

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

RESPECT OF PERSONS

*A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART TWENTY TWO OF SIXTY FOUR*

James, aware of the danger belonging "to an exaggerated conception of the value of material wealth," illustrates it by a picture of two visitors to an assembly. "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ...with respect of persons. For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:1-4). One is led to a good place; the other banished to a contemptible spot solely on the ground of social status. Faith in Jesus excludes such partiality. To be rude or discourteous to anyone is sin. To favor one on the basis of wealth is sin. "If ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin" (James 2:9), exposed to the just judgment of God.

We are not to show respect of persons. We must not judge by surface appearance. There should be no cliques in the church. No favor should be shown to social or intellectual superiority; no scorn for the lowly in position or attainment. Such attitudes are forms of pride-filled worldliness. Every day the world worships the successful, strong, wealthy; and despises the man who is poor. Let us not be guilty of Pharisaical snobbery. Jesus was one who "regardest not the person of men" (Mt. 22:16). Let us greet all brethren and all visitors with equal and just respect. "All distinctions between rich and poor are less than nothing in the blaze of glory which shines in Him..." (Ross).

"The teaching of this verse has obviously a special relevance for the Christian today as he tries to show his religion in the often difficult but pressing problems of social, industrial and racial relations" (Tasker). "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34,35). All men, rich and poor, are equally valuable in the sight of Him Who died for all.

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