

May 2, 2021

Am I a Servant of God

"My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. If you show special attention...have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"
James 2:1-13

How do you react to someone who is not like you? How do I? What kinds of judgments do we make about others? What do we base those judgments on?

This part of James' letter is a stiff condemnation of believers showing favoritism. Because James uses a rich man/poor man example we want to believe that that is all he is really addressing, but I don't believe it is. I am convinced that the thrust of James' command not to show favoritism has a much wider application for believers and establishes a broad principle that we need to understand and follow.

So, looking into the convicting mirror of Scripture, what criteria do we personally use to make judgments about other people, other souls? Who do we favor and who do we condemn and dismiss?

As believers, you and I live under an immutable law: ***"Love your neighbor as yourself."*** James calls this our ***"Royal"*** law. We either demonstrate that attitude in every situation or we don't. James would say that makes us either lawbreakers or law keepers. It is essential that we understand that those who break even a single command become lawbreakers in God's eyes. So, if we fail to love others as we have been commanded to do we are lawbreakers and face God's well-deserved wrath.

How do we begin to rid our lives of the judgmental favoritism that so often permeates our attitudes toward others? There are, I think, a number of things that you and I can do to overcome our tendency to so easily condemn some and favor others.

First, we need to understand that broad generalizations about whole categories of people are just wrong. I cannot know, and will not know, enough about any large category of people to make any judgements about them at all. Generalizations based on broad labels are wrong.

Second, the only sound judgment we might be able to make about any other single person is to come to know that individual personally and well. That means I have spent time listening and seeking to better understand that person. This attitude absolutely reduces the number of individuals that I can know well enough to judge in any way at all very, very few.



Third, James would say, ***"Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment."*** A day is coming when every single one of us will stand before God in judgment. Every one of us will give an account for what we have said and done in and with our lives. Without God's mercy we would face nothing but his overwhelming and well-deserved wrath. How can those who have received such mercy not be quick to extend it?

The foundation of our capacity to be merciful and compassionate is to remember our Lord's command, ***"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."*** (Matthew 7:12) When I have messed up I want others to be

merciful and compassionate to me and I especially want our God and Father to show me mercy for many sin. How then, can I so easily condemn others?

As a servant of God I cannot make condemning judgments about others under any circumstances unless I am prepared to be condemned by the God of Heaven. Our task as servants of God is to treat others the way we would honestly like to be treated in every situation. Because we long for mercy and compassion, we must extend mercy and compassion.



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