

An Old Problem: Respect of Persons
(James 2:1-13)

Introduction:

1. In these verses James confronted a problem that has been around a long time -- having respect of persons [unfair judging].
2. Since this subject has received a great amount of attention recently, perhaps this is a good time for us to be reminded of these instructions.
3. The first point we need to make is that . . .

Discussion:

- I. HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS IS FORBIDDEN IN CHRISTIANITY (vs.1)
 - A. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9).
 - B. To be like God, His children must not be respecters of persons.
 - C. (vs.9) Respecters of persons transgress God's law and are guilty of sin.
- II. HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS IS ILLUSTRATED (vs.2-4)
 - A. This situation involves two men entering an assembly of Christians.
 1. One is a rich man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing.
 2. The other is a poor man wearing "*vile raiment*" [dirty clothes].
 - B. Respecters of persons will treat these men differently.
 1. Respecters of persons will give the rich man a good place to sit.
 - a. He is not treated this way because he is such a good man.
 - b. He is shown favoritism because he is rich.
 2. Respecters of persons will tell the poor man to stand or to sit in a low place.
 - a. He is not treated this way because he is such a bad man.
 - b. He is looked down upon because he is poor.
 - C. This kind of treatment shows partiality.
 1. Those guilty of such partiality are "*judges of evil thoughts.*"
 2. Rather than judge in this manner we must follow the instruction that Jesus gave in John 7:24.
- III. HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS MAKES NO SENSE (vs.5-7)
 - A. (vs.5-6a) Consider God's treatment of the poor.
 1. He has blessed the poor spiritually.
 2. This does not mean that all poor people are good.
 3. However, poor people are generally more receptive to the Gospel than rich people.
 4. Looking down upon poor people just because they are poor makes no sense.
 - B. (vs.6b-7) Consider how rich men have treated Christians.
 1. Rich men have oppressed Christians (Acts 13:50), they have drawn Christians before the judgment seats, and they have blasphemed the name of Christ.
 2. This does not mean that all rich people are bad.
 3. However, the rich are generally more antagonistic toward Christians than the poor.
 4. Showing preferential treatment to rich people just because they are rich makes no sense.
 - C. Respecters of persons demonstrate a lack of spiritual discernment.
- IV. HAVING RESPECT OF PERSONS VIOLATES THE ROYAL LAW (vs.8-13)
 - A. (vs.8) The royal law is: "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*"
 1. Jesus identified this law as the second great commandment (Matthew 22:39).
 2. This law sums up our responsibilities toward others (Romans 13:8-10).
 - B. Having respect of persons is a violation of this royal law.
 - C. (vs.12) We are to speak and act according to the law of liberty because we will be judged by it.
 1. The law of liberty emphasizes mercy over judgment (Matthew 5:7).
 2. Those who show no mercy will receive no mercy (vs.13).

Conclusion:

1. Having respect of persons is an old problem.
2. Let us learn the lesson that Peter learned (Acts 10:9-28).