OPENING SCRIPTURE(S): 1 Timothy 1:5-6

“The purpose of my instruction is that all the Christians there would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith. But some teachers have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time arguing and talking foolishness.” 1 Timothy 1:5-6

Have we missed this whole point?
Are we loving “everyone” from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith? Or, just certain people?
Are we unable to love some because of our love and allegiance to others? If so, then, we’re partial in our love!

Partiality places limits on our love.

Loving Without Limits

1. Partiality places limits on our love and calls both wisdom and faith into question!

   • **Wisdom.** “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no partiality and is always sincere.” James 3:17

   • **Faith.** “My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim that you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people more than others?” James 2:1-9

2. Partiality has a corruptive and divisive influence in any setting. See Peter’s partiality and hypocrisy. Galatians 2:11-13

   • Much of the division in churches stem from jealousy or envy as a result of real or perceived partiality or a desire for preferential treatment! It was true in the early church and it is true today!

   “But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. Those who spoke Greek complained against those who spoke Hebrew, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.”
   Acts 6:1  Notice two things: 1) when this problem arose…[as the believers multiplied]…and the sign or symptom 2) [those…complained]

   • No matter how spiritual we think we are, being partial in our love is never good.
   **Is there ever any good reason in God’s eyes to be partial?** For example, someone might ask, are we not partial to people because we have certain things in common—children, careers, hobbies, family, goals, life experiences, even hurts?
   **This may be our practice and the pattern we’ve observed, but there is never a good or godly reason for showing partiality!**

   “Showing partiality is never good, yet some will do wrong for something as small as a piece of bread.” Proverbs 28:21

3. To show partiality is to love with limits—and to love with limits is to love with an impure heart and motive!

Partiality is to favor or prefer one person over another or one group or thing over another. Partiality is sin because we prefer or favor one person or persons over another; or, show preferential treatment (mercy, justice, faith, love) based on our own moral code or a set of religious standards that was once allowed but have since become obsolete! See Acts 17:26:31 for an example.

4. Some might ask, well, isn’t God partial to some people?

We can be sure that God will never do or be for what He Himself condemns!
"Fear the LORD and judge with care, for the LORD our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of bribes." 2 Chronicles 19:7

There are instances in the Bible that might suggest partiality on the part of God or some Old Testament saints. Only understanding is needed to dispel what appears to be a conflict because Jesus Himself said: “...the Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35

People frequently cite for examples of partiality:

   • David and Jonathan’s friendship. 1 Samuel 18:1-5  **Their friendship was part of God’s plan—not theirs! Neither did they cut themselves off from the community of Israel. Moreover, Jonathan did not see or seek to gain some advantage through his relationship with David!** 1 Samuel 23:15-18

   • Jacob and Joseph’s relationship. Genesis 37:1-5  **What kind of fruit did Jacob’s partiality produce in his house?**
   **In both examples, God simply worked in and through human nature to accomplish His divine purpose—that’s all!**
“Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.” Ephesians 5:1-2

5. Well, if we follow God's example in love, we'll come to only one conclusion—God is not partial in His love!

“Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God doesn't show partiality." Acts 10:34-35

- Jesus was God's own Son—but, God was not partial in His love for Him!
- Jesus was God's first and only Son—but, God wasn't partial to keep Jesus from the trials and temptations that were necessary to produce the fruit of obedience in Him through suffering!
- In fact, the Scriptures say God loves us just as much as He loves Jesus! "I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are—"I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me." John 17:22-23

“And the leaders of the church who were there had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.) Galatians 2:6 God has no favorites! But, we often do!

6. So, how do we, as a body of believers, avoid the sin of partiality?

- Stop loving people on the basis of appearance, rumors, some other superficial level like whether they're nice or not!
  “The trouble with you is that you make your decisions on the basis of appearance...” 2 Corinthians 10:7
- By being careful to keep our good from being evil spoken of. “Let not then your good be evil spoken of.” Romans 14:16 We must be very careful to do good to and suffer long with everyone and not just with those we like, the ones we've never had a problem with, and/or the ones who agree with us!
- By treating everyone the same—and by that we mean, loving people the way Christ loves us! “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.” John 13:34
- By managing our relationships. As a pastor, I have to manage my relationships, watch myself, and keep a close guard on my heart and my affections so that I don't corrupt others by being partial [and, if I have done that, I repent!] or allow them to corrupt me through partiality!

In the church, no relationship—business, family, or personal—is so important that it should be allowed to drive a wedge between brothers and sisters or undermine the peace and unity of the greater body.

This was a settled issue with the apostle Paul:
“For preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't do it! If I were doing this of my own free will, then I would deserve payment. But God has chosen me and given me this sacred trust, and I have no choice. What then is my pay? It is the satisfaction I get from preaching the Good News without expense to anyone, never demanding my rights as a preacher. This means I am not bound to obey people just because they pay me, yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ.” 1 Corinthians 9:16-19

For us, it means not allowing ourselves to be placed in anyone’s debt to the extent that our relationship jeopardizes the work of ministry!

This was also a settled issue for Jesus. Scripture say of Jesus:
“Because of the miraculous signs He did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many people were convinced that He was indeed the Messiah. But Jesus didn't trust them, because He knew what people were really like. No one needed to tell Him about human nature.” John 2:23-25

- It may be easy to love some people because they are nice to us.
- It may be easier to love and/or get along with others because they are easy-going or easy to talk to.
- And, it is very easy to love and be partial to someone because they help us or are good to us.

This is human nature; yet, we must not allow our hearts to become corrupted in any of these relationships and by them become partial in our love!
• It is entirely possible to be loving people just as God would have us to and still be falsely accused of showing partiality. But, when we show partiality or preferential treatment, we remove all doubt!

7. We can spend a lot of time trying to impress people with our love, or 1) we can be a consistent example of love, and 2) we can all go to God’s Word and let Him show each of us how much more we need to mature in the area of love!

Jesus shows us how to love without limits—and the way to avoid being partial in our love! Matthew 5:43-48

1. “You have heard that the law of Moses says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!” 5:43-44
   - If we love only our neighbors, that would be partiality. So, Jesus upped the ante by not only commanding us to love both, but to pray for our enemies who persecute us!
   - In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For He gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too. 5:45

2. If you love only those who love you, what good is that?
   - If we love only the people who loved us back—that would be a whole lot easier than trying to love my enemies, but that would be conditional love—and that wouldn’t help us grow and mature in love…besides…
   - Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 5:46

3. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else?
   - Again, if we’re kind (greet, salute) only to our friends—we could probably keep them around for a long time, but that would give us a false sense of maturity and in the end—that wouldn’t help us grow and mature in love…besides…
   - Even pagans do that. 5:47

4. But you are to be perfect,
   - So, the goal of our love is not just to go through the motions “trying to love a little here, and trying get along a little over there”—but, to be perfect (merciful and compassionate)…
   - even as your Father in heaven is perfect. 5:48

GOD LOVES US UNCONDITIONALLY WITH ALL OUR FLAWS, BUT HE IS NEVER PARTIAL IN LOVING US BECAUSE HE LOVES US WITHOUT LIMITS!

GO YE THEREFORE AND DO LIKEWISE!