

Acts of Favouritism

My brothers and sisters, **do you—with your acts of favouritism—really believe** in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? (James 2:1)

Learning how best to live as a Christian, is something that takes place spontaneously when we come into faith. God freely justifies us, *the ungodly*. The love of God is irrigated into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit that is given to us (Romans 5:1-5). Once law, sin and guilt had combined to imprison us. Now, through Jesus death and resurrection, we are *free indeed*, where grace abounds. *We love, because he first loved us* (1 John 4:19). *Love, limits evil*.

Learning how best to live as a Christian, continues throughout our lives. Christians often start off in the Spirit, and then shift back to 'the flesh' (Galatians 3:3). This is common. We do this almost as soon as we set our own new boundaries, standards, views, and opinions, and make that the thing we live by. We think we are the ones who '*know good and evil*' (Genesis 3:5). Everyone does. Have a look at the news! But our *logic* was corrupted at the fall.

For this reason, James redirects believers away from cultural priorities, back to Jesus. Every culture does some things badly. The standard value system of the Greco-Roman world's culture, bestowed honour on the rich and shame on the poor. Jesus honoured 'the poor' (Luke 6:20), and the 'poor in spirit' (Matt. 5:3), while also loving 'the rich' (Mark 10:21), but confronting them with his heart-searching teaching. In our society, the high cost of lawyers, court fees, and sneaky tactics, is a denial of true justice. Injustice is always wrong.

Acts of favouritism destroy. James reminds believers of the poor inheriting the kingdom of God, as Jesus said. In pointing people to '**the royal law**' (James 2:8), and '**the law of liberty**' (James 1:25; 2:12), James directs people to the gospel, and true mercy.

To always seek to live out of gospel freedom, and the grace of God—and not to impose our own standards on everyone else—is a difficult but important gospel matter. This is so within the church community, and even more so in the wider society. Seeking justice in Australia, for others, is something all can do. It will often involve being in partnership with others, who are not Christian. To join one political group is one thing. To conspire to force a result—while demonising others who view solutions differently—is a different matter. Later in the letter James warns about the fire set ablaze by the tongue (James 3). He warns that conflicts and disputes are driven by wrong passions, and not prayer (James 4). Speaking evil against one another is wrong (James 4:11). James encourages believers to keep peering into 'the perfect law'. **Do you—with your acts of favouritism—really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?** We are to embrace the glorious Lordship of Jesus at work, as the way most needed in the community, and nation. To do this, is to '**do well**' (James 2:8; Acts 15:29).

Prayer: In your mercy Lord, as gospel inspired people, may we obey that ancient command, not to hate, but rather, to love: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev. 19:18).

Trevor