

Avoiding Respect of Persons  
(Proverbs 24:23)

Introduction:

1. In Proverbs 24:23 a subject is mentioned that God requires His people to avoid -- "respect of persons" [partiality].
2. Our lesson is based on a lengthy discussion of this subject in James 2:1-13.
3. To help us understand what we are talking about, . . .

Discussion:

- I. HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS IS ILLUSTRATED IN VS.2-4
  - A. This situation involves 2 men entering a Christian worship assembly.
    1. One is a rich man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing.
    2. The other is a poor man wearing dirty clothes.
  - B. Those who have respect of persons will treat these 2 men differently.
    1. Those who are partial will give the rich man a good place to sit.
      - a. Will he be treated this way because he is a good man?
      - b. No, he is shown favoritism just because he is rich.
    2. Those who are partial will tell the poor man to stand somewhere or sit in a very lowly place.
      - a. Will he be treated this way because he is a bad man?
      - b. No, he is looked down upon just because he is poor.
  - C. Now that we know what having respect of persons is, let us consider . . .
- II. 4 REASONS WHY WE MUST AVOID HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS
  - A. First, having respect of persons is forbidden.
    1. (Proverbs 24:23) Solomon said that it *"is not good."*
    2. James 2:1 teaches Christians not to have respect of persons.
  - B. Second, having respect of persons makes no sense (vs.5-7).
    1. (vs.5) Consider how God feels toward the poor -- He has blessed them in a special way.
      - a. This does not mean that all poor people are good.
      - b. However, as a general rule, poor people are more receptive to the Gospel.
      - c. Looking down on poor people just because they are poor makes no sense.
    2. (vs.6-7) Consider how rich men have treated Christians.
      - a. Some rich men have oppressed Christians, they have drawn Christians before the judgment seats, and they have blasphemed the Lord's name.
      - b. This does not mean that all rich people are bad.
      - c. Giving preferential treatment to rich people just because they are rich does not make any sense.
  - C. Third, having respect of persons violates *"the royal law"* (vs.8-11).
    1. This *"royal law"* is identified in vs.8 -- *"love thy neighbor as thyself."*
    2. Jesus called this law the second great commandment (Matthew 22:39).
    3. Having respect of persons violates this important commandment.
  - D. Fourth, God is no respecter of persons.
    1. (Romans 2:11) *"For there is no respect of persons with God."*
    2. To be God's children, we must not be respecters of persons.
- III. HOW TO AVOID HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS (vs.12-13)
  - A. (vs.12) We are to speak and act according to *"the law of liberty."*
    1. The law of liberty emphasizes *"mercy"* over *"judgment."*
    2. According to vs.13, if we show no mercy, we will receive no mercy.
    3. (Matthew 5:7) *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."*
  - B. Additional passages:
    1. (Matthew 7:12) Practice the Golden Rule.
    2. (Matthew 7:1-2) Avoid unfair judgments.
    3. (John 7:24) Make fair and impartial judgments.

Conclusion:

1. Having respect of persons is a sin; therefore, we must avoid it.
2. Let us remember the statement that Peter made in Acts 10:28 when he went to the home of Cornelius: *"God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."*