

Treat Everyone Equally

Key Verse:
“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?”
—James 2:5

Selected Scripture:
James 2:1-13

AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE

to be appreciated by believers in Christ is that true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can never be associated with the practice of treating others with the spirit of partiality. The Heavenly Father does not manifest this quality and neither should those who profess to be children of God.—Acts 10:34; James 2:1-3

Our Key Verse continues to emphasize that the concept of oneness in Christ requires believers to manifest a genuine and heartfelt acceptance of all who have embarked upon the narrow way. The harboring of artificial class distinctions violates the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves.

As a rule, throughout the Gospel Age those who have been attracted to embrace the offer of discipleship in following Christ have recognized their undone condition and need for salvation, whereas those who felt self-sufficient generally have lacked the needed humility to submit themselves to the transforming influence of the Holy Spirit.—I Cor. 1:26-28; James 2:5-9

James addresses the comprehensive nature of the divine law not only with respect to showing favoritism, but he also notes that we are to follow God's requirements as they pertain to such matters as liberty, judgment, and mercy. We may not pick and choose certain portions of God's commandments and ignore others, because any failure to observe all that God demands of us still would leave us short of being in conformity with his righteousness. Thankfully, our Lord kept the divine law perfectly, and his righteousness is imputed to consecrated believers to cover our deficiencies. As long as we acknowledge our shortcomings, repent, and strive to be more diligent in our Christian walk, we will continue to abide in Christ.—vss. 10-13

Aspects of today's lesson find certain parallels in the teachings of Christ Jesus during his earthly ministry. The prohibition against being judgmental, which is a form of partiality, is clearly set forth by the Master. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."—Matt. 7:1,2

The need to remove one's own faults to the greatest extent possible is a prerequisite for being used as an instrument to assist others with their own deficiencies. To be just in dealing with the world of mankind as well as our brethren would certainly be a basic requirement for all who profess to follow Christ.—vss. 3-5,12

A true test of discipleship, however, is embodied in a new commandment that Jesus gave for his followers to love one another, thus evidencing to him that we have imbibed his spirit. This attitude also should be evident to others who observe our conduct, as we interact with those with whom we come in contact. (John 13:34,35) Let us each strive to make this quality a genuine reality in our lives. ■