

Romans 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For there is no respect of persons with God.

Analysis

For there is no respect of persons with God—οὐ γάρ ἐστιν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ (ou gar estin prosōpolēpsia para tō theō). Προσωποληψία (prosōpolēpsia, "partiality/favoritism") literally means "receiving face"—judging by external appearance rather than reality. This word appears only in Christian literature, possibly coined to express God's radical impartiality. Paul here grounds verses 6-10's universalism: God judges all by the same standard—works revealing faith's genuineness.

This principle decimates Jewish presumption based on ethnic identity and Gentile despair over lacking covenant status. God doesn't grade on a curve with preferential treatment for Abraham's descendants. He evaluates heart, not pedigree; reality, not reputation. Peter learned this lesson at Cornelius's household (Acts 10:34), declaring "God is no respecter of persons." James 2:1-9 applies it to Christian communities tempted to favor wealthy members.

The phrase establishes theological bedrock for Paul's entire argument: justification by faith alone, not ethnic privilege (chapter 3-4), one standard for Jew and Gentile (chapter 9-11), and unified church transcending cultural divisions (chapter 12-15). God's impartiality is simultaneously terrifying (eliminates false security) and glorious (opens salvation to all).

Historical Context

Old Testament repeatedly affirms God's impartiality (Deuteronomy 10:17, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Job 34:19). However, Jewish interpretation often bifurcated: God shows no partiality among Jews but maintains categorical distinction between covenant people and Gentiles. Paul collapses this, insisting the same standard applies to all humanity. This echoes Jesus's radical inclusion—praising Gentile faith (Matthew 8:10, 15:28) while condemning Jewish presumption (Matthew 23:9, John 8:39-41).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What external markers—race, denomination, socioeconomic status—do I unconsciously assume affect God's judgment?
2. How does God's impartiality both terrify me (I can't hide behind privilege) and comfort me (His judgment is perfectly just)?
3. In what ways do I show 'partiality' in how I evaluate myself versus others, grading my sins leniently and theirs harshly?

Interlinear Text

οὐ	γάρ	ἐστιν	προσωποληψία	παρὰ	τῷ	θεῷ
no	For	there is	respect of persons	with	G3588	God
G3756	G1063	G2076	G4382	G3844		G2316

Additional Cross-References

Acts 10:34 (References God): Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Deuteronomy 10:17 (References God): For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

2 Chronicles 19:7 (References God): Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Job 34:19 (Parallel theme): How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.

Galatians 2:6 (References God): But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

Colossians 3:25 (Parallel theme): But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Ephesians 6:9 (Parallel theme): And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

Matthew 22:16 (References God): And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Luke 20:21 (References God): And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: