

James 2:1-9

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Verse 1: “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.” In essence, James is saying that supposed “faith” in the Lord Jesus Christ and respect of persons cannot go hand in hand. The Lord is certainly not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), and neither should we be.

When we show partiality, as the example in the following verses indicates, we do not reflect the love of Christ. When we do not reflect the love of Christ, the only alternative is that we are standing for Satan.

Verses 2-4: “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing (or “fine clothes,” NKJV), and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” This is not diminishing the importance of clothing selection. The clothing we select for worship should be modest, clean, respectful, and culturally appropriate. For example, few would argue that there are right things and wrong things to wear to a funeral. Common sense dictates that certain attire is appropriate for a funeral while other attire is not. The same could be said in regard to worship.

With that said, we become guilty of the sin of partiality when we give preferential treatment to people who are dressed a certain way and less favorable treatment to others. James is plainly condemning such as “respect of persons.” Thus, we need to be careful not to give others the impression that their attendance is unwanted because of their attire.

Verses 5-7: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?” The specific kind of partiality that was taking place here was Christians preferring those with wealth over those who were poor. James explains that not only was this contrary to the will of God, but also it was contrary to common sense! The very people who were more likely to persecute Christians (the wealthy) were the ones who these Christians were showing preferential treatment! Also, there was a lack of understanding here of the fundamental truth that the poor in this life who are faithful Christians will be RICHLY BLESSED in the next (See Matt. 5:3ff).

Verses 8-9: “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.” Loving our neighbors as ourselves is included in the two greatest commands (the other being loving GOD with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, Mark 12:30). James calls this the “royal law,” and indeed royal it is! Can you imagine if everyone treated their neighbor this way? The world would be a much better place!

And yet, Christians cannot love their neighbors as themselves if they are guilty of the sin of partiality. And James does call it sin. “But if ye have respect to persons, **ye commit sin** (emphasis mine, TCG), and are convinced (or “convicted,” NKJV) of the law as transgressors.” Thus, we must ensure that we as Christians are “equal opportunity evangelizers.” We must share the love of Christ without

discrimination, and must treat others how we want to be treated. We must look at all souls as potential converts for Christ, and not be prejudiced against the poor or in favor of the rich (or other groups of people). All souls matter!