

Passage: James 2:9-13

Title: The Test of the Law of God

Summary: As we continue our study in the book of James, a book with the theme of faith and the testing and proving out of our faith, where we see real faith showing up in real life; we come to the "Test of the Law of God". Man has their standards, but God has His, and in our passage, we will dig deep and answer three questions, "What is the Difference Between"

1. Sin and Transgression (2:9)
2. God's Standard and Religion's Standard (2:10-11)
3. Grace and Mercy (2:12-13)

James 2:9–13 (NKJV) ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "*Do not commit adultery*," also said, "*Do not murder*." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Outline: What is the Difference Between:

- Sin and Transgression (2:9)
- God's Standard and Religion's Standard (2:10-11)
- Grace and Mercy (2:12-13)

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need

What is the Difference Between:

- **Sin and Transgression (2:9)**

(James 2:9 NKJV) but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Here we see in this one verse the word sin and transgression, so we ask ourselves, what is the difference between the two?

Simply put:

- Sin is to miss the mark, as to not hit the bullseye.
- Transgression is to cross the line (trespass).

In Psalm 32:5, the psalmist says, "I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.'" In this one verse, "sin," "iniquity," and "transgression" are all mentioned. Basically, the three words communicate the same idea: evil and lawlessness, as defined by God (see 1 John 3:4). However, upon closer examination, each word also carries a slightly different meaning.

The word sin and its cognates are used 786 times in the New International Version of the Bible. Sin means “to miss the mark.” It can refer to doing something against God or against a person (Exodus 10:16), doing the opposite of what is right (Galatians 5:17), doing something that will have negative results (Proverbs 24:33–34), and failing to do something you know is right (James 4:17). In the Old Testament, God even instituted sacrifices for unintentional sins (Numbers 15:27). Sin is the general term for anything that “falls short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Sin leads to a downward progression that, without the restoring power of the Holy Spirit, we all tend toward. The sin nature is present in every human being born since the Fall of Adam (Genesis 3:6–7; Romans 5:12). If left unchecked, continual sin leads to a “reprobate mind,” spoken of in Romans 1:24. Our sin nature causes us to gravitate naturally toward selfishness, envy, and pride, even when we are trying to do good. The apostle Paul alluded to his propensity to sin when he wrote, “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out” (Romans 7:18).

The sin nature leads to trespassing. A trespasser is someone who crosses a line or climbs a fence that he should not cross or climb. A trespass may be intentional or unintentional. Trespass can also mean “to fall away after being close beside.” Peter trespassed when he denied Jesus (Luke 22:34, 56–62). We all “cross the line” in thought, word, or attitude many times a day and should be quick to forgive others who do the same (Matthew 6:15).

Transgression refers to presumptuous sin. To transgress is to choose to intentionally disobey; transgression is willful trespassing. Samson intentionally broke his Nazirite vow by touching a dead lion (Numbers 6:1–5; Judges 14:8–9) and allowing his hair to be cut (Judges 16:17); in doing so he was committing a transgression. David was referring to this kind of sin when he wrote, “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered” (Psalm 32:1). When we knowingly run a stop sign, tell a lie, or blatantly disregard an authority, we are transgressing.

Also - Iniquity is more deeply rooted. Iniquity refers to a premeditated choice; to commit iniquity is to continue without repentance. David’s sin with Bathsheba that led to the killing of her husband, Uriah, was iniquity (2 Samuel 11:3–4; 2 Samuel 12:9). Micah 2:1 says, “Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning’s light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.” In David’s psalm of repentance, he cries out to God, saying, “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:2).

God forgives iniquity, as He does any type of sin when we repent (Jeremiah 33:8; Hebrews 8:12). However, iniquity left unchecked leads to a state of willful sin with no fear of God. The build-up of unrepentant sin is sometimes pictured as a “cup of iniquity” being filled to the brim (Revelation 17:4; Genesis 15:16). This often applies to nations who have forsaken God completely. Continued iniquity leads to unnatural affections, which leads to a reprobate mind. Romans 1:28–32 outlines this digression in vivid detail. The sons of Eli are biblical examples of reprobates whom God judged for their iniquities (1 Samuel 3:13–14). Rather than repent, Eli’s sons continued in their abominations until repentance was no longer possible.

The biblical writers used different words to refer to sin in its many forms. However, regardless of how depraved a human heart may become, Jesus’ death on the cross was sufficient to cover all sin (John 1:29; Romans 5:18). Psalm 32:5, quoted at the beginning of this article, ends with these words: “And you forgave the guilt of my sin.” The only sin that God cannot forgive is the final rejection of the Holy Spirit’s drawing to repentance—the ultimate fruit of a reprobate mind (Matthew 12:32; Luke 12:10). (GotQuestions).

What is the Difference Between:

- God's Standard and Religion's Standard (2:10-11)

(James 2:10 NKJV) For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

(James 2:11 NKJV) For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

(Matthew 5:17 NKJV) "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

(Matthew 5:18 NKJV) "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

(Matthew 5:19 NKJV) "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5:20 NKJV) "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

No Partiality of People / Nor Sin / All Sin is Equal / The 10 Commandments

Along the same thought of showing partiality among people, is selecting levels of sin, for God says all sin is equal before Him for He is a Holy God. God says if you are guilty of one of them, He considers equally guilty of all of them. The world and man-made religion want to grade on a curve, rack and stack them, so they can feel good about their sin, and falsely believe that God winks at their sin. They deceive themselves. And, whether a sin (missing the mark), or transgressing (willfully trespassing), all men/woman are guilty before God.

You remember the Law, the 10 Commandments, are recorded here in His Word the Bible:

(Exodus 20:1 NKJV) And God spoke all these words, saying:

(Exodus 20:2 NKJV) "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

(Exodus 20:3 NKJV) "You shall have no other gods before Me.

(Exodus 20:4 NKJV) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

(Exodus 20:5 NKJV) you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

(Exodus 20:6 NKJV) but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

(Exodus 20:7 NKJV) "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

(Exodus 20:8 NKJV) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

(Exodus 20:9 NKJV) Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

(Exodus 20:10 NKJV) but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

(Exodus 20:11 NKJV) For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

(Exodus 20:12 NKJV) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

(Exodus 20:13 NKJV) "You shall not murder.

(Exodus 20:14 NKJV) "You shall not commit adultery.

(Exodus 20:15 NKJV) "You shall not steal.

(Exodus 20:16 NKJV) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

(Exodus 20:17 NKJV) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

(Exodus 20:18 NKJV) Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

(Exodus 20:19 NKJV) Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

(Exodus 20:20 NKJV) And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

Guilty 1 – Guilty All / No Ranking / All Wretched

God says if you can keep every one of them, yet stumble on one, then you are guilty of them. One lie, just one lie, makes you guilty of stealing, murdering, adultery, using the Lord's name in vain, and even bowing down to idols. Did you do those things, no, then what is God saying? He is saying that He doesn't rank sin. Before Him there are not different levels of sinners. He considers the liar as wretched a sinner as a

murderer. The world and man-made religion want to grade on a curve, rack and stack them, so they can feel good about their sin, and falsely believe that God winks at their sin. They deceive themselves.

Why – He is Holy / A Consuming Fire

Why, because God is perfect, and that is His standard, perfection:

(Habakkuk 1:13 NKJV) *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness.....*

God is perfect and pure, so perfect and pure that anything imperfect that comes into His presence, His holiness consumes it:

(Deuteronomy 4:23 NKJV) *"Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.*

(Deuteronomy 4:24 NKJV) *"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

Judges the Heart

And, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, even elevated this for us, in that He revealed that God doesn't just look at the outward actions, but the thoughts and intent of the heart. Of course He does (last week's study we saw looks at the inward, the heart, not the outward). Jesus said if you have hatred in your heart, He considers you guilty of murder, and if you have lust in your heart, He considers guilty of adultery. So here we all are, guilty before Him. And, for context of our study, if show partiality He considers us equally guilty before Him as the adultery and murder.

Matthew 5:21–22 (NKJV) ²¹ *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Matthew 5:27–28 (NKJV) ²⁷ *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

We Can Forget

We who have been walking with the Lord for a while can forget that He is Holy, we can take His grace for granted, and forget that He is a Holy and Pure God. At the throne of heaven there are creatures who do nothing but all day and night exult His Holiness:

(Revelation 4:8 NKJV) *The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*

Jesus Calls Us to Perfection / Sermon on Mount

Jesus came in love, yet He still calls us to be blameless/perfect:

(Matthew 5:48 KJV) *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Positionally

Now "Positionally" those who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior; you are perfect and nothing you do can will affect your "right standing" with God. You are His child, His heir, and He will never leave you nor forsake you:

(John 1:12 NKJV) *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:*

(John 1:13 NKJV) *who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Relationally

But “Relationally”, our day-to-day communion and fellowship with Him, sin soils and spoils that sweet fellowship. It must be put away from us, so that we can draw closer to God. Again, you can have all of God you want, but not one drop more. Get the Christian Bar of Soap out:

(1 John 1:7 NKJV) But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

(1 John 1:8 NKJV) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

(1 John 1:9 NKJV) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Don't Stop Growing

Remember this book is written so that we might grow, and be mature. The Spirit is speaking to us right now and saying, “be ye perfect”, don't think that because you have rooted out the “big” sins that you are to stop there. God's standard is perfection, and that is what we are to be seeking:

(Philippians 3:13 NKJV) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

(Philippians 3:14 NKJV) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Don't Rank / Root them All Out

Don't rank your sins, and then think you are doing OK. God is saying all sin is wretched to me, allow no sin to be a part of your life. Be Ye Perfect! I encourage you to go back and study again last week's message in Being Doers of the Word, the Test of the Response to the Word.

The Message of Salvation / Sermon on Mount / Our Tutor

But hear this, the Law was given first so that we might see our need for a Savior, that our sins might be blotted out before the Holy God, so that we might not be consumed by Holiness due to our impurity. We have to become children of God, come into right standing before Him, and that can only be done through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for us on the cross.

The Sermon on the Mount was given by Jesus that we might examine ourselves, and His ultimate purpose was that we would see a need for a Savior. That is what the Law still does today, it shows us we are sinners and have offended the Holy God. Jesus Himself quoted the Law on the Sermon on the Mount so that we might see how we have violated God's Holy Standard:

(Romans 3:19 NKJV) Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

(Galatians 3:24 NKJV) Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The Gospel

What is the gospel? I will put it into 5 P's

1. Personal – God loves you and has a plan for your life

(Jeremiah 29:11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

2. Problem – But there is a problem, and that is that your sin separates you from Him for He is Holy.

(Isaiah 59:1-2) Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

3. Penalty – You have offended the Holy God, broken His commandments, therefore you can not come into His presence or fellowship with Him, for He is a consuming fire.

(Romans 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4. Provision – But God doesn't want to leave us separated from Him. God devised a plan that would allow Him to be merciful to us, while at the same time judging sin. Jesus Christ took our place, took our punishment.

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

5 Profession – Our response, we make a profession of Faith.

(Romans 10:9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

- 1. Recognize** – Recognize we have offended the Holy God, and Jesus is the only way.
- 2. Repent** – Be willing to Turn from our sin, and follow the Lord and all His ways
- 3. Receive** – Ask Jesus to come into your life and be your Lord and Savior.

What is the Difference Between:

- Grace and Mercy (2:12-13)

(James 2:12 NKJV) So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

Law Liberty versus Royal Law

The law of liberty, for who the Son sets free is free indeed. There is no other way to freedom except through the law of liberty and you are either under the law of liberty that you've been set free by the finished work of Christ or you are not under the law of liberty and you are a slave and you'll be a slave in this world and you'll be a slave in the next world to come, which will be the world separated from Christ forever lasting life called Hell. Let it be known. Every man lives forever. Death is just a passage into the next and final place of eternity, but every man will live forever. That's what the scripture says. But only on this side of the breath of life can a person make the decision of the next life and it will be through the freedom of the Son who sets free both sin and death through the finished work of the cross. Have you been set free by Jesus Christ who was crucified for you, for your sin that separates you from the holy God.

John 8:36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

The royal law can't save you. The royal law is the response to the law of liberty being set free by Christ. But there's an expectation that comes and hence we come to this passage. The royal law will determine and show what's truly in your heart. Are you living by faith or are you living by flesh because it will show up how you treat others, especially this place that we study here today of partiality, showing bias towards one person or another, whether bias for the good or bias for the bad.

James 2:8 (NKJV)⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;

James 2:12 (NKJV)¹² So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

(James 2:13 NKJV) For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

(Matthew 5:7 NKJV) Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

(Matthew 6:14 NKJV) "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

(Matthew 6:15 NKJV) "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Celebrating Mercy

Verse 13 - For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Once we see God's mercy, His forgiveness of our sins, we are to be merciful to others. You are to be celebrating and showing mercy. We have all heard:

(Matthew 5:7 NKJV) Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

(Luke 6:38 NKJV) "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

This is usually used when speaking about giving money, but that really isn't the context. The verse before it says to be merciful:

(Luke 6:36 NKJV) "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

(Luke 6:37 NKJV) "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

If you want mercy, and you will someday, then you must be merciful yourself. James is saying don't be legalistic. If you are going to be legalistic, then be legalistic with yourself, and gracious with others. Celebrate the law of Liberty.

What is the difference between mercy and grace?

Simply put:

- Mercy – not getting what we deserve (we deserve hell and judgment for breaking God's holy Law, yet instead we get forgiveness), mercy!
- Grace – getting what we don't deserve (God's-Riches-At-Christ's-Expense), we get eternal abundant life with God now and forever.

Mercy and grace are closely related. While the terms have similar meanings, grace and mercy are not exactly the same. Mercy has to do with kindness and compassion; it is often spoken of in the context of God's not punishing us as our sins deserve. Grace includes kindness and compassion, but also carries the idea of bestowing a gift or favor. It may help to view mercy as a subset of grace. In Scripture, mercy is often equated with a deliverance from judgment (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:30–31; 1 Timothy 1:13), and grace is always the extending of a blessing to the unworthy.

According to the Bible, we have all sinned (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). As a result of that sin, we all deserve death (Romans 6:23) and eternal judgment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12–15). Given what we deserve, every day we live is an act of God's mercy. If God gave us all what we deserve, we would all be, right now, condemned for eternity. In Psalm 51:1–2, David cries out, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Pleading for God's mercy is asking Him to show kindness and withhold the judgment we deserve.

We deserve nothing good from God. God does not owe us any good thing. What good we experience is a result of the grace of God (Ephesians 2:5). Grace is simply defined as "unmerited favor." God favors us—He shows us approval and kindness—in blessing us with good things that we do not deserve and could never earn. Common grace refers to the blessings that God bestows on all of mankind regardless of their spiritual standing before Him, while saving grace is that special blessing whereby God sovereignly bestows unmerited divine assistance upon His elect for their regeneration and sanctification.

Mercy and grace are evident in the salvation that is available through Jesus Christ. We deserved judgment, but in Christ we receive mercy from God and are delivered from judgment. In Christ we receive eternal salvation, forgiveness of sins, and abundant life (John 10:10)—all gifts of grace. Our response to the mercy and grace of God should be to fall on our knees in worship and thanksgiving. Hebrews 4:16 declares, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (GotQuestions)

John 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰ The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

Abundant Life

Let me tell you why you can trust, rest, be assured of God’s promise of life and that more abundant... come with me to the Potter’s House, who says “I know the thoughts that I think towards you says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and hope.

Jeremiah 29:10–14 (NKJV) ¹⁰ For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Jeremiah 18 – Come to the Potter’s House

In the book of Jeremiah, chapter 18, we have a wonderful passage about the Potter and the Clay. Potter and Clay. The Bible uses symbolism to deepen the message God has for His people. One such symbol is that of potter and clay. The most detailed example is found in Jeremiah 18. God instructed the prophet Jeremiah to go to a potter’s house where God would illustrate His relationship with Israel. Verses 2–6 say, “So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, ‘Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.’”

Jeremiah 18:1–4 (NKJV) ¹ The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: ² “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” ³ Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. ⁴ And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

If you went to the Potter’s House, you would see four things:

1. The Clay (the object the potter shaped on the wheel)
2. The Potter (the artisan)
3. The Wheel (the instrument the potter worked from)
4. The Kiln (the fire, oven, the potter finished the clay in).

The Clay (the object the potter shaped on the wheel)

Beloved, you are more than clay! The Potter’s hand touches you, has a desire for you, vessels of honor (Rom 9), a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29), and a new heart (Jeremiah 31).

Isaiah 64:8 (NKJV) ⁸ But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.

Romans 9:20–21 (NKJV) ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Jeremiah 29:10–14 (NKJV) ¹⁰ For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

And He starts with a “new heart”, that has God’s Law written on it and in it, empowered by His very Spirit, so that we may be “doers of the Word”, and there be “Real Faith, that shows up in Real Life”.

Jeremiah 31:31–34 (NKJV) ³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

The Potter (the artisan)

The Master Potter, our Father, is an artist.

We Are His Poem (Workmanship)

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (NASB). Other Bible versions use words such as masterpiece or handiwork instead of workmanship. In other words, we are wholly the result of God’s creative, redemptive, and sanctifying work, and we belong to Him.

Workmanship refers to more than the product of creation; it also refers to the degree of skill with which the product is made. That degree of skill imparts value to the thing made. For example, we could say, “That vase is of excellent workmanship.” The vase itself is lovely, but its value is derived from the talents of the one who designed and produced it. With that definition in mind, workmanship may be a more fitting term than either masterpiece or handiwork because of the emphasis it places on the Creator rather than the creation.

We are God’s workmanship in that He created us. Everything God creates is of value, yet nothing in creation compares to His work in creating mankind (Genesis 2:7). From the sky to rivers to frogs, God merely spoke and they were (Genesis 1). For six days, God said, “Let there be,” and it was so. But on the sixth day, He did something different. God reached down into the mud and formed a man. He then breathed “into man’s nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). That breath brought God’s own life into His workmanship. The human being now possessed a spirit unlike the life of animals and plants. Psalm 139:13–16 gives us a peek into God’s workshop, showing us that He is intimately involved in the creation of every human being.

We are God’s workmanship in that He redeemed us. As God knew they would, mankind rebelled against His authority. They defiled God’s workmanship and introduced sin into His perfect world (Genesis 3:11; Romans 5:12). From that very hour, God put into motion His plan to redeem them and restore them to their original design (Genesis 3:21–23). Before the foundation of the world, God had planned this redemption, which would ultimately result in the crucifixion of His Son as a final sacrifice for sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8). His workmanship was costly, as we are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

We are God’s workmanship in that He sanctifies us and fits us for service. He forms us the way He wants for His own pleasure and purposes (Philippians 2:13; Colossians 1:16). Despite the imperfections we find in ourselves and those we love, the clay cannot say to the potter, “Why did you make me like this?” (Romans 9:20; Jeremiah 18:5). God knows what He’s doing. He uses the sculpting tools of adversity, relationships, challenges, and miraculous interventions to mold us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:28). And He promises to finish what He began (Philippians 1:6). The goal is “good works” (Ephesians 2:10).

The truth that we are God’s workmanship is expressed in the context of our salvation: “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship” (Ephesians 2:8–10, NASB). The emphasis is on the grace and gift of God. We are not saved by our own works for the simple fact that we ourselves are God’s work. God is the Designer and Builder of our faith; we cannot save ourselves.

The Church as a whole is also God's workmanship. He has given us gifts, Scripture, and His Holy Spirit to enable us to carry out His work in the world. (Romans 12:4–7; 1 Corinthians 12:4). As a lantern exists to shed light, so the Church exists to spread the light of the gospel to the lost and dying (Matthew 5:14; Acts 13:47). To the degree that we allow His light to shine through us, we display His workmanship.

(GotQuestions).

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:1–10 (NKJV) ¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

And let it not be missed, especially as the culture we live in no longer makes life sacred, that the Master Potter started his forming and shaping of you in your mothers womb.

Psalms 139:14–16 (NKJV) ¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

The Wheel (the instrument the potter worked from)

The wheel are the calling, circumstances, situations, divine appointments and interruptions, the trials, and the temptations, that God allows in our lives. First is to get our attention for salvation, then secondly for Him to make His vessel of honor:

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) ⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

The vessel of dishonor? It is the person (formed in the mother womb), who rejects the invitation to be made into the beautiful vessel of honor.

The Kiln (the fire, oven, the potter finished the clay in).

And when the vessel is made, final shape, it goes into the kiln to be finished.

Firing Clay Explained

Ever wonder why a clay vessel doesn't turn to mud when it holds liquid? Because after it is put in the fire, it changes properties. There is a transformation, material properties change of the clay. It is a fascinating phenomenon.

Ceramics must be fired to make them durable. Potters need to know the processes taking place in order to be able to control the outcome. As well as firing clay, the glaze must also be fired to maturity. It is important to match the firing temperature of the glaze to the maturing temperature for the particular clay body. The type of kiln used and the firing schedule will also have an effect on the color and texture of the glaze.

Clay goes through several physical changes when fired. The first step is the evaporation of water from between the clay particles. Pots must be completely dry before firing, otherwise the steam escaping could cause them to explode. Initially, the kiln should be heated very slowly to give time for all the water to evaporate. Drying can be speeded up by pre-heating the ware in the kiln to 176°F (80°C) for a few hours. This part of the firing, up to 212°F (100°C) is called water smoking, which causes the water in the pores between the clay crystals to evaporate. The next stage is to drive off the water which is chemically combined with the clay (remember the formula for clay is Al₂O₃•2SiO₂•2H₂O). This is known as dehydroxylation and occurs up to 1022°F (550°C). Once this chemical change has taken place, the process cannot be reversed and the clay cannot be returned to its plastic state.

At 1063°F (573°C), the crystalline quartz in the clay body increases in volume by 1% (see silica phases in chapter 6). This may cause cracking if the temperature in the kiln is increased too rapidly. Organic matter in the clay is burned and oxidized to carbon dioxide, and fluorine and sulphur dioxide from materials in the clay body are driven off at 1292–1652°F (700–900°C). At this point

the biscuit firing is completed. The clay particles are sintered or welded together. The ware has undergone little shrinkage since the bone-dry stage, but it is durable enough to withstand handling and glazing.

Above 1652°F (900°C), the clay body begins to shrink and vitrify. The silica starts to melt, filling the spaces between the clay particles and fusing them together (8-1 and 8-2). The fired clay is known as metakaolin. At 1832°F (1000°C) the clay crystals begin to break down and melt. At 1922°F (1050°C), needle shaped crystals of mullite $3\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2$ begin to form, giving the fired clay strength and hardness. When mullite forms from metakaolin $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2$, extra free silica is released. Above 2012°F (1100°C), any free silica (not chemically combined) in the clay changes to cristobalite, which has a different structure from that of quartz.

When the kiln is cooled down, cristobalite contracts suddenly by 3% at 439°F (226°C) (see silica phases in chapter 6). This can cause cracking if the kiln is cooled too rapidly by opening too soon, causing some areas to drop in temperature and stressing the ware. It is advisable not to open it until it has cooled down to below 212°F (100°C).

30 Pieces of Silver

As we think of pottery, how can't we think of the "potter's field", that was purchased with the 30 pieces of silver Judas was given (and later returned) for betraying Jesus.

In Hebrew culture, thirty pieces of silver was not a lot of money. In fact, it was the exact price paid to the master of a slave if and when his slave was gored by an ox (Exodus 21:32). The slave's death was compensated by the thirty pieces of silver. There are two other places in the Bible that specifically mention the amount of thirty pieces of silver, and they are directly linked. The first passage is in Zechariah, which contains a prophecy that is later fulfilled in the book of Matthew.

Leading up to the prophecy of the thirty pieces of silver is a description of a strange episode in Zechariah's life. God had the prophet Zechariah play the part of a shepherd and care for a flock "doomed to slaughter" (Zechariah 11:4–14). God used this to illustrate a prophetic judgment against Israel for crucifying Christ, predicting the fall of Israel in AD 70 and the subsequent scattering of the nation. There are several elements in this passage that point to it as a prophecy about Jesus. First, Zechariah says he "got rid of the three shepherds" of the doomed flock (verse 8). The "three shepherds" are probably a reference to the three religious offices during Jesus' day that worked to condemn Jesus: the elders, the scribes, and the chief priests (Matthew 16:21). Second, Zechariah breaks his two shepherding staffs. One is named Favor and is broken to symbolize the breaking of the Mosaic Covenant by the disobedient people and God's setting aside His favor or providential care to allow judgment to come upon them (Zechariah 11:10). The second staff, named Union, is broken to represent the breaking up of the nation by the Romans.

Another prophetic reference is found in the thirty pieces of silver given to Zechariah after his work as a shepherd. He went to those he worked for and asked them to pay him what they thought he was worth. They gave him thirty pieces of silver, which he sarcastically calls a "handsome price" because it was such a small amount (Zechariah 11:13)—the price paid for a slave's accidental death. The employers meant to insult Zechariah with this amount of money. Returning the insult, God tells Zechariah to "throw it to the potter," and Zechariah tossed the money into the house of the Lord to be given to the potter.

These actions are a shockingly accurate and detailed prophecy, for when Judas Iscariot bargained with the leaders of Israel to betray the Lord Jesus, he asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" The murderous cabal then counted out for Judas "thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew 26:15). That's all they considered Jesus to be worth.

Later, Judas was overcome with guilt for betraying Jesus, and, fulfilling Zechariah's vivid prophecy, he threw the thirty silver coins into the temple (Matthew 27:3–5). The Jewish leaders used the thirty pieces of silver to buy a field from a potter, again as Zechariah had predicted (Matthew 27:6–10). It was in that field that Judas hanged himself. (GotQuestions).

Matthew 26:14–16 (NKJV) ¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

Matthew 27:3–10 (NKJV) ³ Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" ⁵ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. ⁶ But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." ⁷

And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, ¹⁰ and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."

Broken Pieces

What is a wonderful picture God gives us in the Potter's Field, is that He can do the impossible, He can take the broken pieces, even if they were already fired (conformed to the world), and reverse the bake and the set, and redeem us and make us brand new. Oh how we were broken and cast off by the world, say they are set and can never be changed, yet our Potter Jesus Christ, bought us back, redeemed the field, so He can do the impossible and put us on the wheel and make us vessels of honor. Only a God could do that, and in His mercy and grace and love He does.

Matthew 13:44 (NKJV) ⁴⁴ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

But the Potter first had to become a slave, for 30 pieces of silver, in order to buy us back and redeem us. **Matthew 26:14–16 (NKJV) ¹⁴** Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

That is Grace and Mercy!

Outline: What is the Difference Between:

- Sin and Transgression (2:9)
- God's Standard and Religion's Standard (2:10-11)
- Grace and Mercy (2:12-13)

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need