

James 2:1-13 – The Sin of Preference– Part 5

1

Introduction

God is impartial and we are to be also.

In 2:1–13, James presents five features of genuine, Godlike impartiality:

- The principle (v. 1),
- The example (vv. 2–4),
- The inconsistency (vv. 5–7),
- The violation (vv. 8–11), and
- The appeal (vv. 12–13).

2

James 2:1-13

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. ² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," ⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

3

The Violation

James 2:8-10

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

Partiality is also contrary to the "royal law".

We are to show love and respect to all people. God loved us when we were in sin and rebellion and dying under the consequences of our choices. We are to love others just as God has loved us!

James warns that to break just one commandment is to stand guilty of violating the whole.

4

The Violation

James 2:11

For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

James quotes from the Ten Commandments. He chooses two of the most serious social sins which demanded the penalty of death. He chose those in order to illustrate the extreme sinfulness of partiality.

When Israel did not trust in God, but chased after false idols, God held them guilty of "**spiritual adultery**". In the same way, when one does not trust God to meet their needs but attempts to manipulate and use others, it also is spiritual adultery.

5

The Violation

James 2:11

For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

Jesus also taught in Matthew 5 that if we **hate** our brother, we are guilty of murder. If we see our brother in need and we turn our backs upon him, we have demonstrated hatred, and God holds us guilty of a heart attitude of murder. Remember that the poor man was most likely a believer so that attitude of hatred and murder is also directed towards Christ (Matthew 25:45).

6

The Violation

James 2:11

For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

People often see the law as **a series of detached commands**. The idea is that acceptance or rejection by God depends on the moral standing of the person himself. To keep a commandment is to gain credit. To break one is to incur debt.

If one does more good than bad, they are accepted by God. If the scale tilts the other way, they are rejected. **This is an unbiblical notion**. The Law stands unified. If we break just one commandment, we are guilty of violating the whole Law.

7

The Violation

James 2:11

For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

God's standard is perfection. Jesus declared, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48). God will accept nothing less. But because no sinful human can possibly attain to that perfection, God has graciously provided for our failure through the atonement of His sinless Son. (Rom. 5:1, 6, 8, 10–11).

8

The Appeal

James 2:12-13

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James appeals for believers to consider the danger of divine judgment. The goal is to renounce the sin of partiality and ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing.

To "speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" is to say, "**Live and act as a true believer** who has been saved by God's grace. Jesus' righteousness frees the believer from the law of bondage and judges him under the redeeming **law of liberty**."

9

The Appeal

James 2:12-13

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

The gospel is the **law of liberty** because it frees those who place their faith in Jesus Christ from the bondage, judgment, and punishment of sin and brings them to eternal freedom and glory. It it frees us to obey and serve God, to live faithfully by the power of His indwelling Spirit, and it frees us to follow Jesus willingly out of love rather than fear.

10

The Appeal

James 2:12-13

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

God will render to each person according to his deeds (Romans 2:6-11). One of James's major themes is that a person's real faith will be manifest in and through his works (2:26). Our choices and actions declare what we truly believe. **To judge others based on their externals shows a serious flaw in our thinking and faith!** Good works cannot produce redemption; but genuine redemption produces obedient and holy living that will be characterized by good works. **Living faith will be demonstrated by a holy life!**

11

The Appeal

James 2:12-13

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James warns that judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. In this context, the one who has shown no mercy seems to refer to unbelievers. Their lives are characterized by partiality, hardness, selfishness, and lack of concern for others. They will not be blessed or receive mercy, for they have not been merciful (Matt. 5:7).

12

The Appeal

James 2:12-13

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

“Mercy triumphs over judgment” carries the idea that mercy “glories” or “boasts” against judgment. Where mercy and judgment seem to conflict, mercy wins. The good news for every child of God in Christ is that God’s mercy toward us will triumph over His judgment of us (see Romans 8:1). Our sins may argue against us, but Christ is our loving Advocate who argues for us and prevents us from receiving the judgment we deserve. We, therefore, are to display God’s type of mercy toward others.

13

The Appeal

James 2:12-13

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James is telling us that God will judge us with mercy, and we also should judge others with mercy. Being merciful is an act that shows our thankfulness for all God has done, and it is made possible through the Holy Spirit’s indwelling.

Remember the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35

14

So What ...

Partiality is inconsistent with the Christian faith because it is contrary to the nature of God.

Partiality is inconsistent with the purpose and the plan of God in choosing the poor of this world to be spiritually rich.

Partiality is inconsistent with loving your neighbor as yourself.

Let us take time to evaluate our lives. Are we showing partiality? Jesus identifies with the outcast that He makes it plain that how we treat the “least” is how we treat Him!