

INTRODUCTION

1. Tonight we are looking again at the one another's found in the New Testament.
2. We have already considered, loving one another, bearing one another's burdens, submitting to one another, being devoted to one another, giving preference to one another, praying for one another, and being kind to one another.
3. Tonight we're considering a seventh one another and it is found in Romans 12:16.
4. Paul is writing to the believers at Rome.
5. He has just given them eleven chapters of doctrine and now he urges them in chapter 12 to make their bodies living sacrifices for the glory of God.¹
6. To do that, he says in verses 1-2 they must offer bodily dedication, avoid worldly contamination, for them to achieve godly transformation.
7. As he moves into the second section to this chapter, verses 3-21, he focuses on the believer and his service.

¹H. L. Willmington, *The Outline Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999). Ro 12.

8. He tells them in verse 3 to be honest in their estimation of themselves.
9. That is, not “to think more highly of [themselves] than [they] ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment” (v.3) because we are members of one another.
10. In verses 4-8 he reveals the diversity of the body through the gifts the Holy Spirit gives and then gives guidelines in verses 9-21 on how to deal with friendships and with enemies.
11. In dealing with friends, he says they are to love and honor them (vv.9-10), show them their zeal and joy (vv.11-12), share with them (v.13), mourn and weep with them (v.15), and live in harmony with them (v.16).
12. If their love is to be “without hypocrisy” then they are to “be devoted to one another” in this manner.
13. Living in harmony can be a real challenge for any person, whether it be with your parents or siblings or the church.
14. It is true there is no perfect church but we must strive “together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil.1:27) and see to it that we build one another up rather than tear each other down.
15. One of the things God hates is division in the body.

16. **Proverbs 6:19 (NASB)** says He hates ¹⁹ A false witness *who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.*

17. The Corinthians were guilty of this strife so much so that Paul had to write to them in **1 Corinthians 1:10 (NASB)** saying, ¹⁰ Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

18. He stated this again in **1 Corinthians 11:18 (NASB)** when he said, ¹⁸ For, in the first place, **when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you;** and in part I believe it.

19. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he told them in **Galatians 5:13-16 (NASB)** ¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ **But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.** ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

20. Jude even went so far as to say that those who cause divisions are false teachers.

21. **Jude 1:19 (NASB)** ¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

22. In our first study in our series on the one another's, we talked about *God's Plan for Relationships* and noted that to have a deep meaningful relationship with someone it takes time and effort from each party and understanding of what true relationships are.

23. A true friend is a person you know well and regard with affection and trust.

24. And if you are going to have a true friendship with someone, then you must be willing to go the extra mile and make an investment in that person.

25. That is the point of the one another's.

26. We are part of the body of Christ and therefore are to love one another in such a way that it involves getting involved in a person's life.

27. That must be the case if I am to bear their burdens or submit to them in the fear of Christ or to be devoted with brother love or to give preference with honor or to pray or be kind.

28. I have to be willing to love my neighbor as I love myself.

29. The same is true in *living in harmony* with one another.
30. As we look this next one another, I want us see 3 exhortations that are associated with it even though tonight we will only look at the first.
31. The first is found in the phrase, “Be of the same mind toward one another.”
32. This phrase is speaking of impartiality.
33. Paul, in essence, is saying *do not be partial*.

I. Do Not Be Partial (v.16a)

“Be of the same mind toward one another.”

A. God is Not Partial

God is absolutely impartial in His dealings with people. And in that way, as with His other attributes, He is unlike us.

We are not naturally inclined to be impartial.

We deal with people on the basis of how they look, how they dress, their social status, their personality, their intelligence, their wealth, their power, by what kind of car they drive, and by the type of house and neighborhood they live in.

But all those things are nonissues with God.

They have no significance or meaning to Him whatsoever.

1. **Deuteronomy 10:17 (NASB)** ¹⁷ "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God **who does not show partiality** nor take a bribe.
2. King Jehoshaphat of Judah told the judges he had just appointed: ⁷ "Now then let the fear of the Lord be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the Lord our God will have no part in unrighteousness

or partiality or the taking of a bribe. (**2 Chronicles 19:7 NASB**).

3. This truth is repeated in the New Testament where Paul declares in **Romans 2:11 (NASB)** For there is no partiality with God.
4. Peter learned this in Acts 10:34 with an object lesson in impartiality and said, “I most certainly understand now that **God is not one to show partiality.**”

God is impartial in regard to social status, occupation, in the helping of others, in judgment, as well as in all things. He is perfectly impartial! And so we must be.

5. In **Ephesians 6:5-9 (NASB)**, Paul said to servants and masters: ⁵ Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. ⁹ And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and **there is no**

partiality with Him.

6. In the parallel passage that's found in **Colossians 3:22-4:1 (NASB)** Paul says, ²² Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. ²⁵ For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that **without partiality.** ¹ Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

7. To Timothy, Paul said in **1 Timothy 5:19-21 (NASB)** ¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning.* ²¹ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels, to maintain these *principles* without bias, **doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.**

Church leaders and members alike are therefore to be disciplined according to Jesus' instruction here and in Matthew 18.

If a believer is warned privately by one person, and then by two or more but refuses to repent, "tell it to the church," He commands; and "if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Mat.18:15-17).

So just as God is impartial so we are to be in how we treat people.

That is James' point as we come to chapter 2.

James shows us that...

B. Partiality is Sin (James 2:1-13)

James begins chapter two with a command in vv.1-8 and then lists the consequences in vv.9-13 but the heart of what he has to say is in verses 1-4.

In vv.1-4 he gives them a principle, followed by an illustration, and then concludes with a question.

First, notice...

1. The principle (v.1)

The principle begins with...

a) The preface

“My brethren”

This phrase or the expanded phrase, “My beloved brethren,” occurs some 15 times in this letter and indicates that James is speaking out of love and as a fellow believer and brother in Christ.

From this preface comes...

b) The prohibition

“With favoritism” is in the emphatic position, preceding, “Do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory.”

The literal rendering is: “Do not with respect for persons be holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Hiebert).

This is used in the plural, “acts of partiality” which includes the various ways in which partiality may be shown.

The emphatic position gives special force to the imperative that follows and it carries the idea of a continuation, of not making the practice of partiality or favoritism.

This translates a single Greek word prosopolepsia, which has the literal meaning of lifting up someone's face, with the idea of judging by appearance and on the basis of giving special favor or respect.

The word pertains to judging purely on a superficial level, without consideration of a person's true merits, abilities, or character.

While Jesus was on the earth, He emulated His Father by showing no favoritism to anyone.

Even his enemies acknowledge this...

Matthew 22:15-16 (NASB) ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; **for You are not partial to any.**

When you consider His human birth, family, and upbringing in Nazareth, and even His willingness to minister in Samaria and Galilee, regions held in contempt by the

Jewish leaders, you see that Jesus was impartial.

According to verse 1, this prohibition is...

c) The command

“Do not hold” is the Greek verb echo (pres.act.imp.) which means “to have, to possess” (Rienecker) and it is in the imperative mood. It is also in the present tense which means this was something they were continuing to do.

Douglas Moo says, “A favoritism based on external considerations is inconsistent with faith in the One who came to break down the barriers of nationality, race, class, gender and religion. As Paul says, ‘Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all’ (Col.3:11) (James, 88).

“The faith” points to “the well-known faith of Christians as embodied in the gospel” (Hiebert).

“Our glorious Lord Jesus Christ is literally
“Our Lord Jesus Christ of the glory” perhaps
referring to God’s Shechinah glory.

“Glory” is doxa, which denotes in the New
Testament the “divine and heavenly radiance”
manifesting God’s invisible presence
(Hiebert).

To enforce his command, James gives...

2. The Illustration (vv.2-3)

a) Two men enter the assembly

The fact that James uses the word “assembly”
(sunagoge) means that he is referring to a
place of worship. Using the term sunagoge
would make this illustration a familiar one to
his Jewish readers.

1) Their appearance (v.2)

The first man is...

a) “A man with gold rings, dressed in
fine clothes”

“Gold rings” is literally “gold-fingered” meaning “many gold rings” (Doerksen).

“The wearing of a ring was customary among the Jews (Luke 16:22), but in Roman society the wealthy wore rings on their left hand in great profusion” (D. Edmond Hiebert, James, 151) but “only the wealthy could afford gold rings.

Commentator William Barclay tells us there were businesses where people could rent rings to wear when they wished to give an impression of great wealth” (MacArthur).

This had become such a problem that Clement of Alexandria (155-c.220) in his *Paidagogos* felt it necessary to urge Christians to wear only one ring, and that because it was needed for purposes of sealing (Hiebert, 152).

The Apostolic Constitutions (c.381) warned Christians against fine clothing and rings, since these were

all signs of lasciviousness” (Hiebert, 152).

“Fine” Gr.lampros, “fine” is literally, “bright, sparkling” (Doerksen). This refers “either to the glittering color of his clothes or his sparkling ornaments, probably the former” (Hiebert).

The second man is...

b) “A poor man in dirty clothes”

“Poor” Gr.ptochos, “abject poverty,” “This person was a beggar at the lowest level of society” (MacArthur).

“Dirty” - “vile, smelly, dirty, shabby.” “Undoubtedly this poor beggar owned only one robe, in which he slept, sweat, worked and lived” (MacArthur).

2) Their economic status

One is rich and one is poor.

b) Both men are not treated the same (v.3)

The fine dressed man is given special attention. He is told to “sit here in a good place.”

He is shown a cordial reception and is asked to be seated, while “here” points out the place to him (Hiebert).

“The group is awed by the appearance of the smartly dressed man and requests him to sit in a privileged place” (Doerksen).

“That man attracted everyone’s attention, and they gave him preferential treatment so they could win his favor or perhaps profit from his wealth” (MacArthur).

The poor man is dishonored. He is told to “stand there” or “sit here at my footstool.”

“At my footstool” or “under my footstool” is Gr.hupo, “under” could be translated “beside.”

“Since the head of a man sitting on the floor would be at the level of the feet of those on the platform, the expression would imply nothing more than sitting on the floor” (Hiebert).

“If the reference is to a literal footstool, someone in the assembly had both a chair and a footstool, and he wouldn’t give either to the poor man” (MacArthur).

R.C.H. Lenski says, “We should remember that most people sat cross-leggedly on the floor, only more important persons had elevated seats, chairs, benches, etc. No one would think of treating the rich visitor in this fashion, oh, no! That is the point James makes. His readers are still respecters of persons in the evil sense of the word.”²

3. The Question (v.4)

The verse forms the conclusion of the conditional sentence begun in verse 2.

The question invites the readers to probe their conscience.

- a) You have shown partiality (v.4a)

²R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James* (Columbus, O.: Lutheran book concern, 1938). 565.

By your treatment of the rich and poor man.
You welcomed them based on their social,
economic status — this is sin (v.9)

b) You have become judges (v.4b)

You have “become judges with evil motives.”

In calling them “judges,” James suggests that they have needlessly constituted themselves “judges” in the situation.

Their decisions, based on external matters of dress alone, were less than judicious.

The genitive describes the quality of the judges; they were motivated by evil thoughts.

James evaluates this conduct as “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 (poneron) is the strongest, carrying the idea of vicious intentions that have a destructive and injurious effect.

John Calvin commenting on the phrase: “Have you not made distinctions among yourselves?” says, “This may be read affirmatively as well as interrogatively, but

the sense would be the same, for he amplifies the fault by this, that they took delight and indulged themselves in so great a wickedness. If it be read interrogatively, the meaning is, “Does not your own conscience hold you convicted, so that you need no other judge? If the affirmative be preferred, it is the same as though he had said, ‘This evil also happens, that ye think not that ye sin, nor know that your thoughts are so wicked as they are.’”³

William MacDonald correctly says, “Snobbery and caste distinctions are utterly inconsistent with true Christianity. Servility to human greatness has no place in the presence of the Lord of Glory. Contempt for others because of birth, race, sex, or poverty is a practical denial of the faith. This commandment does not contradict other portions of the NT where believers are taught

³John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: James*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998). Jas 2:4.

to pay proper respect to rulers, masters, elders, and parents.”⁴

Charles Spurgeon tells of “a lady who was visited by a minister on her deathbed, and she said to him, ‘I want to ask you one question now that I am about to die.’ ‘Well’ said the minister, ‘What is it?’

‘Oh,’ she said in a very affected way, ‘I want to know if there are two places in heaven, because I could not bear that Betsy in the kitchen should be in heaven along with me, she is so unrefined.’

The minister said, ‘Don’t trouble yourself about that, madam, for until you get rid of your accursed pride, you will never enter heaven at all.’”⁵

So the sin that James’ readers are guilty of is treating rich visitors with great respect and treating poor visitors with no respect.

⁴William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Jas 2:1.

⁵ Tom Carter, *2200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988), 164.

In other words, they have “dishonored the poor man” and honored the rich man and as such they have violated God’s royal law which says, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (v.8).

Partiality is “sin.”

When you break this law, James says, you break all laws according to vv.9-12.

James concludes this section by stating, “To show no mercy is to receive no mercy” (v.13).

CONCLUSION

1. We are to “be of the same mind toward one another” and not be partial.
2. Paul repeats this command again in **Romans 15:5 (NASB)** when he says, ⁵ Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to ***be of the same mind with one another*** according to Christ Jesus.
3. It’s not uniformity of thought that is meant here but that we have the mind of Christ (McGee).
4. Paul’s closing words to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 13:11 (NASB)** were ¹¹ Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made

complete, be comforted, ***be like-minded***, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

5. Peter gives the same instructions in **1 Peter 3:8 (NASB)** ⁸
To sum up, all of you ***be harmonious***, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.
6. Do you have the mind of Christ?
7. Do you respond to your brother or sister or to a stranger with impartiality?
8. James says the legitimacy of your faith is revealed in how you treat others.
9. I want to call you to examine your own heart tonight and ask you to look at how you treat others.
10. To be even more specific, how do you treat other believers?
11. Do you love them, bear their burdens, devote yourself to them, give preference to them, pray for them, be kind to them or live in harmony with them?
12. I realize we will struggle from time to time in our relationships with one another.
13. But what is at the heart of it?
14. Is your desire to obey Jesus from the heart?

15. I pray that is the case.
16. If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, awaiting you is judgment.
17. Charles Spurgeon said, “Oh, if the damned in hell could come to earth, they would let you know what solemn work it is to hear the gospel. Think not that you can hear the gospel without having your salvation or damnation affected thereby.”⁶
18. So “the most important question concerning any man living is this: Is he a saved soul or not? Is he a child of God or an heir of wrath?” (Ibid., Spurgeon).
19. Have you been delivered from the love of sin, rescued from the habit of sin, and set free from the desire to sin?
20. If not, you have not been saved and are still in your sin.
21. Turn to Christ now as we pray.

⁶ Tom Carter, *2200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988), 85.