

Respect of Persons

(Proverbs 24:23)

Introduction:

1. In Proverbs 24:23 Solomon mentioned the subject we are studying: "respect of persons."
2. He stated, *"It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment."*
3. To help us understand why it is not good to have respect of persons, we are studying the information recorded in James 2:1-13.
4. The first observation we are making is that . . .

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. Respecters of persons 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. Respecters of persons 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 IT IS NOT GOOD TO HAVE RESPECT OF PERSONS
 - A. First, having respect of persons is forbidden in Christianity (vs.1).
 - 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 concerning faith.
 - a. This does not mean that all poor people are good.
 - b. However, poor people are generally more receptive to the Gospel.
 - c. Why should poor people be looked down upon just because they are poor?
 - d. This kind of behavior does not make any 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. However, why should rich people receive preferential treatment just because they are rich?

d. This kind of behavior 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 -- *"Thou shalt 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. If we are going to be God's children, then we must not be respecters of persons.

III. HOW TO AVOID HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS

A. (vs.12) We are to speak and act according to *"the law of liberty"* (see 1:25).

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."*