

"Show No Partiality"

(James 2:1-10)

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Introduction: A Lutheran Primer On Sanctification

As taught in the writings of C.F.W. Walther and consistent with the Word of God and as confessed in the Lutheran Confessions and by Dr. Martin Luther (excerpts taken from the essay written by Pr. Espinosa in the book *C.F.W. Walther: Churchman and Theologian*, CPH, 2011):

Summary Thesis 1: Faith brings forth fruit/good works commanded and therefore necessitated by God so that when true faith in Christ is present, a person is changed and he experiences a new life in thought, word, and deed.

Summary Thesis 2: Faith also brings forth a necessary cross that is felt in the spiritual battle between the sinful nature of the Christian and their new life in Christ through which the Holy Spirit leads the Christian to crucify the flesh, feel the anguish of the struggle in keeping humility, and conduct discipline against the possibility of dwelling in unrepentant, deliberate sin that would otherwise destroy faith.

Despite the fact that the Scriptures and our Confessions elaborate on the Christian life, our holiness for living that is in Jesus Christ, we have a tremendous challenge in actually teaching it and applying it. But the two summary thesis statements may be boiled down to these six (6) major elements about your sanctification as one who is God's new creation by grace alone. Keep in mind that these are not the basis for your salvation (only Christ is!), but rather the evidence that you are saved (that is, that you are in Christ your sanctification!):

- 1. An accurate ORDER (a theological sequence and progression which intimates cause and effect) in stating that faith always comes first while good works follow. The order can never be inverted if one is faithful to biblical theology.**
- 2. Good works are necessary in the life of the Christian, which when understood in biblical context, is axiomatic.**
- 3. In true sanctification, the Holy Spirit creates new affections, spiritual movements, and changes the entire life of the believer.**
- 4. The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to crucify (subdue, put down, kill, mortify, drown, etc.) the flesh (the sinful nature marked by impulses to sin against God and our neighbor).**

5. The Christian is led by the Holy Spirit to feel anguish in this struggle as his sin is put before him, but God produces true humility in the Christian as a result.
6. The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to conduct a holy discipline against the possibility of persisting in unrepentant, deliberate sin that would otherwise destroy faith.

Part I: Now wouldn't know that the Epistle of James emphasizes sanctification! This is God's letter in God's Word for you, God's people...and it's all about sanctification!

- A. And in our text today from James 2:1-10, he addresses an area of our sanctification which is often overlooked.
- B. We are commanded by God and therefore we learn that it is God's will that by His grace this commandment would – though imperfectly – still nevertheless mark the lives of you His people. Which command in James 2:1 is there?

Answer: show no partiality!

- C. The Greek word is derived from a Hebrew concept (*nasa' phanim*) which means "to lift the face on a person in the sense of being favorable or partial to him."
- D. God is saying don't do this, because if you do, you are showing favoritism and partiality to one person over another.

Part II: How does the LORD view this sin?

- A. This is the part that blows me away!
- B. Verse 4:

"have you not then [if you practice favoritism] made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

1. The word here for "evil" is describing the nature and practice of evil or wickedness. This is not merely saying that this is sinful – which of course is the cause of all evil along with the devil – but this is the active living out of wickedness and evil...this is a terrible, terrible sin that people commit against God and their neighbor.

2. **WHY is this so bad?! Answer: Because it is one of most blatant contradictions that we would say on the one hand, "Jesus died for all; Jesus loves all; Jesus rose for all!" but then on the other hand, would in our actions indicate a total and complete contradiction of the Gospel by treating some as being better than others (which in effect infers that Jesus is not for all, but only some have received His grace; only some people are really good; only some are worthy of your kindness). This is wickedness!**

C. **Now it's fascinating that James in this context points out a particular set of circumstances regarding this sin: it was especially prevalent in the 1st century Christian Church in Jerusalem.**

1. **Many Christians assumed that the rich were worthy of special treatment, partiality, and favoritism, because it was assumed that if one was rich then they must be especially favored by God. Conversely, if one is not rich, then they have not received God's favor or at least, have received less of God's favor.**

2. **This was a terrible cause for division in the Church and the cause for terrible hypocrisy.**

3. **James had to lead the people to reconsider:**

A. **The LORD Jesus was poor.**

B. **The LORD Jesus had even warned those who were rich. It brings shivers to me sometimes to think of Jesus words about the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16. Abraham says to the rich man in hell:**

"Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted [in heaven], and you are in anguish [in hell]."

4. **Please don't misunderstand: God does not teach that because a person is rich, then they are condemned. That is not what Scripture is saying. It is interesting to note that Abraham during his life on earth was quite rich...and he's the one speaking to the rich man in this parable!**

5. **However, we have to get over our false assumptions that lead us to practice partiality and favoritism.**

Part III: I am called to preach the Word to all and not show favoritism, but...

- A. In a different place and a different time, a very wealthy member expressed an untenable proposition for controlling the ministry and he made it very clear to me that if I did not comply, he would leave and take his offerings with him. I will never forget that day. Shame on me, because I was full of fear and as a result, I wanted to please this man. I wanted to go along with what he was saying. But not of my own doing, somehow, somehow, my mouth opened and words came out to convey that I could not and would not do what he was saying. He kept his word. He left and the offerings were instantaneously negatively impacted. I will never forget also that there I was living in worry and fear again! But not long after that, the LORD brought a new member "out of the clear blue sky" who was clinging to our tradition and our confession of God's Word and did not want to change it, but desired to support it! And he joined. I had no idea who this man was before he had come, but it turned out that God had blessed him as much if not more than the man who had left. The Church actually become stronger. The whole episode was amazing to me!**
- B. But I share with you, because I was in this instance already in my heart, showing favoritism...a terrible wicked sin. The rich man in our midst needs the bold and unadulterated truth of God's Word just as much as the poor man in our midst.**

Part IV and Conclusion: But it is easy to feel Condemned because after-all, how often have we committed this sin?

- A. But Jesus dear Christian did NOT show favoritism or partiality when He came to save you.**
- B. And there's this weird part of us that wants to deny it. We want to say, "Whoa! Wait a minute!"**
- 1. "Jesus should be partial when it comes to my salvation, because I doubt so much..." and we can further think and say...**
 - 2. "I've rebelled so often.**
 - 3. I've contradicted the pure teaching of sanctification in God's Word.**
 - 4. If truth be told, sometimes even though we know intellectually that God's Word says that Jesus died for all, that somehow, somehow – in our sin and in our despair – we must be the exception to the rule...surely God is also partial and shows favoritism, because how many others are better than**

me, a poor, miserable sinner?! I can be so hard-hearted; I can be so approving of my wickedness and sin.”

- 5. But this is where dear Christian that we must return to the pure Gospel, not the limited gospel which is no gospel at all.**
- 6. Jesus Christ became the worst of sinners...you could never compete with Jesus...and there was one time that the Father seemed to be partial...it was when He treated His own Son as being worse than anyone else.**
- 7. Jesus’ sin on the cross of Calvary far, far, far surpassed your own. Your sin can only be on you...but the world’s sins...the sins of billions of people were cast onto Jesus...He was by far...far, far, far worse than you.**
- 8. And with all of that sin...which included your sin, He spilled His blood to cover every ounce of sin.**
- 9. This is the truth, this is why you are forgiven; and His resurrection for ALL proves it!**
- 10. For this reason and this reason alone let us despise our ways of favoritism; let us pray for, love, and serve the rich and poor...and be true to the Word of Christ which guarantees that Jesus showed no favoritism so that every, single one of us might be saved. In Jesus’ Name! Amen!**