

Faith in Action: A Study of James Faith Lives by Liberty

James 2:1-13

A Real Faith for A Real Life 1:1-8

Trust in Christ is not developed absent of challenge but by applying trust in the midst of challenge.

The Perspective Faith Provides 1:9-18

Trust in Christ provides perspective to help us live God oriented lives.

Faith Produces Action 1:19-27

Trust in Christ will produce Christlikeness.

Faith's Enemy: Favoritism 2:1-7

In Palestine, as in most of the empire, the rich were oppressing the poor (2:6-7). But the temptation to make rich converts or inquirers feel welcome at the expense of the poor was immoral (2:4). The language of impartiality was normally applied especially to legal settings, but because synagogues served both as houses of prayer and as community courts, this predominantly legal image naturally applies to any gatherings there.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary

An example of favoritism 2-4

Roman laws explicitly favored the rich. Persons of lower class, who were thought to act from economic self-interest, could not bring accusations against persons of higher class, and the laws prescribed harsher penalties for lower-class persons convicted of offenses than for offenders from the higher class. Biblical law, most Jewish law and traditional Greek philosophers had always rejected such distinctions as immoral. In normal times, the public respected the rich as public benefactors, although the Zealots recognized in the Jerusalem aristocracy pro-Roman enemies. The Old Testament forbade partiality on the basis of economic status (Lev 19:15) and called judges among God's people to judge impartially, as God did.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary

Weakness of favoritism 5-7

With the plea, *Listen, my dear brothers*, James went on to explain why their preferential judgment was wrong. He made his point through four questions, each of which anticipated an affirmative answer. First, *has not God chosen those* who appear *poor* materially, but are *rich* spiritually, to *inherit* His promised *kingdom*? (cf. 1:9) Second, are not *the rich* the ones who are consistently guilty of oppression, extortion, and slander (blasphēmousin, 2:7, lit., "blasphemy"). Third, *are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?* Fourth, *are they not the ones who* slander Jesus' *noble name*? Believers belong to Him, not to the rich exploiters. James' readers would have to agree with these contentions, and to recognize that insulting *the poor* and favoring the rich was wrong and totally unreasonable.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The world may look on poverty-stricken people as insignificant and worthless. God sees them as abounding in the riches of faith. Their faith allows them to experience God's wealth—salvation and its accompanying blessings. This does not suggest all the poor are converted, nor does it mean God practices a bias against those who are not poor. The poor God blesses are those whose poverty is primarily to be “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3). Often those who are economically poor are better placed than the wealthy to understand God's purposes. They are more likely than the rich to be prospects for conversion.

Hebrews, James

Faith's Ally: Liberty

2:8-13

Liberty is expressed through love

8

Favoritism shows guilt

9-11

Liberty brings mercy

12-13

Just as love triumphs over prejudice, mercy triumphs over judgment. The verb “triumphs” or “exults over” (*katakauchatai*) appears only here, in 3:14, and in Romans 11:18. God has ordained unalterable laws. Complete and consistent obedience is required if spiritual maturity is to be attained. The believer is commanded to accept his brother with courtesy, compassion, and consistency.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Those who obey God by faith in Jesus Christ find freedom to serve God and escape from fear of future judgment. Faith in Jesus Christ provides freedom to escape hatred and self-love and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Hebrews, James

**Trust in Christ produces mercy
as we love our neighbor
as ourselves.**

Questions for Application

- Q1. Who are people that we tend to show favoritism toward today?
- Q2. How can we fight against our tendency to show favoritism?
- Q3. Who in your life can you move towards in liberty?