

NO DISCRIMINATION

Part 8 of Foundations 260. Acts 12-14; James 1-2.
Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. March 2, 2025.

DISCRIMINATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I was not allowed to recite Address to a Haggis.

- Because I did not have a strong Scottish accent.
- That was the first time I felt the sting of discrimination, but it was not the last. It didn't feel good. It felt very wrong.

JAMES 2:1-13 (CSB)

My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. 2 For if someone comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and a poor person dressed in filthy clothes also comes in, 3 if you look with favor on the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here in a good place," and yet you say to the poor person, "Stand over there," or "Sit here on the floor by my footstool," 4 haven't you made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Didn't God choose the poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? 6 Yet you have dishonored the poor. Don't the rich oppress you and drag you into court? 7 Don't they blaspheme the good name that was invoked over you?

8 Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. 9 If, however, you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all. 11 For he who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. So if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you are a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has not shown mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

THE PROBLEM IN JAMES 2

The Problem - verse 1.

- The church was discriminating against people based on their wealth, social status, or class:

Verse 1: My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

- James was addressing Christians - those who “hold on to the faith.”

The Parable - verses 2-3

- A parable is a story that communicates a spiritual principle.
- This story describes the dilemma faced by a church when a rich man and a poor man arrived at church at the same time.
- The president of the congregation seats the rich man in an exclusive place and tells the poor man to sit on the dirty floor.

THE PRINCIPLE IN JAMES 2

Favoritism is divisive and evil.

Verses 3-4: If you look with favor (on anyone) ... 4 haven't you made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

- The Greek word for “distinctions” means to separate.
- Favoritism separates people; it divides the church, so it's evil.

Favoritism is sinful and law-breaking

Verse 9: If, however, you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

- Discrimination is sin because it transgresses or breaks God's law.

Do not miss the point.

- The passage is **NOT** telling us to favor the poor over the rich.
- That would be replacing one form of discrimination with another.

Leviticus 19:15 (CSB) Do not act unjustly when deciding a case. Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly.

- James teaches us that any kind of discrimination is unacceptable.

THE PROOF IN JAMES 2

James gives us three reasons why the church should not discriminate.

1. We all share in salvation in Christ - verse 5.

- Unlike the world that cares about class, status, wealth and power, there are no second class Christians.

2. We are all neighbors - verse 8.

- We have a duty to love everyone in the church.

2. We all need mercy - verses 12-13.

- God gave us mercy and judged his Son in our place.
- Discrimination is the opposite of mercy; it judges and rejects people.
- Those who receive mercy show mercy.

PUTTING JAMES 2 INTO ACTION

The world divides, but Christ and the gospel unite.

- We are the church of the God who made all of us in his image, sent his Son to save us, loves all of us, made us all one in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28).
- Therefore, live as one, love all, do not discriminate.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Review

- Review Peter's March 2nd teaching and study guide.
- What were the highlights of Peter's teaching?
- What questions do you have about the passage or Peter's teaching?
- Use the S.P.E.C.K. method to reflect on and apply the teaching:
 - S: Sins to confess
 - P: Promises to claim
 - E: Examples to follow
 - C: Commands to obey or Christ to rest in
 - K: Knowledge or insights to consider

Discuss

- Have you ever been discriminated against? What was the issue? How did it feel? What did you do about it?
- What happens when we seek to make amends for past discrimination by reverse discrimination? Does it bring unity or peace to the church or world? How can we best help those hurt by discrimination?
- What role might the gospel play in ending divisions based on such factors as class, color, culture, or cash? What can we do to promote unity?

Prayers

- Pray for complete unity in Christ and the gospel at the Cornerstone.
- Pray for those hurt by various kinds of discrimination.
- Pray Colossians 1:9-13 for the group and the Cornerstone.