

James 2:1-10,(11-13),14-17

Favouritism forbidden

James continues his letter by giving a vivid example of people being treated differently in the worshipping community, with the rich and important being favoured over the poor and needy. He is stark in his declaration that showing partiality in this way falls short of God's standards. This passage also contains his famous pronouncement that faith without works is dead.



Write

Compile a list of 10 possessions that you treasure. In what circumstances would you give them to someone else and which would you find most difficult to give up? Give thanks for the things and people God has given you.

REFLECT

Think about someone at church who is a good role model. Write down a list of things about them that you like. Notice how many qualities are about the sort of person they are and not about what possessions or skills they have. Set some goals about who you want to become, not just what you want to achieve or gain.

WATCH

Watch an episode of *Rich Holiday*, *Poor Holiday* or *Rich House, Poor House* (both available on Channel 5). What do the families learn?

Bible notes



James continues his moral teaching in the Old Testament wisdom literature tradition. Believing that Jesus is the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord is the central tenet of the Jewish (and Gentile) Christians. It is what sets them free from the guilt of the Law. Yet James is not convinced that their pattern of behaviour, especially their judgement about others, matches their beliefs. Favouritism is a sin. It's neither hospitality, respect nor honour. Preferential treatment sets the culture within the assembly; it treats the unjust and their injustices as acceptable and righteous, while treating the poor, who are rich in faith and custodians of the kingdom, with disrespect and disregard. This is the opposite of Christ's intention.

James' readers understood the problem with the Law – when one element is broken, the whole system falls down. There is credit for obeying the royal law (as expressed in Mark 12:30-31), but since favouritism and prejudice are sins, they undermine the good deed. The corrosiveness and impact of favouritism and bias make them no lesser sins than adultery and murder. Therefore, they must speak and act as being accountable to God.

These verses are a test of genuine faith. James' ambition for the church is to see tangible evidence of God working through the believer and with the poor. Therefore, he challenges Paul's counsel (Galatians 3:1-9). Faith without works achieves nothing, it is dead. If we believe in Christ, we must show it through our lives.

First impressions

- What kinds of people do you tend to ignore?
- Is your head ever turned by riches or beauty?
- What one thing could you do today to 'love your neighbour as yourself'?



A prayer for all ages together

Lord Jesus Christ,
we pray for faith in you,
love for others
and equality in the world.
Help us work to show your glory. Amen.



LISTEN



Listen to 'The Golden Rule' by Nick and Becky Drake, on *Worship for Everyone*. Consider if this really is the 'golden rule' for your household.