make his way to front. Pastor can't preach until elder finishes. Church is silent except for clicking of cane. All eyes are on him. Old man drops cane on floor. With great difficulty lowers himself, sits down next to Bill, & worships with him, so he won't be alone. When pastor gains control, he says, "What I'm about to preach, you'll never remember. What you've just seen, you'll never forget!"

What does it take to mark people as “not like us?”

Would Bill be welcome here?

Do we accept people with long hair or ragged clothes?

Are we ready to accept people recently released from jail; who struggle with drug or alcohol problems?

Are we ready to accept people with tattoos, piercings?

People come with needs. They may take a lot of time!

Are we willing to give time & resources—to serve people with needs?

How far are we willing to go to minister to POOR people God *has chosen to make RICH?*

Or, will **WE** go on playing favorites with powerful people?

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