



5. January 2026

EPISTLE OF JAMES

“Treatment of Rich and Poor”

James 2:1–13

My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “Have a seat here, please,” while you say to the poor man, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you, is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme that honorable name by which you are called?

If you really fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” said also, “Do not kill.” If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment.

In today's passage, the apostle James refers to a very important aspect that the Gospel must teach people in order to shape their interpersonal relationships according to the Spirit of God. The dignity that God bestows extends to all people without distinction, since Christ died for all. The brothers and sisters to whom James addresses his epistle must be aware of this, and for all of us, it remains a criterion by which we must examine our treatment of others again and again.

Often, God sees people differently than we do. He frequently chooses precisely those who are despised—those whom the world calls “poor”—to enrich them through faith and make them heirs to his Kingdom. They are worthy of receiving the message of the Gospel, and there should be no favoritism that relegates the poor in order to give priority to the rich. Evidently, distinctions were being made in that Christian community, and that is why the apostle admonishes them so strongly. In this respect, they had adopted

the attitude of their environment, where people are often treated according to their status, and they had not yet sufficiently internalized the Lord's message.

One of the liberating dimensions of the Gospel is that it does not recognize the distinctions of the world. It addresses all people, regardless of their social status. Each of them is called to welcome God's love with all its benefits. The apostle emphatically reminds the brothers that it is precisely the rich who are often hostile toward Christians, bringing them before the courts and despising their faith. From the poor, on the other hand, they have no such persecution to fear.

James makes it clear that this difference in treatment between the rich and the poor in the assembly is a sin. In this sense, the brothers are not acting according to the law, but according to worldly criteria. Therefore, he exhorts them to keep the law in its entirety, since it has been given to us by God as a guide for all our actions. We cannot be content with keeping most of the commandments while disobeying just one of them. We must convert and observe the whole law.

This message is particularly important for us today, given the growing relativization of God's holy commandments. Although, as weak human beings, we can always count on his mercy as the source of our hope, this can only be effective when we recognize the seriousness of having transgressed God's commandments, ask for forgiveness, and change our lives.

Both the rich and the poor are called to fulfill God's commandments and embrace the message of the Gospel. There is no partiality here. An "option for the poor," which seeks to care for them in a special way, must not be confused with an idealization of poverty. At the same time, we must be very careful that our love and attention toward them are not linked to political ideas that are foreign to the spirit of the Gospel.

The greatest treasure and true wealth for the poor, as for all people, is to delight in the love of the heavenly Father and to welcome his Son as Savior. It is our duty as Christians to approach them with an open heart and, through our works of charity, to put into practice the equality of dignity of all people.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/brotherly-love-2/>