

Salt Church

James 2:1-13

“Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment”

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The Fruit of Salvation

David and Cindy

Recap

James 1:26-27

²⁶ If anyone thinks himself to be religious while not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

This is what we learned:

The deceived man claims Christ and even appears to be religious but the overflow of his heart is expressed by what he says and ultimately determines his actions.

- If he claims Christ through religious ceremony and does not control his tongue, **he is a liar.**
 - For the overflow of man's heart will **always** spill out of his mouth.
 - **The tongue is a small flame** that can set worlds on fire bringing destruction to that person and all that are near them.

God determines how He will be worshiped.

- God has said that our worship is more than going to church.
- More than reading the word.
- More than praying.
 - It is all of those things combined that compel the child of God to action.
 - These actions are motivated **by our love for the Father** and the fruit of that love is put on display by how we:
 - Take care of each other (particularly those in great need like widows and orphans).
 - And how we separate ourselves from sin.

James 2:1-13 (LSB)

2 My brothers, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

- ***“My brothers”***
 - This is a reminder that James is speaking to the Church scattered throughout the region.
- ***“do not hold your faith”***
 - The Strong’s Concordance defines this ***Greek word as “to have and to hold”***.
 - So, **we conclude** that our faith in Jesus Christ cannot be had or held with **favoritism or showing partiality**.
 - ***Apparently, this was a real issue within the church.***

James 2

² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in bright clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,” ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

- **What is the evil thought?**

- The evil thought appears to be that people with gold rings and bright clothes **are rich and therefore are more valuable** and have more to offer than those who are in dirty clothes and no ring on their finger.

- **As a result of this judgement several things happen:**

- The rich guy gets special attention.
 - He gets a good seat in a good place
- The poor guy gets little or no attention
 - He is told to stand “over there” meaning, away from the good seat and the wealthy guy.
 - The only seat offered to him is not the foot stool but the floor next to the foot stool.
 - Meaning next to someone’s smelly feet!

We learned last week that the overflow of a man’s heart will spill out of his mouth.

- That is exactly what is happening here
 - “Stand over there”

- “Sit next to my footstool”
- This person has judged this poor person as “less valuable” because of the absence of wealth.
 - Why?
 - This is how his heart feels.

Why would this be happening?

- I think the simple answer would be the financial state of the early church.
 - Acts 2 tells us that the early church had very little.
 - So, they came together and pooled their resources and took care of each other.
 - Many of them had lost everything because they had chosen to follow Christ.
- Now, imagine when someone shows up who has a little money.
 - The needs are great and this person has the ability to help meet those needs.
 - Therefore, partiality was shown.
 - James, through the power of the Holy Spirit, says that we cannot think that way.

⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

- James’ question is rhetorical.
 - He knows the answer.

- He knows that God the Father doesn't choose a man based upon wealth.
- James also knows that in eternity all of God's children are heirs of the kingdom, which is a beautiful way of saying we are all children of the King.
- James reminds us that ***only those who love the Father will inherit the kingdom.***
 - Therefore, making the love of the Father the quality in which a person's worth is determined.

6 But you have dishonored the poor man.

- The poor man is dishonored when he has **done nothing that deserves dishonor.**

Is it not the rich who oppress you and they themselves drag you into court?

- Those wealthy people **who oppress and drag you into court, they deserve dishonor.**
- Money is their motivation and very possibly their god.

7 Do they not blaspheme the good name by which you have been called?

- Another rhetorical question:
 - ***“blaspheme” = defame, revile, speak evil.***
- This leads me to believe that this has been going on for a while.
 - Why would the wealthy people blaspheme the good name by which Christians had been called?

- I am sure money and position had something to do with it.

⁸ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.

- I love simple!
 - Simple works!
 - James, through the power of the Holy Spirit draws our attention to the non-negotiable command to “love your neighbor as yourself”.
 - That term “royal law” is a reminder of who gave the command “Our King Jesus”.

Here is how Jesus said it:

Matthew 22:35-40

³⁵ And one of them, a scholar of the Law, asked *Him* a question, testing Him, ³⁶ “Teacher, which is **the great commandment** in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ **This is the great and foremost commandment.** ³⁹ And the second is like it, **‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’** ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Back to James

⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.

- Why?
 - Seems to me that we would be loving the one that we would be showing partiality too.
 - The problem comes within the word “partiality”.
 - In order to show partiality we must show **disdain at the same time.**
 - Love requires an equal amount of attention and respect.
- The transgression comes when love is not shown to someone due to some type of prejudice.

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

- That’s a heavy statement!
 - This is all of us.
 - This is what keeps us humble.

¹¹ For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

- What is God saying to us?
 - All sin carries the same punishment.
 - What is that punishment?
 - The wages of sin is death.
- I believe the idea that James is trying to convey to us is that we are deeply flawed people.

- We are so deeply flawed that we tend to categorize our sins as serious and not so serious.
 - The problem with that way of thinking is that some sins become acceptable and justifiable.
 - The sin of favoritism, or showing partiality, is a serious sin due to the fact that disdain can be the consequence.
 - It ranks with adultery and murder.
 - Why?

I was hoping that you would ask!

- Because it starts in our heart.
 - Jesus said that if you lust after someone in your heart you are already guilty of adultery.
 - Jesus also said that if you hate someone you are already guilty of murder.
 - Why?
 - Because the heart is the origin of attitude, thought, decision, and action.

James, through the power of the Holy Spirit is saying that we need a new heart that sees the world for the way that it really is.

- We need a heart that sees the damage that is caused by prejudice.

¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom.

- ***What is the law of freedom Pastor?***
 - **I thought** the law could only convict?

- **Why does** James say that we “are to be judged”?
- **How does** all of this affect how we speak and act?
 - **I thought** we were not supposed to judge others?
 - **What does** the Bible (Jesus) say?

Matthew 7:1-5

7 “Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. ³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

- What is Jesus saying here?
 - Does Jesus really want a world or a people that do not make judgements?
 - No!
 - We must make judgements based upon the Word of God.
 - And when we judge we must do two things:
 - 1st Judge ourselves, so that to remove our sin
 - 2nd Judge with much grace and mercy

Consider Matthew 18 as it shows us the model for proper judgement within the church:

Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵ “Now if your brother sins, **go and show him his fault, between you and him alone;** if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen *to you*, **take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.** ¹⁷ And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; **and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax collector.** ¹⁸ Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

- ***“If your brother sins”***

- That phrase establishes that Jesus expects us to make judgements that are Biblically based. (God determines what is sin.)
- **“go and show him his fault, between you and him alone;”** Why would Jesus want us to go to our brother alone?
 - Two reasons:
 - **First: You can crush the spirit** of a person if you gossip about someone’s sin without ever addressing it with that person.
 - **The motive of the gossip’s heart is destruction.**

- The motive of Jesus and His followers is reconciliation, restoration, and love.
- **Second: There may not be a sin.**
 - Perception can be distorted without all of the facts.
 - Go to them in private so that both of you don't appear foolish.
 - If it is not sin but simply a perception issue, no harm no foul.
 - If it is sin, call that brother to confession and repentance.
 - If he repents you have won your brother over, if not go get two or three witnesses that will confirm his disobedience.
 - If that doesn't work, bring it before the church and treat him as an unbeliever.

(Side note)

Matthew 18:19-20

¹⁹ “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

- These verses have been so miss used.
- The context in which Jesus says this is related to church discipline.

- Meaning that when the difficult decision has been made to discipline a brother in Christ for unrepented sin, Jesus says you can ask for it and it will be done.
- Verse 20 confirms that when the two or three witnesses have come together in His name and have rightly and graciously done everything that Jesus has said to do, they can rest assured that He is in agreement with them and is with them in their decision.

Sadly, some have said those words and insinuated that Jesus is only with us when two or three are gathered in His name, that simply is not the truth, for Jesus Himself said that **He would never leave us or forsake us.**

What have we learned?

- We are called to make judgments, but those judgments need to be made with the same grace and mercy that has been given to us.
 - Those judgments need to be based upon the Word of God.
 - In this case there is no Biblical standard for mistreating someone just because they are poor.
 - Why?
 - Because every child of God is rich! (In His love and future inheritance.)

Final thoughts

- Jesus spent most of His time with people who had little or no money at all.

- Many of the people that followed Him, followed Him because He offered hope and access that they never had before in any Rabbi.
- He was kind, gracious, and filled with mercy.
 - He fed them and ate with them.
 - He hugged and touched those that were considered unclean.
 - He chose the unwise fishermen to be His disciples.
 - He chose the rejected tax collector and the overzealous political activist to be His disciples.
 - He chose women with very sinful pasts to be a very important part of His ministry.
 - He also reached out to the rich, and some of them heard His voice:
 - Zacchaeus
 - Nicodemus
 - Joseph of Arimathea
 - But most of the wealthy rejected His words.
 - The rich young ruler couldn't leave his wealth to follow Jesus.
 - Almost all of the religious leaders of His day rejected Him because they loved their money and power more than Him.
 - Pilate rejected Jesus' words because he wanted to keep his position of Governor.
 - And Judas thought Jesus was only worth 30 pieces of silver.

With all of that in mind, James cautions the church about chasing after men and women who have money.

- **His message is simple**

- Love everyone the same.
- Partiality and favoritism are a sin **especially** if they are motivated by money.

Why did you say it like that Pastor?

- Because Jesus did choose to spend more time with three of the twelve.
- Peter, John, and James were invited into intimate moments that the others were not privy to.
 - They were often called away from the group for more training.
 - The mount of transfiguration for example.
 - I do not believe that this meant that He loved them more than the others,
 - It just meant that they had been called into leadership and that leadership required more training and more time.

What am I am trying to express:

- **You will favor your children** over someone else's child and that's okay, and it is expected.
- **You will favor close friends** over others that you have just met and that is okay as well.
- **But what we must not do** is determine to dislike someone before we even meet them.

- ***Loving your neighbor as yourself*** is a broad statement that carries a lot of weight because Jesus said it.
 - Some neighbors are easier to love than others.
 - We must remember that Christ loved us even when we were His enemies.
 - **The difficult neighbors** (brothers and sisters) require more prayer, more truth, **more patience**, more grace, more mercy, more love, **more patience**, and **even more patience**.

We close out today's teaching with James 2:13

¹³ For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy.

If you do not give grace and mercy in how you judge there will be no mercy for you.

- This insinuates that if you do not show mercy then **you don't know The One that has shown you mercy.**
- For the child of God knows the mercy that has been generously poured out upon them.
- And that is the motivation of their heart as they extend the same mercy given to them.

Verse 13 closes with a promise

"Mercy triumphs over judgment."

- Praise GOD!

- There is only mercy for the child of God, for the cross of Christ has intercepted our judgment and His mercy has shielded us from the wrath of God's holy judgment.

A.W. Tozer (You are an odd group!)

“A real Christian is an odd person.

**He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen,
talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see,
expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another,
empties himself in order to be full,
admits he is wrong so he can be declared right,
kneels down in order to get up,
is strongest when he is weakest,
richest when he is poorest
and happiest when he feels worst.**

**He dies so he can live,
forsakes in order to have,
gives away so he can keep,
sees the invisible,
hears the inaudible
and knows that which passes knowledge.”**