Neighborhood Baptist Church (1993), FBC Yucaipa (29 Sep 1993) Dr. Rick Griffith

Amman International Church (19 Mar 2022) Message 6 on James

NIV 30 Minutes

Title

**Rich Man, Poor Man**

***James 2:1-13***

**Topic:** Favoring the rich

**Subject:** Don’t prefer the wealthy

**Complement:** when God prefers the needy.

**Purpose:** The listeners will stop giving preferential treatment to rich people and start treating poor members of the church with dignity.

# Introduction

### Interest: [I felt my church favored the rich.]

Retreat

#### “Oh, my! You’ve got to be kidding!” That was my response when I saw the price the bulletin required to go to our church retreat. “Why do we have to go to such an expensive resort?”

#### My wife and I had recently become members of this church in Texas. I was a seminary student with enormous school costs and a young family, and even though I worked three jobs while studying full-time, no way could we spend half a month’s salary on an elaborate retreat.

#### I felt this was a classic example of our church favoring the rich.

### Interest: [But I was tempted to favor the rich too.]

#### Then Mr. Miles shook my hand at church and it felt a little weird. Why? Paper came between us. I later looked more closely at that paper and saw it was a $100 bill. Just what we needed to buy food for that week!

Mr. Miles

#### The next Sunday Mr. Miles shook my hand again—and another $100 sandwiched between our palms had met a need.

#### I found myself tempted to want to be around Mr. Miles. After all, rumor had it that he made over $250,000 a year as one of the city’s top lawyers. I certainly didn’t avoid him at church. I made sure that if he wanted to sit near me there was room!

#### I found that I, too, was tempted to favor the rich.

Choose a Crown

### Need: I’m sure you can’t relate to favoring wealthy people.

#### I’m sure that you purposely *avoid* the rich to make sure you won’t favor them, right?

#### No doubt, you don’t even know who the rich are, right?

#### You certainly treat everyone exactly the same—true?

### Background: Favoring the rich has been a problem since mankind began.

Shoes

#### In ancient days Job got a lot of respect due to his wealth—until he lost it all.

Prov 19:4

#### Centuries later, Solomon wrote in Proverbs 19:4, “Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man’s friend deserts him.”

#### A decade after the church started we had the same problem—not bucking those with bucks! James showed how faith is revealed by rejoicing in trials and obeying the Word. But today’s text says that faith is shown when it avoids favoritism. Most of the Christians were poor, so it became easy to keep an eye out for those who could help the church out financially.

• Flavoring

• 2:1-13

Book Chart

#### And the problem stays with us today: *flavoring* the rich!

### Text: Do you think we *should* favor the rich? Obviously not! James 2:1 clearly says not to show favoritism towards the wealthy. Please turn there with me and let’s read it together: “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.”

Agree?

• 6 clicks

2:1

### Examples: This raises issues on which we might not all agree. For example:

#### Our church should have only locals on certain committees.

#### Church leaders must be at least middle class.

#### Our pastor should be a foreigner.

#### It's OK to reserve better seats at church for certain people.

#### Pastors from the West should earn more than locals with equal experience and roles.

#### Favoritism!

Other Examples?

#### No doubt you could add other examples.

Subject

### Subject: But *why* shouldn’t we favor the rich? What are some reasons you and I should shun the temptation to show preference to the wealthy? This is the question James answers in the following verses.

### Preview: Today we will see *five reasons* not to show preferential treatment to people based on their wealth.

• 5 reasons

(The first reason believers should not favor the rich is because…)

MP

# 1. Favoring the rich *indicates impure motives* (2-4).

2-4

# Discrimination based on money shows we have evil thoughts.

## The first century situation is clear.

### The church has assembled—likely a Jewish church since the word for “meeting” in verse 2 really means “synagogue”—the only time a church meeting is called this in the NT.

### Two strangers enter and don’t know where they can sit.

#### One is wealthy. In fact, the “fine clothes” mentioned literally means “bright” or “shining” and refers to the shiny white garments often worn by wealthy Jews. He’s also got a ring, indicating his rich status. This guy gets the best seat in the house.

#### Another man enters—a poor man without a ring and wearing dirty clothes. “Oh, anywhere is good enough for you.”

### This scenario was not unusual because at that time people treated Pharisees like kings—impressive titles and the best seats in the synagogue—like we sometimes do today.

Cartoon

### In 1993 my family visited Philadelphia, our nation’s first capital. There we went to Christ Church and the guide explained where the distinguished members sat—the best seats in the building, of course. I especially remember President George Washington’s seat, pew #58 to be exact—the one with extra leg room! James 2 came to mind. In fact, reserved seats went only to tithers who gave later in the week because a plate was never even passed in front of the poor. Perhaps special treatment for the wealthy is not so distant as it seems.

Pew 58

Christ Church

## James says in verse 4 that favoring rich over poor in the church stems from evil thoughts.

Thoughts

### What are we really thinking when we shun the poor to prefer those with money?

• Leave?

#### “What will happen if I don’t give him better treatment? Will he leave the church?”

• Spill?

#### “On the other hand, if I’m nice to him maybe some of that money may spill my way.”

• I leave!

#### “But if I oppose him, maybe I’ll need to leave the church!”

### So what do we do? We “discriminate among ourselves” and thus dishonor God.

Favoritism Defined

### What is favoritism, by the way?

#### The dictionary says favoritism is “preferential treatment, especially when unjust or narrowly discriminating.”

#### Verse 4 provides the answer in this context—to treat another person based upon his financial status and from an improper motive.

(So why not give special treatment to the wealthy? Because favoring the rich indicates impure motives. It reveals some bad things about us. In verses 5-6a James gives a second reason not to favor the rich…)

MPI

# 2. Favoring the rich insults the poor whom God honors (5-6a).

• MP

# A bias against the less fortunate is the exact opposite of God’s values.

5-6a

## Whose side is God on? The rich or the poor? While He loves us all, God is clearly on the side of the poor more than the rich.

### The first part of verse 5 says that He grants the poor greater faith to believe Him. As a seminary professor at Singapore Bible College for 30 years, I discovered that more often than not, the sharpest students are often the poor students—ones from Nepal, India, Myanmar. Why? God has chosen them and molded them through difficulty to be rich in faith! They’ve been to the school of hard knocks and learned to trust Him—and they make the best missionaries. One of my poorest students was a Burmese missionary to Thailand who far surpassed me in faith—like faith enough to learn eight languages! She said sheepishly, “But I can preach in only four”! How dare we insult the poor—especially poor believers?

6 Students (Auto adv)

### What a joy to visit No Pum in Myanmar—a humble classroom and house, yet a pastor who takes orphans in to his meagre home.

No Pum  
(3 slides)

### How else do I know God champions the poor? The second part of verse 5 says more poor people will enter heaven than rich. We can certainly see this in our day. In nearly every country of the world, the poor have been the most responsive to the gospel.

## It seems to me that there’s something within each of us that knows how much God honors the poor and those who minister among them.

Mother Teresa

### While she lived, Mother Teresa consistently came out as one of the most respected women in the world.

### Why? Not even 5 feet tall, she didn’t have more money or education than most, and she served in one of the most obscure places of the world.

MPs

(So a bias towards the rich is wrong for at least two reasons so far in this text. Favoritism indicates impure motives. And it insults the poor. But there’s a third reason not to show partiality…)

# 3. Favoring the rich *indulges oppressors* more than the oppressed (6b-7).

• MP

# The rich oppress, the poor take it severely—and we cheer for the wrong side!

6b-7

## James’ three questions here bite down hard…

### Who here has ever been exploited by a poor person?

### Who has ever been taken to court by a poor person?

### Don’t the rich curse God by oppressing the poor more than the poor curse God by oppressing the rich?

## The world's richest man also happens to be the world's biggest oppressor—Putin, who is 50 times richer than Donald Trump.

Putin

## But how do believers side with affluent oppressors more than the penniless?

### The text gives the specific example of where people sit. Maybe that’s not a big deal to you and me. People are free to sit wherever they want in this church. But where else might we be demonstrating favoritism towards the rich?

Multi-Millionaire

### I noted earlier how it’s easy to design church activities based on the wealthy—retreats, camps, or seminars. As a pastor, I found that giving scholarships solved that problem.

Retreat

### And how do we select church leaders—church positions only for the wealthy?

P

#### How many men from the lower and middle classes serve on the church board?

#### Have you noticed that most churches stack their boards with successful businessmen? Do they represent the entire church? Generally not.

#### My church in Texas noticed this trend and purposely picked as the next elder a man from the middle class—not high in a company like the rest of the leaders. This helped begin to balance the board rather than show favoritism towards the rich.

#### 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 give 20 qualities required of church leaders. Notice that not a single one of them relates to wealth—except “not pursuing dishonest gain.” They address whether a potential leader’s character is respected, handles his family properly, and other character traits.

MPs

(James boldly tells us that favoring the rich indulges oppressors more than the oppressed. He then moves into his fourth reason against prejudice…)

# 4. Favoring the rich *is selfish* (8-11).

• MP4

# Preferring the wealthy goes against God’s command of selflessness.

8-11

## The point here is that God said in Leviticus 19:18 to love *all people* like we love ourselves. This law is called the “royal law” as it’s the highest law: treat people like you treat yourself.

Lev 19:18

## Do you abuse yourself? Hopefully not! There’s a proper self-interest that each of us has which motivates us to take care of ourselves.

## Likewise, treat the poor like you treat yourself.

(Perhaps you say, “Hey, so I do this favoritism thing sometimes. But we all have our faults, right? What’s one little defect?” James anticipates that some of us might say this, so he responds that…)

## One sin of prejudice makes you a breaker of God’s standards. It doesn’t take a lot of sins!

### Verses 10-11 place favoritism alongside with sins like adultery and murder. That alone should jar us into seeing how heinous a sin it is in God’s sight!

### Suppose you drive out of church today and you speed on the road. Then you see red lights in your mirror—red lights ahead of you are fine, but not behind you!

Rear View Lights

#### You pull over and tell the officer, “Hey, didn’t you see all those stop signs I followed all the way down the street? I drove on the right side of the road the entire time, I’ve paid my insurance, my car’s legal. I’ve obeyed every law—except the speed limit. Why are you picking at my disobeying one little law?”

#### What would the officer say? “OK, you’re not a lawbreaker”? No, it only takes one infraction to make a traffic offender. It takes only one crime to make a criminal.

### It’s also not proper to justify “a little” favoritism in God’s sight. A little still displeases him and makes you and I guilty as lawbreakers.

MPs

(In verses 12-13 James provides a final reason not to show preferential treatment based on money…)

• MP5

# 5. Favoring the rich *incurs God’s judgment* (12-13).

# God will judge us on how much mercy we’ve shown to the poor.

## Think of it! At the Rapture when we go to heaven will also be the Judgment Seat of Christ.

12-13

### This won’t be a judgment to determine our eternal destiny since we are already saved.

### Rather, it will be a judgment only for Christians to determine the extent of their rewards. You and I will each account to the Lord for all kinds of things. And one of those is…

## Jesus will judge us for how we treat the impoverished and the rich.

Bill Gates

### Bill Gates noted, “If you are born poor, it’s not your mistake, but if you die poor, it’s your mistake.” Do you agree? Seems heartless to me! If we lack mercy towards the poor, we will forfeit any reward which would otherwise be coming to us!

### But if we have shown mercy toward the poor, we will experience Christ’s mercy and reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Subject

(So what has James told us in today’s text? Why not give preference to those with money?)

# Conclusion

### Don’t prefer the wealthy when God prefers the needy (MI). Do not favor the rich because God honors the poor more than the wealthy (restated MI).

Main Idea

### What are five reasons not to favor the rich? Here’s the Main Points:

MPs

#### Favoring the rich *indicates impure motives* (2-4).

#### Favoring the rich *insults the poor* whom God honors (5-6a).

#### Favoring the rich *indulges oppressors* more than the oppressed (6b-7).

#### Favoring the rich *is selfish* (8-11).

#### Favoring the rich *incurs God’s judgment* (12-13).

2:1

### If you want the message in a nutshell just look at verse 1 again: “My brothers, as believers in our *glorious* Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.”

Computer Restart

#### As I worked on this message, my computer froze while I was using the electronic thesaurus. When I restarted and called up the thesaurus again, for some reason it had by itself looked up the word “God.” Then below this it said candidly, “No synonyms found for God.”

• No Synonyms

• God

#### I said, “Amen! Amen!” James 2:1 says that Jesus is glorious—no synonyms, no equals! And below Him we all look the same, like we humans all view ants. Are there any distinctions between those ants? They all look the same to me! But if you looked closely you’d see that some are “better off” than others—maybe a bit more of your kid’s cookie crumbs stuck behind an antenna.

#### That’s God’s view of our wealth and poverty, for the huge differences to us are minimal to Him. Someone wisely said, “The ground is level at the cross.” If we see people from God’s view then we will accept all equally apart from financial position.

### Years ago in Portland, Oregon, there was a bright but esoteric student named Bill. His hair was always messed up like Einstein’s and rain, sleet, or snow, Bill was always barefoot. During college he became a Christian—just at the same time that the well-dressed, middle-class church across the street began to develop a ministry among college students. They weren’t really that sure how to go about it, but they were making some efforts to make them feel welcome.

Barefoot Bill

#### One day Bill decided to go to the church. He walked into the service wearing blue jeans, a tee shirt, and, of course, no shoes. People looked uncomfortable but said nothing. So Bill began walking down the aisle looking for a seat. The church was really crowded that Sunday, and by the time Bill got to the front row, he realized that there were no seats left. So he just squatted down on the carpet­—perfectly acceptable behavior for a college fellowship, but perhaps a bit unnerving for most churches. The tension in the air became so thick you could almost slice it.

#### Suddenly an elderly man began walking down the aisle toward the boy. Was he going to scold Bill? Some of the people thought, “Well, you can’t blame this old man for what he has to do.”

#### As the man kept walking down the aisle, the church became utterly silent—all eyes focused on him, you couldn’t hear anyone breathe. When the man reached Bill, with some difficulty he lowered himself and sat next to Bill on the carpet. He and Bill worshipped together on the floor that Sunday. There was not a dry eye in the house (Rebecca Manly Pippert in Hostetler, *Illustrating the Sermon*, 15-16).

### Let’s bow for a moment and allow me to ask some questions…

May I probe?

#### Do you treat people alike—rich or poor? Or do you treat the wealthy with special attention?

#### Whom do you invite for lunch or dinner? Is it always someone who’s equal or better off than you financially?

#### Do you show kindness to those who can’t reciprocate? Even though they can’t return your generosity in financial terms?

#### Do you love and serve the more needy in this church? Do you take a personal interest in them or is all your time absorbed by the others?

### Let’s pray: “God, thank you that with you there is no partiality—no favoritism. The best example of this is your son Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us all. Please help us give ourselves equally for all. For Christ’s sake, Amen.”

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

### What is favoritism (1)?

### Is all discrimination wrong (4)?

### What’s the difference between discernment and judgment?

### What kind of evil thoughts are in view?

### How is that only (?) the poor will inherit the kingdom (5)?

### How does favoritism insult the poor (6)?

### How do the rich slander Christ’s name (7)?

### Why is this command called the “royal law” (8)?

### How does this lawbreaker stuff fit into the argument (8-11)?

### How do illustrations from murder and adultery prove James’ point?

### What’s the significance that the Mosaic (?) law gives freedom (12)? How does it do that?

### Is this judgment without mercy at the Great White Throne? the judgment seat of Christ (13)?

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

We can’t kiss up to the rich & treat our neighbor with the same kind of care we give ourselves.

We’re supposed to take care of others like we take care of ourselves, right?

God says to care for others like we care for ourselves. You don’t care for yourself only if you have a certain status if you limit your care for the wealthy.

Care for others with the same care you give yourself—and you take care of yourself despite your financial status.

You don’t limit care for yourself depending on your economic

# Possible Illustrations

George Washington always occupied seat number 58

Allowing only wealthy students to buy books

Hostetler

I find it interesting that you have a missionary speaker for this text, for I have been both the poor and the rich, depending which country I’m in! I have lived primarily on the gifts of others since 1980, yet as a seminary professor I am wealthier than most of my students.

## Instead, treat others like you treat yourself (8-11).

### In Singapore I once heard two women share how they won their maids to Christ. One common thing both said was, “I don’t have my maids eat off the children’s plates.” I was amazed. They said this as if this was unusually good treatment—I know dogs better fed than that who have their own food and bowl!

### Why do we pat ourselves on the back for humane treatment? Verse 8 says, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Which of us would like to eat the scraps left over from our children’s plates! If you don’t treat yourself that way, don’t treat others that way if they are poorer.

(The favoritism James has in view is based on wealth. Maybe that’s not your problem…)

## Perhaps you show favoritism only towards your own race.

### I think American believers have made some good strides here in recent years concerning racial prejudice. Why, as late as the 1950s and 60s most evangelical seminaries did not allow blacks as students. My last course in the USA was in was at Talbot and I noticed that only 9 of the 22 students were white men like myself.

### The Chinese lady who lived next door to us in Singapore caused some real problems for us in this area. Whenever an Indian walked down the street she said to our young boys, “Come! Into the house! Indian man will get you!” then locked the gate.

### Is God’s Word for you this morning that you secretly distrust Hispanics? blacks? preachers?

# Possible Applications

The text gives the specific example of where people sit. Maybe that’s not a big deal to you and me. People are free to sit wherever they want in this church.

Where else might we be demonstrating favoritism towards the rich?

Designing church activities that only the rich can participate in (retreats, camps, seminars)

Church positions available only to the wealthy

Can we show partiality in other areas besides income level?

Race?

Accent?

**Rich Man, Poor Man**

***James 2:1-13***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The reason believers should not favor the rich is because God honors the poor more than the wealthy.

# I. Favoring the rich indicates impure motives (2-4).

# II. Favoring the rich insults the poor (5-6a).

# III. Favoring the rich indulges oppressors more than the oppressed (6b-7).

# IV. Favoring the rich ignores God’s command to love others like ourselves (8-11).

# V. Favoring the rich incurs God’s judgment (12-13).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: I felt my church favored the rich.

### Interest: But I was tempted to favor the rich too.

### Need: I’m sure you can’t relate to favoring wealthy people.

### Background: Favoring the rich has been a problem since mankind began.

### Text: Do you think we *should* favor the rich? No! James 2:1 clearly says not to.

### Subject: But *why* shouldn’t we favor the rich?

### Preview: Today we will see five reasons not to show preferential treatment to people based on their wealth.

(The first reason believers should not favor the rich is because…)

# I. Favoring the rich indicates impure motives (2-4).

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPII here.)

# II. Favoring the rich insults the poor (5-6a).

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPIII here.)

# III. Favoring the rich indulges oppressors more than the oppressed (6b-7).

[Restate MP here.]

# IV. Favoring the rich ignores God’s command to love others like ourselves (8-11).

[Restate MP here.]

# V. Favoring the rich incurs God’s judgment (12-13).

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into the MI here.)

# Conclusion

### (MI).

### Main Points

### Exhortation: An older man stooped to relate to poor Bill in church.



**Rick Griffith**

2016

Message of 10

**Title**

***Passage***

# Introduction

Subject with a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ blank answer in hidden text

# I. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

# II. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

# Conclusion

### Main Idea has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

### Application question

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. Contrast:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Contrast** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. Text-based question

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. Application to your own Christian experience

Text

Text

Download this sermon PPT and notes for free at BibleStudyDownloads.org/resource/new-testament-preaching/

Rich Man, Poor Man • James 2:1-13

September 29, 1996

We shouldn’t favor the rich because this...

• *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ impure motives* (2-4).

• *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the poor* whom God honors (5-6a).

• *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ oppressors* more than the oppressed (6b-7).

• *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God’s command* to love others like ourselves (8-11).

• *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God’s judgment* (12-13).

I hear God’s Word telling me to…