

“Reversing Discrimination Consequences”

James 2:1-13

Introduction

In James 2:1-13 the church is warned against expressing favoritism based on illegitimate judgments of value. In the scenario that James puts forth the rich man with expensive clothes is favored in God’s house, while the poor man in dirty clothes is dishonored and told to sit in an obscure place. Yet the believers are warned that showing partiality in this way is in fact sin that comes with a consequence. (*James 2:9*) We too, have been both the subject and the perpetrator of such discrimination, and we are not immune to the consequences that accompany this sin.

Discrimination consequences originate from an ungodly spirit of elitism. It is pride that rises up in us to make us become the judge of our fellow man. A discrimination consequence is expressed in the unjust treatment of others and is rooted in an ungodly motivation. Discrimination can take on various forms; one can experience class discrimination like the scenario we read above, or racial discrimination, cultural, religious, gender, political and so on. Regardless of the type of discrimination the consequence is the same; how we judge others will affect how God judges us. James 2:12-13 says, “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.”

We are told that the sin of discrimination is not to be taken lightly. Just as any other commandment of the law, when you break one the entire law is broken. (*James 2:10-11*) Therefore one cannot be both holy and discriminatory at the same time, these ideas are intrinsically opposed. Yet thanks be to God we are not left without a recourse to reverse the consequence of discrimination. Discrimination consequences can be reversed by understanding the value system of God’s Kingdom. Notice that James is quick to remind them that God chose the poor to be “rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom.” (*James 2:4*) If God values the poor surely we should too. Lastly, discrimination consequences can be reversed when we understand and apply the royal law of love. Simply treating others in the way we want to be loved and treated helps us avoid the pitfalls of discrimination consequences.

Getting Started

1. What types of discrimination have you had to deal with most? How did you deal with this?
2. It is often difficult to admit when you have personally sinned. Think about a time when you may have discriminated against someone based on socio-economic status, religion, gender, age, etc. What did you do, think or say that would have been discriminatory? What should you have done differently?

Let’s Get Personal

1. One way to counteract discrimination when we are the subjects is to intentionally express love to one another. As the Scripture says above “mercy triumphs over judgment.” (*James 2:13*) Have you ever had the opportunity to respond in love when discriminated against? Did your response bring about a change?
2. In this lesson we learned that judging others affects how God will judge us. Name a time when God has shown you mercy but you haven’t shown mercy to others. Read Matthew 18:21-35 and discuss the implications of this parable in your own lives.

Take the Next Step

1. In light of the political climate we live in, no matter what party you align yourself with you must first align yourself with the Kingdom of God. In what ways can you live out God’s Kingdom values in how you treat people? What is one tangible thing you can do this week to show the love of Christ to others who are different from you?

2. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the follow passages: Galatians 2:11-21; Numbers 12:1-15; John 4:1-45; I Peter 3:7; Galatians 3:28-29; Romans 14:4-12; Ezekiel 43: 1-12; Acts 6:1-6; Romans 14:1-4

Renew Your Mind

“My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.” James 2:1
