

Partiality

Over the years that I have been a member of the Lord's Church, there have been several occasions upon which I have heard it said that a certain person, based upon religious background, cultural background, or other bias, "could never be converted," and therefore are a waste of time when it comes to teaching the Gospel to them. However, God, through the inspired writers, took a quite different approach to this matter.

James begins the second chapter of his epistle with the command for us to not hold the faith of Christ with partiality. He uses the example of two men, one clothed in fine apparel and one in dirty apparel, to illustrate the fact that one cannot judge the heart based upon physical appearance. When we do this, James says that we become "*judges with evil thoughts.*" Instead, he implies that both men should be treated equally in the assembly, and in fact reminds the reader (James 2:5) that the poor of this world would be heirs to the Kingdom of God.

Christ himself also emphasized the fact that the poor of this world are to be shown compassion and are to be taught the Gospel as well. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-30, Christ shows that a man's riches will not save him after his death, in the final judgment. Later, in Luke 18:25, Christ makes the comment that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. In this we see that Christ himself considered the riches of this world to be a vain hindrance to one's spiritual health and to one's goal of reaching heaven. This clearly indicates that the preference should not be given to the one who is exceptionally wealthy. Instead, all those who are in the assembly should be treated as equals, without regard to social status or material prosperity.

As Christians, we must remember that Christ died for all men (1 Corinthians 15:3; Romans 5:6-8), not just the wealthy or those in positions of power. We must also remember that all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23) and that all of us need Christ's blood to save us (1 Peter 1:18-19). Because of this, we are all equal in the sight of God, and should therefore be considered equal in the assembly. John, in his third epistle, publicly condemned Diotrephes who was violating this rule by usurping the power in the congregation, and by forcing brethren from the church (3 John 9). John assured the reader that this man would be held accountable for his actions and love of power and position in the assembly (3 John 10). We cannot condone the actions of those who are similar to this man, but instead must show humility and acceptance to all in the assembly.

When Christ gave the great commission to His apostles in Mark 16:15-16, He did not place a social status requirement, wealth requirement, or any other kind of physical prerequisite to having the Gospel preached to an individual. Instead, He simply said that the Gospel should be preached to every living creature. This is something we, as Christians, must remember as we try to teach the word of God to others. Every single human being in the world needs the good news of the Gospel of Christ, regardless of their physical condition, and we have an obligation, as Christians, to fulfill that need.

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