

7. WHICH FINGER HURT YOU WORST?

I remember when I was a bratty kid, and complained to my mom about not being fair. My mom sat me down and told me, "I want you to bite any of your own fingers, and tell me which one hurt you worst." In another word, she did not have favoritism between me and my older brother who was a lot smarter than me, who always took the first or second place in the entire school while I was checking out the lives of low and unintelligent students of the school. He was a pride and joy of our teachers and I was their question marks: "Are they same brothers? One is so smart, another one is next to nothing?"

To our loving and merciful God there is no favoritism, period. When it comes to skin color, financial and social status, God is an absolute fair player. People might say that they don't have favoritism, but they still do. But to our God, He doesn't have His favorite saint, from Billy Graham to Ted Bundy who killed and mutilated many girls and women.

A. R-E-S-P-E-C-T

In this portion of James, we are learning "RESPECT OF PERSONS".

It is not what we wear makes our personalities.

It is not which car we drive shows what we are inside.

It is not where we live makes what kind of mind set we have inside.

But there is tremendous difference in treatment by us or other between rich and poor. Let say, if I had an occasion to go to Ritz Carlton Hotel in Phoenix in black tux by a chauffeur driven a stretch limo to their entrance. A bell boy would hop out and open the door for me with a salute.

Another occasion, if I drive my old '86 Mitsubishi 2 door dinky car to the same hotel entrance, stop the car and step out in sweat shirt and blue jeans. I wonder what that bell boy would say to me.

There must have been a worldly element in the Judean Church, to call forth such words as these in chapter 2:1-13. So different from the way the church has started in Acts 2:45 & 4:34.

Acts 2:45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Acts 4:34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

B. CLIQUES IN THE CHURCH

James 2:1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

The Lord Christ taught that the glory of His church would be in its kindness to the poor. But evidently some of the congregations were developing into social circles where the poor were given to understanding they were not wanted. This social circle, we call "Clique" would bring division among congregation and satan will use that division to bring God's church down.

Deut. 1:17 Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it.

Lev. 19:15 *“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.*

Prov. 24:23 *These also are sayings of the wise: To show partiality in judging is not good:*

Acts 10:34 *Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism*

God loves the poor. And the rich ought to love them too.

James 2:2-4 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, 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,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Here ‘meeting’ the Greek for this term is the origin of the English word “Synagogue.” We have a tendency to judge people’s characters and spiritual condition by outward appearances.

If someone says in different tone of voice about God, or rolling up on their toes, or speaking in tongue out loud, or running around in the church and claiming that the Holy Spirit made him to do so, we are quick to think that they are highly spiritual. Even though that is not necessarily true.

Even the prophet Samuel thought the first son of Jesse was the next king after Saul because of his appearance. But God has different thing in His mind.

1 Sam 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

C. THE TRUTH AGAINST FAVORING THE RICH

James gives three arguments against showing favoritism to the rich:

- 1) The rich persecute the poor believers (5-7).
- 2) Favoritism violates the royal law of love and thus is sin (8-11).
- 3) Favoritism will be judged (12-13).

1) PERSECUTION AGAINST THE POOR BELIEVERS

James 2:5-7 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? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

Luke 6:20 Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: “Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God.

1 Cor 6:20 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

2) FAVORITISM VIOLATES THE ROYAL LAW OF LOVE AND THIS IS SIN

James 2:8-11 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; but if you show partiality,

you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 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.

What is the Royal Law? The law of love is called "royal" because it is the supreme law that is the source of all other laws governing human relationships.

In Matt 22:36-40, Jesus tells us this and as well as in Rom. 13:10 and Lev 19:18.
Matt 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Lev 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

KKK, Nazi, Skinhead, Nation of Islam, Black Panther, Adrian Brotherhood have two things in common; they are extremely selfish, they show favoritism. As a matter of fact, the founders of KKK were devout elders and deacons in their own churches. But they didn't understand the meaning of God's love for all people. When God saves Black, Asian, and Hispanic people, He didn't need their permission to save them. In Christianity, there should not be any racial prejudice, period.

Sometimes, we cater our friendship to those who are lovable or better looking or more influential. People have a tendency to flock around the people who have bucks and fame such as stars, singers, and musicians. Also isn't it true that we'd rather hang around with better looking opposite sex people than less glamorous people? We must realize that beauty is only skin deep. We need to repent from that too.

What about loving only those who are lovable? If we do only that, how are other who are not lovable going to know the love of God? No wonder the Lord says that we should love our enemy.

Favoritism brings judgement in our hearts regarding others. However, it brings the same measure of judgement right back to us in Matt 7:1-5.

How are you treating your children? Is there any difference in your treatment among your children? Please don't. You are making a terrible mistake. Look at what happened to Joseph because his father, Jacob treated him better than any other sons of his.

3) FAVORITISM WILL BE JUDGED

James 2:12-13 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

If man is merciful, God will be merciful on the day of Judgement.

Prov 21:13 Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard.

Let's stop and examine our hearts and minds now. See if there is any portion in our hearts about partiality and favoritism toward other? If we do, let's ask the Lord to forgive us for our sins and change our attitudes so that they may see the equal love of God instead of our favoritism.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Favoritism is not from God. It is from the pit of hell.

Let's not dance in the devil's tune.

2) Favoritism devices the body of Christ.

Let's not have cliques in the church.

3) Let's reach out to one another first, especially to those who are timid, lonely and hurting.

A wise preacher said, "There are hurting people in every pew. If preacher ministers to those hurting people, he will never lacks congregation."