

"Respect of Person: The Royal Law"

James 2:1-9

May 31, 2009
by C.W. Powell

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 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: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 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? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. (Jas 2:1-9 AV)

There are three things here.

1. What it means to have respect of persons.
2. How this applies to the Rich and to the Poor. These terms taken in the broadest possible ways.
3. What is the royal law, and why it is called that.

I. What it means to have respect of persons. We will get our information from the Scripture itself

A. Old Testament: two words: lifting up of the face.

1. 6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7 Wherefore now 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. (2Ch 19:6-7 AV)

2. 23 These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. 24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: 25 But to them that

rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.
(Pr 24:23-25 AV)

3. 20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. 21 To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress. 22 He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him. (Pr 28:20-22 AV)

B. New Testament: one word: Take the face. Accept the Appearance

1. 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11 For there is no respect of persons with God. (Ro 2:6-11 AV)

2. 5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. 9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. (Eph 6:5-9 AV)

3. 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. (Col 3:23-25 AV)

4. James 2: under consideration.

5. 1Pe 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

II. As it applies to the rich and the poor. In the church.

A. Rich and Poor are relative terms. Woman in India with a tent and one dress at

one time was considered rich.

B. Builds upon the theme of chapter one: God is the maker of both rich and poor. Pr 22:2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

C. Cause for rejoicing: rich man humbled; the poor man exalted. Their station in life itself is a trial and temptation; without faith, both are ruined. With faith, both can rejoice. Station [face] means nothing in itself.

D. We are to see a man's true worth; not his appearance. It takes time and testing for that to be revealed.

E. Pharisee and publican: In this parable the Pharisee was the rich man--a favorite with God [he thought]; publican the poor man. [tax collected--probably not poor in wealth].

F. Rich oppress the poor: the man who thinks he is something oppresses the ones he despises; whether he is a publican or a pharisee.

G. We are not to respect persons; but to judge righteous judgment.

H. We are not to dismiss because of appearance; or accept because of appearance. Evaluate on true worth, as God does.

III. The Royal Law: Love your neighbor as yourself==requires us NOT to judge according to appearances.

A. 1Sa 16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. [eye, face]

B. Joh 7:24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. [They were still griping about the man that he had healed and told to take up his bed on the Sabbath Day]

C. 2Co 5:12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. [We know no man after the flesh--new man in Christ:love, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc.]

D. 2Co 10:7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's. [Paul was weak and contemptible in appearance;

his letters were weighty and powerful]

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. 13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. 14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: 15 Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, 16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. 17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. (2Co 10:12-18 AV)

E. 1Th 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil. [From every face that evil puts on]

Conclusion: Defense against bullies: Not respect of persons. 1 Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. 2 Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment: 3 Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause. 4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. 5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. 6 Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. 7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. 8 And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. 9 Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Ex 23:1-9 AV)

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.