

What Are You Looking At? James 2:1-4 (NKJV)

1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 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, 3 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," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Have you ever heard of the ugly laws that were passed in many cities across the USA in the late 19th century. It was illegal if you were ugly and deformed from being on the street in many of these cities.

One reason was that beggars were populating the streets in hope of cashing in on their disability. And many did. Some who were blind, when arrested and brought to court could suddenly see. Another case of a beggar arrested and brought to court took \$80 dollars from his pocket to pay his fine.

There were stories like the one of a blind organ grinder who, when arrested, was found with \$710 on him and was said to treat his "lady friends" to car rides and cafe luncheons.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-ugly-laws-disabilities-chicago-history-f-lashback-perspec-0626-md-20160622-story.html>

Eventually when WW1 veterans came home for the war with terrible injuries the feelings of people began to change. And the last ugly law was repealed in Chicago in 1974.

Well it is nice to know that Christians would never do anything like that. Or would they.

You see the trouble with Christians is that they are sinners just like everyone else and although they have been born again they still have parts of the old nature that die hard.

And being partial is one of those that seem to hang on and on.

James addresses that issue in our text today. And it is something that we all need to take note of.

- I. Partiality has no place in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.
 - A. First because Jesus showed none himself.
 - 1. It was the Jewish law.
 - a. Leviticus 19:15 (NKJV)
 - (1) 15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.
 - 2. Look at who Jesus spent time with.

- a. It made no difference to Jesus whether the one to whom He spoke or ministered was a wealthy Jewish leader or a common beggar, a virtuous woman or a prostitute, a high priest or a common worshiper, handsome or ugly, educated or ignorant, religious or irreligious, law-abiding citizen or criminal. *John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – James, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 98.*
 - b. After all, when the Lord Jesus came into the world, **He wasn't a rich man's boy**; He wasn't born with a silver spoon in His mouth. He was born in poverty. He was born in a borrowed stable. He had to borrow loaves and fishes from a little lad to feed the crowd. He spoke from a borrowed boat. He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (see Matt. 8:20). He had to borrow a coin to illustrate a truth. He borrowed a donkey to ride into Jerusalem. He borrowed a room to celebrate the Passover. He died on a borrowed cross—it belonged to Barabbas, not to Him. They put Him in a borrowed tomb—it belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. *J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary: The Epistles (James), electronic ed., vol. 53 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 52–54.*
3. Pharisees and prostitutes
- a. Luke 7:39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw [this], he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman [this is] who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."
4. Rich people and beggars
- a. Unlike those good Christian people of the late 19th century in our country beggars were an accepted part of Jewish life.
 - b. But Jesus saw them all the same.
 - c. They were all sinners made of flesh and bones.
 - d. They all had the same basic needs.
 - e. And each was vulnerable to the same human frailties.
 - f. In this world a beggar might become rich and a rich man might become a beggar.
5. Jews and Gentiles
- a. Jesus healed the daughter of the syrophenician women.
 - b. And the centurion's servant.

(1) Matthew 8:5-13 (NKJV)

(a) 5 Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, 6 saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." 7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! 11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

c. Jews & Gentiles were not so much a racial division as a difference in a covenantal relationship.

d. As far as God is concerned there is but one race, the human race.

(1) Acts 17:26 "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

6. And He is the Lord of glory.

a. The phrase our glorious Lord Jesus Christ is, more literally, "our Lord Jesus Christ of the glory," perhaps referring to God's Shechinah glory (see Ex. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11), the history of which James's Jewish readers would have been very familiar. *John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – James, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 97.*

b. Psalm 24:

(1) 8 Who [is] this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He [is] the King of glory. Selah

- B. Then those who claim to be followers of Jesus cannot have standards that Jesus did not have.
 - 1. The Church was the only place in the ancient world where social distinctions did not exist. *William Barclay, Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "The Peril of Snobbery Within the Church (Jas 2:2-4)".*
- C. We are to be like Him especially in this.
 - 1. The idea is that we cannot hold the faith of Jesus Christ, who is the very presence and glory of God, and be partial. *John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – James, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 97.*
- D. Like our language and our giving it is a measure of our spirituality.

II. An Example

- A. Two men one rich the other poor come to the same church but receive very different welcomes.
- B. The one has gold rings the other dressed in rags and dirty clothing.
 - 1. Now the wealthy back then wore several rings on several fingers so that no one would miss it.
 - 2. The rich man in Luke 16 faired sumptuously every day.
 - 3. While the beggar full of sores laid outside the rich man's gate hoping to receive something to eat.
- C. How are they each received.
 - 1. Maybe we shake the one's hand regardless of the corona virus outbreak.
 - 2. The other we would not shake their hand if we had on surgical gloves.
- D. In the world we would expect that the one would be gladly received while the other would be received but not with the same enthusiasm.
- E. But not so in one of the Lord's Churches.
 - 1. If you go the bank they are going to check your credit rating.
 - 2. If you join the country club you may need to meet certain requirements.

3. But to enter this place all you need is to be a sinner.
4. And to be a part of the church you need to be a sinner saved by grace.

In a diatribe against Christians written in a.d. 178, the Roman philosopher Celsus attacked Christians to a large extent simply because most of them were poor and uneducated. He severely criticized the commonness of believers, portraying them as vulgar, "like a swarm of bats or ants creeping out of their nests, or frogs holding a symposium amid a swamp, or worms in a convention in a corner of mud." *John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – James, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 100.*

Proverbs 30:8 (NKJV)

8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me;

Acts 10:34-35 (NKJV)

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Romans 2:9-11 (NKJV)

9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.

John 7:24 (NKJV)

24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

1 Timothy 5:20-21 (NKJV)

20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. 21 I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.