

Sermon or Lesson: James 2:5-7 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Our Favoritism Is All Backwards

INTRO: Have you ever been oppressed, or exploited, or wrongfully threatened with litigation by a rich person who was using their wealth against you? Perhaps many of us have. Did this mistreatment make you want to become good friends with that rich person?

Now in comparison, have you ever been oppressed, or exploited, or wrongfully threatened with litigation by a poor person who had no money to use against you? Perhaps few if any of us have. Does this lack of mistreatment motivate you to become good friends with poor people?

In our passage, let's study how God views rich persons and poor persons in this regard, especially in relation to the showing of favoritism.

READ: James 2:5-7, with vv.1-4 for context

[Lesson Question: What can be concluded from this passage about how God regards the poor as a whole in relation to the rich as a whole?]

SECTION POINT: As a conclusion drawn from this passage, generally speaking as a group, God regards and chooses that the poor, as a whole, deserve to receive spiritual blessings while the rich do not, as a whole.

- - v.5 - God's positive regard and blessings upon the poor: He chooses them; they are to be rich in faith; they will inherit the kingdom; they love Him.

- - vv.6-7 - God's negative regard and disdain for the rich because of their behaviors: v.6 - they insult the poor, they exploit the poor, they drag people into court; v.7 - they slander His name.

[Lesson Question: In this passage, how and in what ways does God's regard for the poor over His regard for the rich fit into this discussion about "showing favoritism" (v.1)?]

SECTION POINT: God's regard for the poor over His regard for the rich fits into this discussion about "showing favoritism" (v.1) because this passage is declaring that we humans have the favoritism all backwards - in God's opinion.

Specifically, the ways our favoritism is all backwards are:

- - v.5 - We "discriminate" (v.4) against the poor, presumably because they are not worthy of our positive regard; yet God "chooses" those very people to receive blessings, presumably because their lowly position in life facilitates the nurture of "richness" in their faith and a "love" for God.

- - v.5 - We shun and avoid associating with the poor; yet God desires and arranges to eternally associate in His kingdom with those very people - the poor.

- - v.6 - Through our favoritism, we insult, “humiliate, dishonor, and show our contempt for” (*AMP*) the poor; yet through spiritual blessings, God honors and exalts those very people - the poor.
- - v.6 - Through our favoritism, we highly regard the rich; yet the rich are the ones who “exploit”, “exercise dominion against, and oppress” us and others. (Strong’s #2616)
- - v.6 - Through our favoritism, we treat nicely and lavish benefits on the rich; yet the rich are the very ones “who are dragging us into court”, suing us for money or property.
- - v.7 - “As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” (v.1), we are trying to bring glory to the One who saves us; yet some of the rich supposed believers are “blaspheming” (*NAS*) and “slandering the noble name” of Jesus, by whose name we are called because we have been bought by Him.

- - The rich are distinguished in this passage by negative qualities we believers are ignoring due to our favoritism thinking, such as: poor in faith, exploiting and oppressing others, suing others, and slandering the name of Christ.
- - Furthermore, the qualities we value in the rich due to our favoritism thinking are not mentioned or honored by God in this passage, such as: the volume of wealth they have, the number of servants and flocks they have, the amount and quality of the land, houses, and chariots they have, and the position in the community they hold.
- - We are told to “listen” (v.5), suggesting we need to immediately correct our thinking and behavior in this sin area of favoritism.

BIG IDEA: Opposite to what we value, God values the spiritual qualities and virtues that typically accompany being poor and He detests the moral behaviors that typically accompany being rich.

IMPLICATIONS:

- - The ones who are truly rich are the ones rich in faith - they will inherit the Kingdom of God. (v.5)
- - The poor deserve to be treated well and do not deserve to be insulted.
- - Typically, the rich are poor in faith.
- - The false sense of security that comes with wealth leads to being poor in faith.
- - Excess money empowers humans to be exploitative, abusive, litigious, and blasphemous.
- - Rich people tend to place their love in wealth, while poor people tend to place their love in God. (v.5)
- - Of all the people that make it into heaven, those who were poor in this life will far outnumber those who were rich.

- - The rich people that do make it into heaven will not avoid having to answer to God for any oppression of the poor they did.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Are you listening to what God is saying about favoring the rich and disfavoring the poor? Are you ready right now to correct your thinking and behaviors in order to align with what God is saying? This is a choice you have - to take corrective action or not.

- - Do you use your money to exploit, or oppress, or litigate your neighbors, your subordinates, your employees, or your peers? Do you realize you are bringing public shame, disgrace, and discredit upon the name of Jesus, the One you claim to be a believer in?

- - Do you rely on and use your wealth to maintain your social status? What does God think about how you are doing that?

- - When you walk into a group of people, what is your attitude about yourself in relation to others there?

- - When you go to a social get-together comprised of people you do not know, what kind of people do you tend to gravitate to? Why?

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