

No Respect of Persons

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[0 : 00] All people that on earth do come, sing to the Lord.

James chapter 2 from verse 1. It says, My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

For if they come unto your assembly, a man with a gold ring in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool.

Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and I become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

[1 : 10] If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, you commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Friends, it's telling us there about respect to persons, and that's my topic tonight. Thinking about respect to persons, in the context here, James talks about a man coming in, richly dressed, and elegantly dressed, with a gold ring on his finger, the other poor and shabbily dressed, and he uses that as a picture of how we are not to respect persons.

We're not to treat one differently from another. We are to treat people the same. And not to be unfair and partial in how we treat people. It's wrong.

And such evil discrimination is anti-Christian behaviour. Now that's not to say that all discrimination is wrong. Now, I'll need to clarify that, in case you think I'm a racist or something, but there is a discrimination between right and wrong, between truth and error, between light and darkness.

There is a discriminating, a deciding between, a judging between, a discerning between, a discriminating between. That's a good discrimination. But James writes here of an evil discrimination, a partiality, a respect of persons.

[2 : 36] And there's much scriptures on this theme. It's quite interesting. I didn't realise until I started looking into this, how often it is referred to in the Word of God. You might like to turn to Romans 2, where Paul talks of it too.

Romans 2 describes this same theme. From verses 1 to 11, it says, Romans 2 verse 1, There's a context here of judgment.

But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.

To them who by patient continuance and well-being seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil of the Jew first and also of the Gentile.

[4 : 15] But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good. Glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good. To the Jew first and also to the Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God.

You know, I'm glad that we're living in grace, aren't you? We're not in the Old Testament where it appeared that God singled out the Israelites, of course, as his chosen ones.

Today God's mercy is extended mankind-wide. It's extended Gentile and Jew. It's extended where God has no respect of persons.

We're seeing there that there's a truth here in terms of the judgment of God on the one hand and in terms of the blessing of God on the other. There is no respect of persons with God.

And this phrase, respect of persons, it means a partiality. It means a favouritism. And the Bible condemns it as sin. I know when I was growing up, I think my mum and dad were asked by one of those kids, who was the favourite in the family?

[5 : 28] Myself and my two sisters. And my parents wisely said that there is no favourites. I think, am I true? You're the favourite son. But there's a sense where, in God's family, as it were, we're all God's children.

There's not one higher than another, not one more valuable than another, not one that's more worthwhile or worthy than another. There is no respect of persons with God. We're all on level pegging in God's kingdom.

And not having respect of persons, it's one of God's attributes. It's one of His attributes. And there's many attributes of God, but this is certainly one of them. And we can take heart in that and learn from that.

And as we know, we are to walk in His steps and follow His leading and to be like Him, so we likewise should have this attribute. And 2 Chronicles 19, 7 talks of it also, where it says, Wherefore let the fear of the Lord be upon you.

Take heed and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. Again, there's no respect of persons with God. In Deuteronomy 10, 17 it says, For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.

[6 : 44] So it's right through, right from these early scriptures in Deuteronomy and 2 Chronicles, right through to James Romans. If we are children of God, we are to also not to be partial, not to be unfair, but to be even-handed and fair to all men.

Because in salvation, God is so inclined to us. God is so inclined. He has no favourites. He's entirely fair. He's entirely just. As we know it says, The judge of all the earth shall do right.

We know He's entirely just in His character. And Colossians 3, 25 it says, But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons. Again, the one who's done wrong will receive the penalty, for there is no respect of persons.

What does it say? All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. It says that all are under the curse. All are damned and condemned without Christ.

And yet, once for all, He died. Once for all, He died for the salvation of men. And friends, we can take heart in that extensive umbrella that God puts us under, as it were.

[8 : 08] There's potential for every man to trust Him. And Christ was even recognised in His impartiality too.

In Matthew 22, 16, for example, and there's others, Mark 12, 14, Luke 20, 21, even Christ's enemies recognised He was impartial. They recognised that He had no respect of persons.

For example, in Matthew 22, 16 it says, of the critics of Christ, And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth.

Neither carest thou for any man, for thou regardest not the person of men. He regarded not the person of men. We know in Revelation it says that every tribe, tongue, and nation are going to be around the throne.

It's going to be in different languages, different cultures, different races will be there. Every nation, every tribe, and tongue, and kindred will be there in the end times, in the end day, when we'll praise Him and sing Hallelujah as one chorus.

[9 : 18] And our Lord does not regard the person of men. No one is more or less important than another. I'm heartened that our church, as God helps us to, is reaching across the board.

We're a mixed bag. Some have said, I've used less endearing terms to describe the mixed bag of people that we have. We're a motley crew.

We're a lot of different coloured jelly beans or smarties, if you like. We're all different from different backgrounds, different shapes and sizes, different racial backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, nationalities, and yet different ages from the very young to the elderly.

And yet we are, as it were, in one family. We that love Christ and are saved are God's children together from all of those different places and backgrounds.

I know just this afternoon I popped in on Francis who came in the morning of an African background and he was there with some other young fellas playing some music and in the African style of music and that's a kind of foreign thing to me.

[10:36] Not just foreign in the language but foreign in the style and the way they do these things. But yet they are fellow believers in Christ and I can acknowledge that and know that God has no respect of persons.

that he reaches out to every race, creed, colour and tribe right across the planet and it's a wonderful blessing to know that isn't it? And like that too that's why we take an interest in reaching the very young for those that might not have the opportunity not having godly parents to hear the word of God and to be able to be reached with the message so that they all have that opportunity to hear the gospel from a very young age.

I think that's important. God has no respect of persons. I'd like to think that we as a band of believers can reach out across the spectrum to people from all walks of life.

It's like Ralph in the nursing home nearby. He's got an open door of opportunity there as there's some 30 people as it were a captive audience in the nursing home and yet willingly coming to hear and sing and receive the word of God and ideally and prayerfully receive salvation in Christ.

And so there's no respect of persons whether the very elderly or the very young or across the board in different nations different languages different tribes. And so as much as sometimes it's hard for us I know in the mornings when we have some African folk and we might ask them to participate and they pray over the offering or the communion time and they use their native language because they're still learning the language of English.

[12:24] And there's no respect of persons with God. We don't exclude people because they may not have English as their mother tongue and we don't exclude people for reasons that are to do with status or standing or culture and such like because the Bible says that God is no respecter of persons and so should we be.

And because people matter to God. People are significant. Now what shall a man give if he shall gain the whole world yet lose his own soul? That's the value of one single human soul.

It's an incredible comparison isn't it? The relativity of that. The relativity of one soul if you were to put them on a scale that one soul would be more valuable than the planet earth and all of its riches and wealth.

People are significant. There's a story told of a man who was undertaking some examinations. It was the closer, the nursing school I take it he was learning to be a nurse or some profession and the professor gave the students a quiz.

And he writes, I was a conscientious student and I breezed through the questions until I read the last one. It read, what is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?

[13:50] Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark haired and in her 50s but how would I know her name?

I handed in my paper leaving the last question blank and before the class ended one student asked the question would that last question count towards their grades?

Absolutely, said the professor. In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care even if all you do is smile and say hello.

I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learnt her name was Dorothy. It's true isn't it? We go about life and we don't stop and take attention to the human souls that we rub shoulders with every day. I know that's true of me. There's some folk that I could take more effort to get to know them and to seek ultimately to introduce them to Christ. And we all could take a lesson from this page and a lesson from this story.

[14:56] To think of those people around about us that we may not even know their name. We take them for granted and we can do that when we go about our day by day not caring for those human souls that we make contact with whether it be at the shops or about our day by day.

We can sometimes take for granted and not consider them significant. Consider that they matter. Consider that they are important. But they do. They absolutely do.

When you look at Christ, you look at his life, you look at how he lived, how he went about his day through the Gospels, you see that humanity that he touched.

He reached out and touched them. All kinds and shapes and sizes, large and small, short and tall, every kind of human being.

He had an impact. You see the Roman soldier at his death, you see the Nicodemus, the Pharisee, you see the beggars, the cripples, the wounded and hurting.

[16:05] He reached out to everyone, the whole mass of humanity. He made an effort on an individual basis with each one. He touched many lives and he wants to do that too through you and me.

You could consider for example in Luke's Gospel, chapter 19, the account of Zacchaeus.

Sometimes we gloss over that, oh that's just a Sunday school kind of story, a quaint story of someone climbing up a tree to get a better view because he was short.

And yet the Gospel of Luke is filled with stories of people just like Zacchaeus and many others. The human encounters that Christ had, showing no respect to persons. He was compassionate to the poor, to the sinful, to the hurting, to the sick.

And the story of Zacchaeus is typical of many of his encounters. For example, Luke 19, 1 it says, And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And behold, there was there a man named Zacchaeus, which was chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

Maybe he had been a good person to have in the church because he was rich. That's how some people think, isn't it? And he sought to see Jesus who he was and could not for the press because he was little of stature.

[17:18] You know, it's just a short man, you might discount him, maybe a midget or a pygmy or whatever, you might use some disparaging term to label him as such. And he ran before and he climbed up on the sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way.

Verse 5, Luke 19, And when Jesus came to that place, he looked up and saw him and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for today. I must abide at thy house.

And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured saying that he was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner.

That's what they said. He's gone to be with this. He's chosen to go and spend time and rubbed shoulders and mixed with such a type as this. This was a man that is a sinner.

And verse 8, Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

[18:23] And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

What a wonderful story, the account of this man, of his trusting Christ, of his surrender. Christ reached and touched him and changed him.

He still is the friend of sinners. He's still the one who reaches and touches those who are the untouchable. He reaches those who are the lowest of the low. as we should.

Reach to the uttermost part of the earth. It's like someone said, to the gutter most. I know a man, he says that he started coming to Christ when he was lying in the gutter in his own vomit.

He realised where he had sunk to, that he sunk to that point. And then he could cry out from the bottom of the pit. And friends, that's where he was numbered with the transgressors.

[19:32] He was numbered with the transgressors. And he's not ashamed to come and stand by me. He's not ashamed to come and stand by you. In all your inadequacy, in all your shame and guilt and reproach and unworthiness, he's not ashamed to come and stand by you.

We read that in Hebrews 2, just the context there from verse 3. How shall we escape if we neglect? So great salvation. It goes on, verse 7, Thou madeest him a little lower than the angels, Thou crownest him with glory and honour and did set him over the work of thy hands.

Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

Verse 9, But we see Jesus, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Verse 10, For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings, for both he that sanctified and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause, note this verse 11, he is not ashamed to call them brethren, he is not ashamed to call them brethren, he is the glorious one, stepping down from heaven's height, crowned with glory and honour, now brought load to the suffering of death, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man, made the captain of our salvation, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren, friends, he's not ashamed of us, and as much as in those encounters that

[21 : 39] Christ had, we know at times he was with the very sinful ones, wasn't he? Many accounts, many encounters of Christ were with the very sinful ones, and those who thought themselves righteous scorned him for that, and mocked him for that, he was derided for that, yet he's not ashamed to call us brethren, he's not ashamed to stand by us.

Acts 10 34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. Here's Peter, James, Paul, now Peter, God is no respecter of persons.

Verse 35 of Acts 10 But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. If you fear God, it doesn't matter what your nationality is, what your language is, if you fear God, you are accepted with him, fearing him and working righteousness.

Thank God today, friends, we can take heart. You can take heart here, whether you're an Australian, whether you come from Adelaide or Timbuktu, you can take heart today that God is no respecter of persons.

He doesn't go through some kind of referee check. As it were, if you want to enter into his service, he's just looking for people idle in the marketplace.

[23 : 07] He's looking for people kicking a stone and smelling the flowers or I don't know, whatever they do in the marketplace when they don't have anything to do. Or maybe just idly passing their time away.

He's looking for people idle in the marketplace and he says come and enter into my vineyard. Come and work for me today. There's no prejudice. It's not as if there's some kind of age limit or some kind of racial discrimination or some kind of you've got to do a literacy test or have a police check or you know you've got to have a block free kind of record.

I know people were talking to me today on the bus about my driving quality. know you can wonder there could be some fault there's always some fault that you can make and I've got many.

If we had to have a scot free kind of record to enter into his service to trust him to be his then none of us would qualify because all have sinned and come short.

But there is no partiality with God. We all can make application. Everyone he says come unto me all ye all ye there is no partiality!

[24 : 24] of nationality of social status of age! of money of background of standing no prejudice with God he is absolutely no respecter of persons and 1 Peter 1 17 it tells us of being redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold etc but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot and verse 17 of 1 Peter 1 it says if you call on the father and without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work God the father judges according to every man's work now of course we know the judgment is based on are you in Christ or outside of Christ it's either one or the other you can't be on the fence you can't be half in Christ and half not are you in Christ tonight that's the question and

God is no respecter of persons and the judgment is based on the merits of Christ it's based on the work of the cross the finished work the done work the completed act of his bleeding and dying on our path bearing our sin in our place that is the merit because none of us merit heaven by our own doing and you're kidding yourself if you're thinking you're good enough for heaven by your own working by your own standing by your own trying it's not a trying it's a trusting it's not a doing it's a done and friends tonight are you in him or out of him I challenge you tonight thank God there's no respect of persons there's still an open door there's still an invitation extended I love to tell the story of haunting things above of Jesus and his glory Thank you.