

God Chose the Poor

Աստուած Աղքատը Ընտրեց

James 2:1-7

I hate favoritism. I cannot stand how people favor someone over another based on family background, religion, or race. I was raised in the Middle East. Favoritism was the way people used to achieve their demands. The principle was this: “It is not who you are; it is whom you know.” When I was a school principal, or a church pastor, people tried to approach me through a person I knew. They thought I would approve their demand if they spoke in the name of my friend. Certain people thought that I should use a different scale in passing grades for certain “elite” students. Even one day there was a line to wait for a free physical examination that I organized for people who did not have insurance. One lady from the church told me that she should not wait in line because she was from “the family of faith”, quoting from the Bible.

Favoritism is a sin. It is not just sin where destroys human relationship; **it destroys our witness for our God.** We represent our Lord Jesus. How does God treat His creation?

“My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.” (2:1 NIV)

James uses the word **favoritism** (*partiality in other translations*). Literally means, ‘receiving the face’: **to accept something merely as it appears; to judge something by its face, by its outside cover.**¹

James gives the example of two newcomers to the church service. One of them is dressed very well, is wearing gold and expensive clothes and “drives an expensive car.” (My interpretation). The other comes not well dressed, not too stylish. How do we treat each person? Do we judge them “by the cover”? Do outside appearances have an effect on our judgment?

Unfortunately, we do judge by the outside appearance. When we go to a job interview, we wear something good and try to look nice. There is nothing wrong

with that; yet, eventually the outside appearance will prove to be secondary when the interview continues to find out the real person! Watch out!

-How does God treat us?

God does not show favoritism. **“For God shows no partiality”**. (Rom 2.11 ESV)

Moses said: **For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.** (Deut. 10.17,18 ESV)

My favorite example is when **God sends Samuel to find a king for Israel**. He goes to Jesse to look among his sons. Eliab was a tall and handsome man. But he was not the right one. After the first seven sons passed, the eighth one, the youngest one was the right man. **“The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”** (1 Sam 16:7b ESV). God looks at the heart and we are commanded to be careful how we judge things.

Have you noticed if someone who has the right body shape and lovely features enters a place people are more attracted to them? On the other hand, a shy, less talkative, not too famous person is ignored.

Warning: I, as a badveli have to train myself not to ignore anyone. It is easier to socialize with people who are in the front. How about the ones who are not seen?

Illustration: (Video)

Remember Susan Boyle, a simple British woman who sang in her church for years? She wanted to go and sing in a show called “Britain’s Got Talent”. In the beginning the judges and the whole crowd were not impressed by her appearance, her age, and her inability to present herself in her few words. But when she opened her mouth to sing, everyone was astonished!

This is not a sermon just on ethical behavior as such, although there are practical steps on how to treat people. Did you notice how James chooses his words:

“...believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ...must not show favoritism.”

“Believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”

Who is our example? Consider Jesus, what kind of clothes would he wear?

**“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.**

**³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.**

Like one from whom people hide their faces

he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.” Isaiah 53:2b-3 NIV

What kind of appearance is this?

This simple man, a carpenter, born in a simple place, from the small town of Nazareth. Even Jesus said about himself:

“Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”(Matthew 8:20 NIV)

Yet His glory was not in his outside appearance. (Muslims often asked me how do we worship a God who is beaten and crucified. They missed the point.)

His disciples witnessed this after Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Let us not be deceived by appearances.

-How did Jesus treat people? Lepers, prostitutes or unclean persons had a chance to touch him. He spoke to them and cared for them. Also, he did not reject Pharisees’ dinner invitation, or tax collector’s invitations. He did not reject Nicodemus, nor he rejected the rich young man who came and asked questions.

James is concerned for the church members who should **examine their motives when they serve in the church.** *(How about those who jump from church to another searching for the better church? What are they seeking? What is their motive in worshipping the Lord?)*

-Does God choose the poor?

“Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?” (James 2:5-7 NIV)

What is going on?

It seems James witnessed how rich people (clergy, Pharisees...) treated poor people badly and dishonored them, especially in the court.

“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”
(Lev 19.15 ESV)

James condemns partiality in the context of judging; it means to treat people the same way.

Yet this passage starts saying **God chose the poor and to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised.**

Although we read that we should not show favoritism, and God does not show favoritism. Yet we read that God chose the poor. **Does He favor the poor?**

Before I answer this question let me elaborate on these two words: Poor and Rich.

-Will every poor person inherit the kingdom of God? NO

-Will every rich not inherit the kingdom of God? NO

Materially poor people have nothing to depend upon. They have more tendency to turn to God than the rich who think they are secure and in control of their possessions.

Now let us not generalize.

I have seen financially poor people who are full of themselves and do not think they need God. All they think is how to become like the rich man. Also, there are rich people who think always how to become richer. They don't see anything else; they see only their possessions.

In the first chapter, James warned the people who trust in their wealth: “**...But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.**”(1:9-10)

Badveli Kevin preached about this topic two Sundays ago, poor and rich (chapter 1)
“Rich or poor, where do you find strength to struggle onward? Is it in Christ, or is it in something else? Are you so identifying with the privation of economic standing that you’re debilitated by it, or will you persevere through that trial, knowing that God is for you, in Christ you hold a high position and God will use the trial to strengthen you, that you might be mature. Likewise for those of wealth, is your significance in Christ or economic security...”

God chose the poor? Why?

Jesus said: “Blessed are the poor in the spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”(Matt 5:3 NIV)

Why?

Yes, because in **the sight of God we all are poor.**

- God does not care how much money you have in the bank.
- God does not care how large a mansion you have.
- God does not care what kind of car you drive.
- We do not have anything to offer to God.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

God sees people who need Him,

people who are genuine in their heart,
who know they are poor, empty, and need God’s grace for healing and becoming complete.

There is no other way to come to God.

Rich or poor, whatever standard of living you have, come to God empty and naked.

God is on the side of the poor. There is no other side.

Only when we are naked,

God will clothe us;

only when we are blind,

God will give us sight.

In your poverty you will realize how sinful you are and you will ask for God's saving grace through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

1. No favoritism. Stop judging by the cover. Treat people kindly and without partiality. Ask yourself, how can I stop from showing favoritism in my relationships?

2. Come to God empty and poor. He will feed you and strengthen you to face trials and temptations and life matters daily. He will give you a purpose to live and continue living daily for His Glory.

Amen

1. Tyndale commentary says: "It is first used in the New Testament as a literal rendering of the Old Testament Hebrew language for partiality. To 'receive the face' is to make judgments and distinctions based on external considerations, such as physical appearance, social status or race.