

## The Evil of Favoritism Pt 1

### James 2:1-13

James 2:1–13 (NKJV)

**2** My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality. <sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> 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,” <sup>4</sup> have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

<sup>5</sup> 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? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? <sup>7</sup> Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

<sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*” you do well; <sup>9</sup> but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet

stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

## **Introduction**

We have a natural tendency to think of sin in terms of degrees. In other words, some sins are worse than others. Although all sin is equally offensive to God, not all sin is alike, and this is true. I would much rather someone hate me than too actually murder me. Yet the Bible says that if a man hates his brother, he has murdered him in his heart. And it says that if a man lust after another woman, he has committed adultery in his heart. And it is here, in text like these, that God is making it clear, that sin is sin, and although we may have a tendency to lessen the severity of our sin, God sees our sin as severe as murder or adultery. In these text, he is not saying that if you hate, you have

literally murdered someone and now they are dead. He is elevating the sin of hate to how God perceives it.... just like murder.

We would all agree that sin is evil, but we may not all agree as to how evil sin is. Herein lies the danger of the subtle nature of sin.... It is extremely deceptive and has a built in desensitizer. The more you commit it the easier it gets. Sin swims in a cesspool of lies and deception. The more a person or a society participates in sin or sinful attitudes, the more normalized it becomes and less offensive it will remain.

A good example of this in our society is the sin of favoritism or partiality or prejudice. Our culture is saturated in this. We consistently make wrong judgments on external appearance and our society adds fuel to this fire by making everything about the outside and not the heart or soul of a person. You are considered valuable if you are successful, wealthy, and educated. You have meaning if you are popular and have many friends on Facebook or followers on social media. If you live simply on the lesser things of life and don't have the nice house, the new car and the nice things, you are looked at as less important, and your opinion is worthless. Ours is a culture of the "Outside". We are more concerned of what you look like than who you are.

We are more concerned with beauty of the body than the purity of the heart.

We spend enormous amounts of time putting lipstick on our pigs, only to have them eventually return to the mud.

Our is a society of the superficial and simple minded with no depth or appreciation of the real nature of things.

Our sins of envy and pride have so overwhelmed us that all we can see is the external. We are as a culture a populace of judges with no scales to determine truth and no eyes to see past the exterior.

And recently we have see the sin of favoritism and partiality come raging into our society in the form of Social Justice and Critical Race Theory. It has veiled favoritism in the form of victims. It has made the determination of the value of a person based on there race, gender or even immoral minority. Positions are filled and choices are made depending on how much intersectionality you have, or how much of a victim you are.

So to make they clear, if a position in a company or in some cases even a church is offered. The main determination will not be whether or not the person is qualified to fill and fulfill the requirements of that position but whether they are

minority race, or minority gender, or a immoral minority. The favoritism is purely external.

And honestly, I don't expect it to be any other way for a fallen human race. We are sinners and as sinners it is a natural thing to act this way and live this way.

But when it comes to the church. The redeemed of Jesus Christ. The sinners saved by grace and delivered from the wrath to come. There should be a noticeable difference. No people on this planet can understand more the amazing nature of salvation than the one who knows that, there was nothing inside him or outside him that made God save him.

“Nothing in my hand I bring, only to thy cross I cling.”

Every saved sinner, has had his pride trampled. His self sufficiency destroyed and all his sin exposed before His God and Savior. He comes to Christ as a destitute beggar with nothing to give, nothing to offer and nothing to see. He is utterly worthless, defiled and corrupt, internally and externally and he knows that if God is to save him. He will have to be God who shows no partiality and is not a God who shows favoritism.

And that is exactly what the Bible teaches and sinners experience in salvation. A God who is not Partial, a God who shows NO favoritism.

When we think of God, we often think in terms of His characteristics of Grace and Mercy. Love and Faithfulness. Kindness and Benevolence. We think in terms of Justice and Holiness. Wrath and Vengeance, we might say God is a Omnipotent Omniscience, Omnipresent God. Or that he is Immutable and impeccable, but do we think at all about God as an impartial God.

Sin and Evil are the antithesis of the character of God who is holy and righteous and pure.

And Favoritism is the absolute opposite of God.

If you are a person who is prejudice or partial, you are an infinite distance away from God. You are the antithesis of God, You are evil.

I started out discussing the degrees of sin and how God sees sin and too often we don't see the sin of favoritism or prejudice as evil as it really is. It is as much the opposite of the character of God as Evil is to his Holiness.

It is expected of the fallen lost sinner to act this way, His father is the devil.

But for a believer to act this way, is contrary to the God who lives in him, and contradicts his calling

and is a reflection of his lack appreciation for how God saved him.

The Bible is clear that God is a God of impartiality

Deuteronomy 10:17–18 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> For the Lord your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. <sup>18</sup> He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.

Job 34:19 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> Yet He is not partial to princes,  
Nor does He regard the rich more than the poor;  
For they *are* all the work of His hands.

And God expected His people Israel to show no partiality

Deuteronomy 1:17 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment *is* God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.'

Deuteronomy 15:7–11 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> “If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, <sup>8</sup> but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. <sup>9</sup> Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin among you. <sup>10</sup> You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. <sup>11</sup> For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.’”

Deuteronomy 16:19 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.

Leviticus 19:15 (NKJV)



<sup>15</sup> ‘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.

King Jehoshaphat of Judah reminded the judges he had just appointed

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 94). Moody PrESS.

2 Chronicles 19:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care and do *it*, for *there is* no iniquity with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.”

Proverbs 24:23 (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> These *things* also *belong* to the wise:  
*It is* not good to show partiality in judgment.

Proverbs 28:21 (NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> To show partiality *is* not good,  
Because for a piece of bread a man will  
transgress.

Malachi 2:9 (NKJV)

9 “Therefore I also have made you contemptible  
and base  
Before all the people,  
Because you have not kept My ways  
But have shown partiality in the law.”

## **God is impartial in Salvation**

Acts 10:24–35 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. <sup>26</sup> But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” <sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. <sup>28</sup> Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?”

<sup>30</sup> So Cornelius said, “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, <sup>31</sup> and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. <sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.’ <sup>33</sup> So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.

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

### **God is impartial in His Sentence**

Romans 2:9–11 (NKJV)

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

## 1 Peter 1:17 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear;

## **We are expected to be impartial in Society**

### John 7:24 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> **Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."**

### Ephesians 6:5–19 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup> not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, <sup>7</sup> with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.

<sup>9</sup> And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

So it is clear, from the Old and New Testament that God considers favoritism a grievous sin. It is contrary to His character. It is the opposite of just and righteous and is not to be tolerated or practice among the people of God. It is contrary to the population of Heaven. Heaven is made up of the poor, ignoble, the humble, the unpopular, the rejected, the scorned, and the persecuted.

### 1 Corinthians 1:26–29 (NKJV)

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. <sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, <sup>29</sup> that no flesh should glory in His presence.

The church that practices favoritism is a church that is acting opposite of Heaven and is not a reflection of Christ but rather a mirror image of evil and the devil.

This is why James hits this so hard. The Jewish community had for so long made everything external and the separation of the Jews and the Greeks had fed this mentality. The Jew rested in his Jewishness and believe he was favored by God because he was a Jew. The Pharisee would practice that Gods favor was gained by external obedience and Gods blessing was seen in riches and God's curse was seen in affliction and suffering.

## **Lesson**

*I. The Command*

*II. The Context*

*III. The Concern*

### **I. The Command**

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

My brethren,—He is talking to the Jewish Christian church.

James 1:1–2 (NKJV)

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the **twelve tribes** which are scattered abroad:  
Greetings.

<sup>2</sup> **My brethren**, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

James is addressing the visible body of believers and instruction them on what is expected of a genuine Christian. Some see the book of James like the book of First John. That is, a series of test for the nature of true saving faith. Although there are a number of prohibitive and correctives given by James to this group of professing believers, it would be expected in there sanctification that corrections in behavior would be made in an act of repentance.

But also, if someone does not see the needs or have the desire to correct their actions or attitudes, He warns of being deceived.

Regarding ones response to trials and temptations,  
James says

James 1:16 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Regarding ones response to the Word of God,  
James says

James 1:22 (NKJV)

<sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only,  
deceiving yourselves.

Regarding ones use of his tongue and pure religion  
James says,

James 1:26 (NKJV)

<sup>26</sup> If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and  
does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own  
heart, this one's religion *is* useless.

Later in chapter 2:14—

He warns of the a faith that does not have works, or  
a faith that doesn't save.

And now, sandwiched between not being decieved  
and having true saving faith that produces works, is  
a corrective passage on favoritism. Something that  
is contrary to Christianity and saving faith.

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



do not hold the faith — Pres. Imperative with the negation ‘μὴ’ — can be translated as prohibitive — don't do this or a corrective — stop doing this..

I personally believe, because of the context of the Jewish nature of the letter and the culture that this is a corrective. They had acted with favoritism and James got word of it and is telling them to Stop it.

*The space that James devotes to this matter in his letter suggests that discrimination was a problem among his readers*

Moo, D. J. (2000). [The letter of James](#) (p. 99). Eerdmans; Apollos.

*Goodspeed renders it, “Do you try to combine faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with acts of partiality?”<sup>4</sup> Songer holds that James’s diatribe style “makes it more likely that the verse is a question.”*

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 132). BMH Books.

Most interpreters agree that the imperative is more probable. The imperative, which is found in all ancient versions, is more forceful and in keeping with James’s hortatory style. If the verse is a question, the *gar*, “for,” not in NIV, of verse 2 is more difficult to explain. Also, if the verse is a question, the negative *mē*, implying a “no” answer, is ironic since James in verse 6 emphatically asserts their guilt. It is best to take the verse as an imperative, demanding that they terminate all further practices of partiality. The second person plural (*echete*) confronts the readers directly with this demand.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 132). BMH Books.

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

**with partiality**— is last translation here, but in the Greek, it is placed emphatically forward in the sentence. (The ESV translates it this way)

The original order calls attention to this evil with peculiar pungency.

**Original Word:** προσωποληψία, ας, ἡ

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Feminine

**Transliteration:** prosópolémpsia

**Phonetic Spelling:** (pros-o-pol-ape-see'-ah)

**Definition:** respect of persons

**Usage:** partiality, favoritism.

This compound noun that literally means “a receiving of face” — — (and is plural, “acts of receiving face or favoritism” mine) is based on the Septuagint rendering of a Hebrew phrase meaning “to lift up the face” (Lev 19:15; Ps. 82:2). The compound noun does not occur in secular Greek or the Septuagint and is apparently a term developed early in the Christian church. It came to be a well-known term to denote the partiality of a judge raising the face of someone to his unjust advantage. It denotes “a biased judgment based on external

circumstances such as rank, wealth, or race, disregarding the intrinsic merit of the person involved.” This was a common failing of Oriental judges, and the Old Testament strictly prohibited it (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 2 Chron. 19:6–7; Prov. 24:23). The early church, with its strong sense of justice and personal worth, was keenly aware of this evil practice.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 132). BMH Books.

the single Greek word *prosōpolēmpsia*, which has the literal meaning of lifting up someone’s face, with the idea of judging by appearance and on that basis giving special favor and respect. It pertains to judging purely on a superficial level, without consideration of a person’s true merits, abilities, or character. It is both interesting and significant that this word, along with the related noun *prosōpolēmptēs* (see Acts 10:34, “partiality”) and the verb *prosōpolēmpteō* (see James 2:9, “show partiality”) are found only in Christian writings. Perhaps that is because favoritism was such an accepted part of most ancient societies that it was assumed and not even identified, as it still is in many cultures today.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 98). Moody Press.

This condemnation of “respect of persons” does not prohibit the recognition of factual distinctions between people, or showing honor and respect to those to whom it is justly due (1 Pet. 2:17)

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 133). BMH Books.

We are not saying that position of esteem should not be honored. We are not saying that we would not honor the kind, or esteem those who rule over you. or that we should not give honor where

honor is due and respect where respect is due. But we are talking about showing favoritism only because of external appearance.

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

τὴν πίστιν τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ  
the faith, not just the act of believing, but the entire body of faith. The content of our faith.

James is saying, stop holding, possessing, having the faith, the truth of our relation with the Lord Jesus. with partiality.

In other words, stop identifying the faith that saves with the sin of favoritism. It is totally inconsistent with grace and mercy and God's sovereign choice in salvation. It is acting opposite of what the faith teaches. It is opposite the character of God.

It is akin to what Peter says in  
1 Peter 1:14–17 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as in your ignorance*; <sup>15</sup> but as He

who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, <sup>16</sup> because it is written, “*Be holy, for I am holy.*”

<sup>17</sup> And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear;

If you are going to claim to be a christian, and claim to know the God of Heaven and have a relationship with Jesus Christ, then act like you should. Since God is holy, you be holy. Since God is not partial then you stop being this way.

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

“Lord Jesus Christ” is, of course, a common combination of titles in the NT; but nowhere else is the word “glory” added to the series

Moo, D. J. (2000). [The letter of James](#) (p. 100). Eerdmans; Apollos.

τὴν πίστιν τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ **τῆς δόξης.**

There are as many attempts to interpret what is meant by the last 2 words “the glory” as there are commentators. The last 7 words of the greek text are all genitives and trouble is how to best attribute the word Glory.

Without taking you through all of the details, I believe it is best to be understood in 3 possible ways. **First**, as an attributive genitive describing the phrase, “our Lord Jesus Christ” the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, or **second**, that Jesus Christ is the Glory of God.

John 1:14 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

Hebrews 1:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, ....

Titus 2:13 (NASB95)

13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

Or third,

Describing Jesus as *the Lord of glory* suggests particularly the heavenly sphere to which he has been exalted and from which he will come at the end of history to save and to judge (cf. Jas. 5:9). This reminder is particularly appropriate in a situation where Christians are giving too much “glory” to human beings.

Moo, D. J. (2000). [\*The letter of James\*](#) (p. 101). Eerdmans; Apollos.

All of these would fit well with the emphasis that James is making. There is only one who is due glory and honor, and you are giving it to the wrong person. The rich who come into your assembly.

The idea is that we cannot hold the faith of Jesus Christ, who is the very presence and glory of God, and be partial. Jesus Himself was impartial (Matt. 22:16), as indicated by His humble birth, family, and upbringing in Nazareth, and His willingness to

minister in Samaria and Galilee, regions held in contempt by the Jewish leaders.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 97). Moody Press.

During His incarnation, Jesus was the glory and image of God in human form (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:4, 6; Phil. 2:6) and, like His Father, He showed no favoritism, a virtue even His enemies acknowledged. 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. His overriding concern was the condition of the soul. One day, John assures believers, “we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2). And while we are on earth, we should act just as He did when He was on earth.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 98). Moody Press.

## I. The Command



## II. The Context

<sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> 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,”

**2** For if there should [come into your **assembly** a man

ἐὰν γὰρ — for- explains why he has made the command in verse 1

IF — introduces a hypothetical situation that was really not hypothetical. This has happened and will happen again.

*To better appreciate James’s emphasis in this passage, it is necessary to understand that the vast majority of early converts to Christianity were Jewish and poor. If they were not already, many suddenly became poor when, because of their faith, they were ostracized from their families and society, so that a*

*husband and father lost his job or a wife and mother was thrown out of the house without anything but the clothes on her back. There was intense hatred of fellow Jews who converted to Christianity. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul asked believers there to consider the fact that among them “there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble” (1 Cor. 1:26).*

*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.”*

*Immediately after Pentecost, the absence of partiality was evident: “All those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need” (Acts 2:44–45). These needs came about as Jerusalem Jews were alienated by the new believers’ faith in Christ and as pilgrims who had come for Passover and Pentecost and remained had no sources of income. A short while later, Luke*

*reports, “For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:34–37).*

*Still later, as persecution caused many believing Jews to lose their jobs and become ostracized by families and friends, the need for food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities increased to a critical point. One consequence was that, “while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food” (Acts 6:1). That practical need led the church to choose godly men to oversee the food distribution. That allowed the apostles to devote themselves “to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (v. 4).*

*There were, of course, a number of early Christians who were wealthy. One was Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, the high Jewish Council and a secret disciple of Jesus, who*

*gained Pilate's approval to bury Jesus in his own new tomb. Nicodemus, another secret disciple, and also a prominent and wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, helped Joseph by providing myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus for burial (John 19:38–40). The Ethiopian eunuch who was converted under the ministry of Philip was a court official and treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia and consequently very wealthy (see Acts 8:26–38). The Roman centurion Cornelius was another prominent Gentile convert and was obviously a man of some means (see Acts 10), as was Sergius Paulus, a proconsul (13:7, 12). Also financially well-off were Lydia, a “seller of purple fabrics” (16:14), many of the “God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women” (17:4) converted in Thessalonica (v. 1), the Jewish tent-makers Aquila and Priscilla (18:1–3), as well as the Gentile Titius Justus (v. 7) and Crispus, the leader of the synagogue in Corinth (v. 8). Writing to Timothy in Ephesus, Paul said, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17).*

*But as already noted, most early believers were poor, especially those in Judea, a condition that would be made much worse by a famine. Luke*

*reports that “in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul [Paul] to the elders” (Acts 11:29–30). Even poor believers gave as generously as they could to help their brothers and sisters in Christ who were perhaps even worse off than they. Paul writes of “the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality” (2 Cor. 8:1–2). All through Scripture, the poor are objects of God’s special concern (Lev. 25:25, 35–37, 39; Pss. 41:1; 68:10; 72:4, 12; Prov. 17:5; 21:13; 28:27; 29:7; 31:9, 20; Isa. 3:14–15; 10:1–2; 25:4; Gal. 2:10).*

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 100–102). Moody Press.

**assembly** Original Word: συναγωγή, ἡς, ἡ

The term is the well-known designation for a Jewish congregation or group meeting for worship (Matt. 4:23; Acts 17:1). The compound noun, composed of *sun*, “together,” and *agō*, “to lead or bring,” basically means a gathering together and may denote either

the people gathered together (Acts 6:9) or the place of assembly (Luke 7:5). Here the reference is to the place of assembly, as is evident from the mention of assigned seats. The readers are Christians (1:1; 2:1), and the pronoun “your” makes clear that it is not a non-Christian Jewish synagogue, since the readers are viewed as being in control of arrangements. At the time when James wrote, the Jewish Christians apparently continued to speak of their place of assembly as their “synagogue,” so James used the term that would be most familiar to them. Early Christian literature shows that the term was used at times of Christian assemblies, but from 5:14 it is clear that Christians also used the word “church.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 135–136). BMH Books.

## **Man #1 The Rich Man**

**2** For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel,

with gold rings,

from

**chrusos: gold**

**Original Word:** χρυσός, οὐ, ὁ

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Masculine

**Transliteration:** chrusos

**Phonetic Spelling:** (khroo-sos')

**Definition:** gold

**Usage:** gold, anything made of gold, a gold coin.

Cognate: 5557 xrysós (a masculine noun) – gold, used also as a symbol of profound purchasing power ("potential acquisition").

See 5553 (xrysiōn).

**ktulos: a finger**

**Original Word:** δάκτυλος, ου, ὁ

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Masculine

**Transliteration:** daktulos

**Phonetic Spelling:** (dak'-too-los)

**Definition:** a finger

**Usage:** a finger.

*Chrusodaktulios (with a gold ring) literally means “gold-fingered,” and could indicate the person was wearing more than one ring. It was a common practice among well-to-do people of that day, both Jews and Gentiles, to wear numerous rings on their fingers as marks of wealth and social status.*

*The Roman statesman and philosopher Seneca wrote, “We adorn our fingers with rings and we*

*distribute gems over every joint”* (cited in William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], 75).

*The term does not suggest just one ring but rather a finger laden with gold rings. The wearing of a ring was customary among the Jews (Luke 15:22), but in Roman society, the wealthy wore rings on their left hand in profusion. A sign of wealth, rings were worn with great ostentation. There were even shops in Rome where rings could be rented for a special occasion. No doubt this ostentatious practice also spread to the provinces and would be known to James’s readers. The practice of wearing rings as a manifestation of luxury and display invaded the churches. Clement of Alexandria (c. 155–c. 220) in his *Paidagogos* felt it necessary to urge Christians to wear only one ring because it was needed for purposes of sealing. The *Apostolic Constitutions* (c. 381) warned Christians against fine clothing and rings, since these were all signs of lasciviousness.*

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 136). BMH Books.



*It was doubtless because that practice was common in some churches that the second-century Church Father Clement of Alexandria admonished Christians to wear no more than one ring and that one should depict a dove, fish, anchor, or other Christian symbol* (Barclay, 75).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 102). Moody Press.

in fine apparel,

**Fine** translates *lampros*, which literally means “bright,” or “brilliant.” It is used of the “gorgeous robe” that Herod and his soldiers mockingly placed on Jesus before they sent Him to Pilate (Luke 23:11) and of the “shining garments” of the angel who appeared to Cornelius as he was praying (Acts 10:30).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 102–103). Moody Press.

James 2:2 (LSB)

2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in bright clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

This would have been an attention getter. A noticeably wealthy man comes into the assembly

and he has dollar sign emanating from him. They are coming off him like steam from a hot drink.

The majority of your congregation are poor, dirt poor. living paycheck to paycheck and having more month than pay check.

The temptation is obvious. To treat him well in hopes that he will treat you well.

so you say

**3** and you **pay attention** to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,”

### **pay attention**

Original Word: ἐπιβλέπω

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** epiblepó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (ep-ee-blep'-o)

**Definition:** to look on (with favor)d.\

1914 epiblepō (from 1909 /epí, "on, fitting" intensifying 991 /blépō, "look, fix the eyes upon") – properly, look upon with focused attention; give special regard to (apt consideration), as the sight moves the beholder. 1914 /epiblepō ("to regard, respect") suggests a favorable viewing – a

"preferred" noticing, giving special attention ("to notice especially," L & N, 1, 24.12).

The second person plural verb makes clear that the eyes of the congregation were fixed admiringly upon this visitor

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 137). BMH Books.

(The repeated article with the adjective, “the clothes, the shining,” stresses his striking appearance. The repeated reference to his clothes underlines that their favorable response was prompted solely by his external appearance, “only the outward and the perishing attracting attention.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 137). BMH Books.

**3** and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,”

In most synagogues of that day, there were only a few benches to sit on, perhaps one or two in the front—the “chief seats in the synagogues” that the scribes and Pharisees coveted (Matt. 23:6)—and

possibly some others placed around the walls. Most of the people either stood or sat cross-legged on the floor. Occasionally, someone would also have a **footstool**. MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 103). Moody Press.

“and say” (*eipēte*). The second person plural verb does not mean that it was the verbal response of the entire group, but that the speaker well expressed their united sentiment. The speaker is left unidentified. It is possible that he was the group’s leader or someone appointed to meet visitors—perhaps a deacon. The fourth-century Apostolic Constitutions ordered that the bishop should place the deacons in charge of seating the people and directed that if the service already was in progress, the bishop would not interrupt the service to direct a rich visitor to “an upper place

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 137). BMH Books.

The use of the emphatic personal pronoun (*su*) directs the invitation to him personally. He is asked

to be seated, while “here” points out the place to him.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 137). BMH Books.

So because he is wealthy, you give him the prominent and preeminent place. A place of esteem, respect and honor.

Now to be clear, there is nothing wrong with giving a visitor to your assembly a place of honor treating them respectfully. That is into the sin.. We are to give honor to whom honor is due. But that is not what happens here. This sin is found in how they respond to

## Man # 2 The Poor Man.

**2** ..... and there should also come in a **poor** man in **filthy** clothes, **3** ..... and say to the **poor** man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,”

### **poor**

**Original Word:** πτωχός, ή, όν

**Part of Speech:** Adjective

**Transliteration:** ptóchos

**Phonetic Spelling:** (pto-khos')

**Definition:** (of one who crouches and cowers, hence) beggarly, poor

**Usage:** poor, destitute, spiritually poor, either in a good sense (humble devout persons) or bad.

4434 ptōxós (from ptōssō, "to crouch or cower like a beggar") – properly, bent over; (figuratively) deeply destitute, completely lacking resources (earthly wealth) – i.e. helpless as a beggar.

4434 (ptōxós) relates to "the pauper rather than the mere peasant, the extreme opposite of the rich" (WP, 1, 371).

## filthy

**Original Word:** ῥυπαρός, ἄ, ὄν

**Part of Speech:** Adjective

**Transliteration:** rhuparos

**Phonetic Spelling:** (rhoo-par-os')

**Definition:** filthy

**Usage:** filthy, defiled, dirty.

**Cognate:** 4508 rhyparós (an adjective, derived from 4509 /rhýpos, "moral filth") – filthy, foul (used only in Js 2:2). See 4509 (rhypos).

## From

4509 rhýpos (a masculine noun) – properly, "grease-filth," soiling all it touches; (figuratively) uncleanness that results from doing what is morally unfit, i.e. what is unacceptable because (morally) filthy (LS).

**3** ..... and say to the **poor** man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"

He is given a choice, but either alternative reveals indifference to his comfort or feelings. The speaker is inclined to order the man to stand “over there” in an inconspicuous place, or, if he prefers to sit, he can take a place “on the floor by my feet” (*hupo to hupopodion*, literally “under my footstool”). The alternative for him is to sit cross-legged on the floor. If the reference to his “footstool” is taken literally, the words imply that “the speaker has a footstool as well as a good seat.” Then the stool is not even offered to the poor man; he is told curtly to sit “under [hupo] my footstool,” not underneath it but beside it on the floor  
 Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 137–138). BMH Books.

Occasionally, someone would also have a **footstool**. To ask another person, especially a visitor or guest, to **sit down by my footstool** was therefore a double show of disrespect. The person on a bench or in a chair not only would not give that seat to the visitor but would not even allow him to sit on his **footstool**.  
 MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 103). Moody Press.

*I. The Command*

*II. The Context*

### III. The Concern

**4** have you not **shown partiality** among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

James 2:4 (LSB) ESV NASB

4 have you not **made distinctions** among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

**diakrinó:** to distinguish, to judge

**Original Word:** διακρίνω

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** diakrinó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (dee-ak-ree'-no)

**Definition:** to distinguish, to judge

**Usage:** I separate, distinguish, discern one thing from another; I doubt, hesitate, waver.

1252 diakrínō (from 1223 /diá, "thoroughly back-and-forth," which intensifies 2919 /krínō, "to judge") – properly, investigate (judge) thoroughly – literally, judging "back-and-forth" which can either (positively) refer to close-reasoning (discrimination) or negatively



"over-judging" (going too far, vacillating). Only the context indicates which sense is meant.

[1252 (diakrínō) "literally means, 'to separate throughout or wholly' (dia, 'asunder,' krinō, 'to judge,' from a root kri, meaning 'separation'), then, to distinguish, decide" (Vine, Unger, White, NT, 125).]

Among Christians, such discrimination is much more than poor hospitality; it is plainly **evil**. Of the three words James uses for **evil** (see 1:21, *kakia*, "wickedness"; and 3:16, *phaulos*, "evil"), the one used here and in 4:16 (*ponēros*) is the strongest, carrying the idea of vicious intentions that have a destructive and injurious effect.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 103). Moody Press.

"evil" (*ponērōn*), having the ethical quality of ....evil that exhibits the character of the one who practices it.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 139). BMH Books.

**4** have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil [thoughts](#)?

**dialogismos: a reasoning**

**Original Word:** [διαλογισμός](#), οὐ, ὁ

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Masculine

**Transliteration:** dialogismos

**Phonetic Spelling:** (dee-al-og-is-mos')

**Definition:** a reasoning

**Usage:** a **calculation, reasoning, thought, movement of thought, deliberation, plotting.**

Cognate: 1261 dialogismós (from 1260 /dialogízomai, "back-and-forth reasoning") – reasoning that is self-based and therefore confused – especially as it contributes to reinforcing others in discussion to remain in their initial prejudice. [See 1260](#) (dialogizomai).

Romans 15:5–7 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Romans 5:8–10 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ....

<sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more,

having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.