

Favorites and Favoritism

We all have favorites. My favorite team is the Vikings, Mike's is the Packers. My son's is the Timberwolves, and my daughter's is the Lynx.

My favorite milk is chocolate, and my favorite trail is the Pacific Crest Trail. My favorite island is The Big Island, though I haven't been to Kauai yet, so I wouldn't know if that might change.

As for my favorite child... well, that depends on who is visiting me next!

We all have our favorites, but how we show it is what really matters. The fourth test that James brings for our consideration is this: **Is our love impartial?**

God's Character on Favoritism

Before diving into our main passage, let's first look at what Scripture says about God's character on this matter:

- **Deuteronomy 10:17** – *"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes."*
- **2 Chronicles 19:7** – *"Now let the fear of the Lord be on you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."*
- **Romans 2:11** – *"For God does not show favoritism."*

James then gives us five key elements to understanding favoritism:

I. The Principle (v. 1)

"My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism." – **James 2:1**

This doesn't mean treating everyone equally rude. Kindness is still one of the fruits of the Spirit. Nor does it mean withholding respect from those in authority, as Scripture is clear about honoring those in leadership. Instead, James teaches that favoritism in judgment and treatment of others is wrong.

II. The Example (v. 2-4)

"Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" – James 2:2-4

This passage challenges us to examine how we treat people, both in church and in daily life. Do we judge by outward appearance or by God's standards?

- **Proverbs 28:21** warns, *"To show partiality is not good—yet a person will do wrong for a piece of bread."*
- **Deuteronomy 15:7-11** commands generosity toward the poor, showing God's heart for those in need.

III. The Inconsistency (v. 5-7)

"Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?" – James 2:5-7

Why are the poor rich in faith? Because their lack of resources has taught them to rely on God. The wealthy often do not experience the same dependence on faith.

James reminds us that showing favoritism to the rich contradicts God's priorities.

IV. The Violation (v. 8-11)

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." – James 2:8-11

Favoritism is not a minor flaw—it is a serious sin. It reflects selfishness, not love.

- **Malachi 2:9** – *"So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law."*

- **Romans 13:10** – *"Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."*

James makes it clear: to love others is to treat them with equity, without bias.

V. The Appeal (v. 12-13)

"Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment." – **James 2:12-13**

Jesus teaches this same principle in the **Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)**. If we have received mercy, we are called to show mercy.

How will we respond?

Will we treat those who are poor or outcast with the same kindness and care we would give to our favorite movie star or athlete?

James challenges us to examine our hearts and live out our faith with impartial love.