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Apostle Walter Camp, 1st Vice President
Minister Danny Current, Dean of Christian Education
Pastor Michael Hansberry, Southern District Moderator

Rice Memorial Missionary Baptist Church

Apostle Walter F. Camp, Presiding Senior Pastor
Pastor David K. Baker III, 2nd Presiding
802 W. 15th, Little Rock, AR 72202

www.RiceMemorialBaptistChurch.org

Avoid Showing Favoritism

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828 Edition
or Roget's Thesaurus – **February 9, 2014**

James 2:1-13

Introduction: In this chapter the apostle condemns a sinful regarding of the rich, and despising the poor, which he imputes to partiality and injustice, and shows it to be an acting contrary to God, who has chosen the poor, and whose interest is often persecuted, and his name blasphemed, by the rich, James 2:1-7. He shows that the whole law is to be fulfilled, and that **mercy** should be followed, as well as **justice**, James 2:8-13.

He exposes the error and folly of those who boast of faith without works, telling us that this is but a DEAD (unproductive; bringing no gain; unprofitable) faith, and such a faith as devils have, not the faith of Abraham, or of Rahab, James 2:11-26.

(Source: *The Matthew Henry Commentary on the whole Bible* classic.studylight.org/com/mhc)

James 2:1, *My brethren, have not the **faith** of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of **glory** (honour), with **RESPECT of persons**.*

Respect of Persons defined 4382, PARTIALITY, favoritism..

PARTIALITY, n. inclination to favor one party or one side of a question more than the other; an undue bias of mind towards one party or side, which is apt to WARP the judgment. Partiality springs from the will and affections, rather than from a LOVE of truth (*This the first love. 2 Thessalonians 2:10, Revelation 2:4.*) and justice.

FAVORITISM, n. 1. The act or practice of favoring, or giving a preference to one over another. 2. The disposition (the temper or frame of mind) to favor, aid and promote the interest of a favorite, or of one person or family, or of one class of men, to the neglect of others having equal claims.

NOTE: a. The glorious faith we have, the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, should never be associated with partiality (**discrimination**). The Lord of glory Himself shows no partiality (Deuteronomy 10:17, Acts 10:34), so neither should those who put their trust in Him.
b. We do well to remember that James wrote to a very "**partial**" age, filled with **prejudice** and **hatred** based on class, ethnicity, nationality, and religious background. In the ancient world people were routinely and permanently categorized because they were Jew or Gentile, slave or free, rich or poor, Greek or barbarian, or whatever.
i. A significant aspect of the work of Jesus was to break down these walls that divided humanity, and to bring forth **ONE new race** of mankind in Him (Ephesians 2:14-15).
c. The **unity** and **openness** of the early church was an astonishment to the ancient world. But this unity didn't come automatically. As this command from James shows, the apostles had to **teach** the early church to **never** hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . with partiality.

(Source: *David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible* classic.studylight.org/com/guz)

2 Chronicles 19:5-7, And he (*Jehoshaphat*) set **judges** in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, And said to the judges, Take heed what ye **DO**: for ye **judge** not for man, but for the **Lord**, who is with you IN the **judgment**. Wherefore now let the **fear (DREAD** [reverential or respectful fear]) of the Lord be upon you; take heed and DO it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor **respect** of **persons**, nor taking of **gifts (bribe)**.

2 Samuel 23:3, The God of Israel said... **He (he, SHE, they)** that **ruleth** over men must be **JUST**, **ruling** in the **FEAR** of God.

Just defined 6662, just (in a moral sense, upright; HONEST; having principles of rectitude [exact conformity to truth]; or conforming exactly to the laws, and to principles of rectitude in social conduct; equitable [impartial, evenhanded, FAIR and aboveboard] in the distribution of justice], **righteous** [accordant to the divine law.]

Fear defined 3374, reverence (Fear mingled with respect and esteem [high value or estimation; great regard]; veneration. The fear acceptable to God, is a filial [becoming a child in relation to his parents] fear, an awful reverence of the divine nature, proceeding from a just esteem (high value) of his PERFECTIONS [infinite power, holiness, justice, benevolence and wisdom], which produces in us an inclination to his service and an unwillingness to offend him.]

Leviticus 19:15, Ye shall do no unrighteousness in **judgment**: thou shalt not **respect (to lift, spare)** the person of the POOR, nor honour the person of the **mighty (great)**: but in **righteousness** shalt thou **judge** thy neighbour.

James 2:2-4, For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in **goodly (gorgeous)** apparel, and there come in also a **poor** man in **vile (dirty, cheap or shabby)** raiment; And ye **have respect (partiality)** to him that weareth the **gay (gorgeous)** clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the **poor**, Stand thou there, or sit here **under (by)** my **footstool**: Are ye not then **partial** in yourselves, and are become **judges** OF (possession) EVIL thoughts?

NOTE: What a marvelous insight this gives into the early Christian assemblies. They were open meetings, in which men of **all classes** and conditions might enter. **Synagogue ...** This is the only place in the New Testament where this name is given for a Christian meeting place; but as Roberts said, "The literal meaning of the word had no religious connotation, being used in Genesis 1:9 for the gatherings of water." In time, however, the word came to have very definite religious overtones, John referring to "the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9). It appears from the usage of the word here that in Jerusalem, from which James presumably wrote, the Jewish name of the meeting house was currently used by **Christians** of their own meeting houses, a usage which, at that time, had no doubt already disappeared in most other places. **Gold ring ... fine clothing...** Lenski paraphrased James' thought here thus: "Are you Christians still impressed by a gold ring and a bright rag?" Deriving his information from Seneca, Barclay wrote: The more ostentatious of the ancients **wore rings** on **every finger** except the middle one, and wore far more than one on each finger. They even hired rings to wear when they wished to give an impression of special wealth.

Clement of Alexandria justified the wearing of one ring by Christians that it might be used as a seal, but said that it ought to have a religious emblem on it, such as a dove, fish or anchor. It is a very vivid picture which James brings to our minds in this passage. The Christians have assembled for worship; and suddenly there walks in this distinguished looking man with a gold ring and obviously **expensive clothes**. He creates quite a stir. Someone, one of the **ushers** perhaps, bows him into a good place; and then, when a

working man, still wearing his **work clothes**, comes in, he is told to sit on the floor or stand! Such conduct, either then or now, is disgraceful. But does it still happen? Who can deny that it does?

A number of totally **false assumptions** on the part of Christians acting in such a manner are discernible in this situation condemned by James. By such conduct, the perpetrators of this **injustice** revealed that they considered fine clothing a mark of **good character** and shabby clothes a mark of **bad character**. It showed that they considered wealth to be a guide to the **worth** of persons, that financial ability should procure a more favorable acceptance in the church, and that social and economic caste systems are allowed in the religion of Christ. All men should be thankful that James came down very hard against such **false values**.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

James 2:5-6, 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 (contemn [neglect as unworthy of regard], maltreat, dishonour)** the **poor**.

NOTE: It is true in every age, as in that of Paul, that not many mighty, not many noble are called. Again, we have this blunt paraphrase from Lenski: You acted as if this were what your Christian faith had taught you, whereas it taught you the very opposite. Look at your own numbers! How many of you would be heirs of the kingdom if God would act as you do?

There is also the **counter-productivity** of such conspicuous **partiality**. As a matter of fact, the poor visitor at church is a hundred times more likely to become a Christian than the wealthy visitor; and it is a sin against the growth of the church to exhibit the kind of **partiality** that would tend to discourage the poor.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

James 2:6, Do not **rich men oppress** you, and **draw** you before the **judgment** seats?

NOTE: It simply does not make sense for the church to dishonor the poor and to fawn upon the wealthy and powerful. As Calvin put it, "Why should a man **honor his executioners** and at the same time **injure** his **friends**?" **Do not the rich oppress you ...?** There had been countless examples of this right there in Jerusalem, where the Sadducees, the rich party of their day, were notorious oppressors of the poor. **Drag ...** "This implies force and is actually mentioned in cases of arrest in Acts 9:1; Acts 16:19, etc." **Christians** were widely **hated**, and this would have made it easier for prosecutors to seek them out and harass them. **Judgment seats ...** These were both Jewish and Roman courts. "Josephus speaks of the cruelty of the rich Sadducees to the poor in Jerusalem"; and besides this, both Isaiah (Isaiah 3:15) and Amos (Amos 4:1) speak of the same thing.

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Psalms 82:1-4, God standeth in the **congregation** of the mighty; he **judgeth** among the **gods (magistrates, judges)**. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?... Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.

Proverbs 28:3, A poor man that oppresseth the POOR is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

James 2:7, Do not they **BLASPHEME (speak evil, vilify [attempt to degrade by slander])** that worthy name by the which ye are called?

NOTE: **Do they not blaspheme that worthy name** Of Christ, or Christians; by the which ye are called? and which, as before, may design either unbelieving rich men, whether among Jews, or Gentiles, who blasphemed and cursed the name of Christ, and compelled others to do so likewise; or such who professed the Christian religion, who by their

supercilious (lofty with PRIDE; dictatorial; overbearing) and disdainful (scornful [disrespectful]) treatment of their POOR brethren, and by their dragging of them to the tribunals of the Heathens, and distressing them with vexatious **law suits** there, caused the name of Christ, after which they were called Christians, to be blasphemed and evil spoken of, among the Gentiles.

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

James 2:8-10, 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**. For whosoever shall keep the **whole** law, and yet **offend** in one point, he is guilty of **all (whole)**.

NOTE: Even Christians who willfully violate the commandments of Christ are transgressors, being breakers of **HIS LAW**. It is a gross error to refer this to keeping the Law of Moses; but of course the same principle held with reference to it. People like those **showing partiality** to the rich and powerful, through their value judgments based upon external conditions, were violating the law of **LOVE**, as taught by Jesus and his apostles. As Wessel said, "The law here is not the Old Testament law as such, but the **whole** spirit (of Christ) which is contrary to partiality."

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

James 2:11, For he that said, Do not commit **adultery**, said also, Do not **kill (do murder)**. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

NOTE: This verse is the reason, to be sure, why some insist on construing James' words in this section as a reference to the Law of Moses; but there are some considerations that forbid this. In this verse, James was clearly rebuking those who were **dishonoring** the poor man, **equating** their **conduct** with **murder**, based upon Jesus' elaboration of that command in Matt. 5:21, 22. He even reversed the order of the commandments to achieve more readily this application. Therefore, it is still the Law of Christ which James is holding before his readers. Harper agreed that James here reflects Jesus' explanation of the commandment on killing." Thus, it is no small breach which those who showed the partiality were guilty of. Their unfeeling snobbery toward the poor was exactly the same kind of **personality destruction** which Jesus **equated** with **murder**.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

James 2:12-13, So speak ye, and so **DO**, as they that shall be **judged** by the **law of liberty**. For he shall have judgment without **MERCY**, that hath shewed NO MERCY; and **MERCY** rejoiceth against (in opposition to) **judgment (condemnation, damnation)**.

NOTE: This will teach us, not only to be **just** and **impartial**, but very **compassionate** and merciful to the poor; and it will set us perfectly free from all sordid and undue regards to the rich. Observe here, 1. The gospel is called a law. It has all the requisites of a law: precepts with rewards and punishments annexed; It prescribes **duty**, as well as administers **comfort**; and Christ is a king to rule us as well as a prophet to teach us, and a priest to sacrifice and **intercede** for us. We are under the law to Christ.

Take notice here, (1.) The doom which will be passed upon impenitent **sinner**s at last will be judgment without mercy; there will be no mixtures or allays in the cup of wrath and of trembling, the dregs of which they must drink. (2.) Such as show **NO MERCY** now shall find **no mercy** in the great day. But we may note, on the other hand, (3.) That there will be such as shall become instances of the triumph of mercy, in whom mercy rejoices against judgment: all the children of men, in the last day, will be either **vessels of wrath** or **vessels of mercy**. It concerns all to consider among which they shall be found; and let us remember that blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

(Source: The Matthew Henry Commentary on the whole Bible classic.studylight.org/com/mhc/)