

# The Vain Religion of Selective Obedience

*Spiritual Identity*

By Rev. Erik Guichelaar

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** James 2:8-13  
**Preached on:** Sunday, December 3, 2023

**Grace Protestant Reformed Church**  
O-11225 8th Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

**Website:** [www.graceprc.org](http://www.graceprc.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc)

We turn in God's holy and infallible word to James chapter 2. The general letter of James to the churches in general, chapter 2. This morning when the summary of the law was given, we read from where I quoted from Leviticus 19 verse 18, love thy neighbor as thyself. That is quoted by James here in verse 8, Leviticus 19 verse 18, that's why I gave that as part of the summary of the law this morning. It ties into the instruction of God's word tonight. Let's read the first 13 verses. The text is verses 8-13. We will not be rereading that, but we will be working through these verses, verse by verse, so I encourage you to keep your Bibles open as we work through those verses. James chapter 2.

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of [or with] evil thoughts? 5 Hearken [listen], my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

Now begin the words of the text,

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced [or convicted] of the law as transgressors. 10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For he shall have judgment

without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

So far we read God's holy word.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the passage that we look at this evening is very closely related to what we looked at last time when we looked at verses 1 through 7, and so by way of introduction, I want to do a little bit of a review and look briefly at what we considered last time when we looked at verses 1 through 7. Maybe you remember, it's been a couple of weeks, in our sermon on that text, we had three main points. In the first point, we looked at what being a respecter of persons is, we looked at the definition, and maybe you remember that the word "respecter of persons" literally is to receive the face. So that to be a respecter of persons means you receive a person or you reject a person simply based on their outward appearance. You make your judgment of a person not based on their intrinsic merits, or their character, or what they do, but based simply on their outward appearances or circumstances so that you prefer as the one more worthy of your love, the one who is rich, or high born, or good looking, or powerful, you prefer him to someone else who doesn't have those things. And at the heart of this activity of respecting persons is judging a person based on what they offer me, what they can do for me with their riches or with their good reputation or whatever else I'm using them. That's what it is to be a respecter of persons.

In the second point of the sermon, we looked at why being a respecter of persons is so offensive. It's offensive to be a respecter of persons, first of all, because it's against justice. That's what James writes in verse 4, a respecter of persons is one who has evil thoughts. Evil thoughts because you're not loving your neighbor as yourself. You're not loving them at all, but you're judging them based on how they can potentially affect your life, either for better or worse. Your motivations are entirely selfish. You're like a judge who is biased. It's against just justice. You're really using them.

It's offensive to be a respecter of persons, second of all, because it's against reason, that's verses 6 and 7. James says, you favor the rich over the poor, but isn't it the very rich who oppress you? So that the way you're behaving doesn't even make sense. for you. It's against reason. And it's offensive to be a respecter of persons, third of all, because it's against God and it's against Jesus. That's especially verse 5 and also verse 1. God himself is no respecter of persons. Jesus himself is no respecter of persons. And to be a respecter of persons is simply contrary to the character of God and the character of Jesus and it's completely contrary to how God has dealt with us.

Then in the third point of the sermon, we looked at how we can avoid this offensive sin by staying close to the cross, by remembering how God has dealt with me personally in Jesus Christ, not respecting my person. This evening, as we move on to verses 8 through 13, what we want to notice first by introduction is that James is presenting a fourth reason for why being a respecter of persons is so offensive. Being a respecter of persons is so offensive, fourth of all, because it's against the royal law. It's against the law of liberty, verse 9, "But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin and are convicted of the law as

transgressors." Being a respecter of persons flies directly against the commandments to love your neighbor as yourself. If you are truly loving your neighbor as yourself, then there's no possibility for being a respecter of persons because as far as their outward appearance goes, you treat them all the same because you're treating them out of love, and not out of selfish ambition.

Now that's clearly what James is saying in these verses, but if we dive a little deeper, we see that James has something more that he's addressing in this passage, something that is perhaps even more serious than being a respecter of persons, in fact, it's something that explains why some church members allow themselves to be respecters of persons. What is this deeper issue that James is addressing in the text? It's this: the vain religion of selective obedience, picking and choosing which commandments of God you would keep and which commandments are not actually that important to keep. James is addressing this heart attitude that says we can pick and choose which commandments of God we will keep. That's a very important message for us, that's very timely because this is the temptation or the attitude that we're tempted to have also. The whole culture we live in is a culture of relativism. "I will determine what commandments to keep and what commandments I don't want to keep." And it's an attitude that creeps into the church. "I will claim to stand on the truth of God's word. I will claim to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. But I will still choose for myself which commandments I'm going to obey today, or this week, and which commandments I will ignore this week." That's really at the heart of being a respecter of persons. God says love your neighbor as yourself and yet I go ahead and I pick which neighbors I am going to love and which neighbors I'm not going to love. And we do it with this commandment, we do it with other commandments, too, and this is where James is going with these comments. James says, it's really a dead faith. It's a vain religion, and it's a dead faith.

We take our theme this evening, "The Vain Religion of Selective Obedience." We'll look at three things. First, the serious sin, verses 8 through 11. Second, the sober admonition, verses 12 and 13, the first part. And then third, the added encouragement, the last part of verse 13. As we begin looking at these verses, let's first walk through verses 8 through 10 and make sure we understand what James is saying here. In verse 8, James writes, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." And I think it's appropriate for us when we read verse 8 to read it as if it contains a sense of irony or maybe, yeah, I don't want to say sarcasm, but that sense of irony so that the idea is this, James is anticipating a response to what he's written so far in this chapter, and he's anticipating a response that looks like this, "But James, we keep God's law. After all, we don't kill, we don't commit adultery, we certainly keep the Sabbath day holy. We keep God's law." And James responds, anticipating that, he responds by saying, "Yes, if you keep the royal law, thou shalt love thy neighbor as yourself, ye do well." But then he goes on in verse 9 and says, "But look here, if you have respect of persons, you are committing sin and you are convicted of that law as transgressors." And the point James is making is this, you may think you are keeping God's law with your stable marriages, your fiscal finances, your Sabbath observance, you think you're doing good, but you are not. You're not keeping God's law because God's law says this, love your neighbor as yourself, and when you show favoritism and you

despise the poor and the needy, you're not loving your neighbor as yourself. You're breaking the law. And in verse 10, James goes on to explain, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." And the point James is making and the issue he's dealing with is this: you can't pick and choose which commandments you're going to keep. And you see, that's the issue going on in these churches. Let's see that. Let's remind ourselves of a few things here.

First, let's remember that these saints to whom James is writing are predominantly of a Jewish background. Remember, this is very early New Testament history. The church is made up practically entirely of Jewish converts, and these Jewish converts were those who were raised with a zeal for respecting and keeping God's law, right? They were all about keeping the law. But second, coming from that Jewish climate that they grew up in, these saints would also have been inclined towards a warped view of that law, a view of that law that emphasizes a mere outward obedience and it was a view that even emphasized that you could really pick and choose which commandments you wanted to keep and which you wanted to ignore as long as your good works outweigh your bad works. So that for the Jews, keeping the law was kind of like a credit and debit system. You don't want to commit the big sins, because that puts you in deep debt with God, but if you avoid the big sins, well, then you get credit to your account. So what you really want to do is avoid the big sins, but then you can commit the little sins. As long as the good you're doing outweighs the evil that you're doing, you're doing good. That's how the Jews thought. It was a spiritual balancing act. It was a form of works righteousness. It's legalism. And of course, for the Jews, something like avoiding adultery is a much bigger deal than showing favoritism. So if I show favoritism, but I avoid adultery, I'm pretty good. I'm acceptable. It's a form of selective obedience. It's self-righteous legalism and this is the culture James is writing against, faith without works.

This explains some of the language that we find in verses 8 through 10. For example, in verse 8, James writes, if you fulfill the royal law, and when James writes the royal law, what James is emphasizing is that the law we are given to keep is the law of the King. You don't get to pick and choose which commandments you keep because it's the law of the King. God is the King and our calling as citizens of his kingdom is to observe the law of the King. It's the royal law. And then in verse 8 he adds, he amplifies that by saying, according to the scripture, if ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, and what James is emphasizing there is that this law is not some man-made law, not something we're inventing, it's in your own scriptures. Leviticus 19 verse 18, "Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is in scripture. The law of God says, love your neighbor as yourself, treat others as you would have yourself be treated, treat the poor with the same love that you, and that's a twisted view of love, but with the same love that you show the rich. And the law says, don't interact with your neighbor merely with consideration of how he might be of profit to you, or how he might be a burden to you but love him as yourself. Truly love him spiritually. And so you get to James 2 verse 9, and what James writes is very easy to understand, "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin and are convicted of the law as transgressors." And in verse 10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." And here in verse 10, there's an important

principle that James is teaching. I've already said it, but he's emphasizing it: you can't pick and choose which laws to obey and which laws not to obey because the law is one. They go together. Otherwise, you're going to have a culture of legalism.

I can put it this way, the law of God is not to be imagined as a set of bowling pins, right? A set of bowling pins, you set them up at the end of the bowling alley and then you roll the ball and maybe you knock down a pin or two but the rest of the pins keep standing. That's not how the law of God works when you sin. No, rather, the law of God is to be compared to a glass pane or a mirror so that when you hit that mirror with a hammer, even though you only hit that mirror maybe in just one spot or even in a corner, what happens is this, the whole mirror shatters. You hit it at one point and the whole thing shatters. That's how the law works. That's how sinning works. You break one law and you break the whole thing and the point is, no one can justify this sin of being a respecter of persons by saying, "Hey, I'm only breaking one commandment. I'm only knocking one pin out of ten. There's still others that I keep standing. It's only a little sin." No, you've shattered the whole law and the attitude you are exhibiting is an attitude of vain religion. It's the vain religion of selective obedience.

And we might ask, why does it work this way? I think a Catechism student even asked me that a few weeks ago when we were looking at the law, Lord's Day 2 and Lord's Day 3. Why does the law stand as a unit, as one whole, so that you can't pick and choose which commandments you will observe and which you will ignore? Well, we can give a few reasons. I have three reasons. First of all, the law stands as a complete unit because the law is not just an expression of God's will, but the law is an expression, a reflection of God's very own being. The law, every commandment is rooted in God's very own being. There's nothing random about any of the Ten Commandments. They are all rooted in the very nature and being of God and so, to ignore just one of the commandments is really an attack on God himself. Just as God himself is one, so his law is one. To pick and choose which commandment you're going to keep is really to pick and choose which part of God you're going to like and which part of God you hate. That's what we do when we sin. I'm hating this part of God. It's an offense.

Second of all, the law stands as one entire unit because the essence of the law is love. At the heart of every single commandment is the commandment to love and so to pick and choose which commandment you're going to keep, it is really to pick and choose how you're going to ignore God's commandment to love. To refuse to love in one aspect of the law is really to refuse to love in all.

And then third of all, the law stands as one complete unit, one whole, because to disobey any commandment is simply the refusal to submit to the King. To try to pick and choose which commandments I will keep this week and which commandments I will ignore is really to say, in the end, I'm still going to be the one who's God. God won't be God, I will still be God. I will keep the laws that I judge to be good laws, that seem right to me, that are not too hard for me, and I will ignore the ones that seem not right to me.

It's simply idol worship. It's the worship of self. To practice selective obedience is really to reject who God is as my king. It's vain religion and James writes this is exactly what you're doing, churches, when you show favoritism. You're going to judge someone merely on the basis of their skin color and you call yourself a Christian? Have you really become that superficial? You're going to select who you treat in brotherly love and who you don't based on their wealth and their beauty or their family ties or lack thereof? What James says is you have to love your neighbor as yourself. That's the royal law.

And what does that mean to love your neighbor as yourself? Well, it's pretty straightforward. I love myself. That's obvious. I take care of myself. I have a concern for my physical health. I have a concern for my spiritual well-being. I love myself. I nurture and cherish my own body. It's natural. And you love yourself, that's natural, right? Whose mouth did you feed this morning? Whose face did you wash? Whose body are you concerned to keep warm when it's winter time? That's love. Whose career occupies your mind? Who are you trying to make comfortable? It's you. You love yourself and the idea is when you learn to love others in the same way that you love yourself, as God gives you that opportunity, whether they be rich or poor, educated or uneducated, handsome or otherwise, when you love your neighbor in that same way, you won't have a problem with being a respecter of persons. If you're loving others as yourself, there is no respecter of persons.

The calling is to love our neighbor as ourselves and when I am showing favoritism, I'm not doing that. I'm ignoring the law of the King. I am working sin. Literally in verse 9, you commit sin, it says you are working sin. I'm a transgressor, and I'm worthy of judgment. I'm showing a refusal to submit to God. I still want to be my own God and I really have a heart of enmity towards the law. That's at the heart of showing favoritism. My so-called Christian religion, in which I am allowing myself to be a respecter of persons, because I have this legalistic approach, my so-called Christian religion is a vain religion.

Now still in the first point of the sermon, if we move on to verse 11, we see that what James does in verse 11 is really apply this idea to all the other commandments. That's why I'm emphasizing this in the sermon tonight, because James knows that this is our inclination, not just with regard to showing favoritism, but with regard to all the commandments. Verse 11, "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." Just imagine for a moment, there's a man who's faithful in his marriage, he's a good family man, doesn't steal, doesn't lie, respects those in authority, maybe even makes good money too, but there's just one thing, he killed a man. How does the law judge him? Does the law say, "Well, he's generally a good person. Look at his life. He's just got this one sin in his life. Let's pile up all his good deeds on one side and compare it with this one bad thing that he did, and we'll see the good outweighs the bad." Is that how we think? No, the man is judged. He's judged for his selective obedience. That man needs to repent.

Just think of this. There's a man who calls himself a Christian. He's a hard worker. Maybe he's serving on school board. But oh yeah, he also reserves the right to pick and choose which Sundays he's going to skip church and instead work and try to make his money. He's a man who's practicing selective obedience.

Just think, there's a person who says he's a Christian, he goes to church faithfully, his life is good, but oh yeah, he also reserves practically in his own behavior, he reserves the right to let his temper run wild whenever it feels good for him to do so. He's a man who's practicing selective obedience. Or maybe he reserves the right to sin when he's on vacation. After all, his thinking is, God doesn't really expect us to keep his law perfectly anyway, does he? And now I say this with dripping sarcasm, God won't mind, will he, if we pick and choose which parts of his being we like and which parts of his being we hate and we really don't care for? The law that God gives us, it's only the law that he loves. He won't mind if we pick and choose which commandments to stomp on. James says, no, it's serious sin and it's as if James says, for you, who think you care about God's law so much, and maybe you're so judgmental of others, my brothers, my sisters, do you see how bad this way of thinking really is? Your attitude of respecting persons is very offensive. Are you getting it? Do you get it?

This is serious sin and saying that, James goes on in verses 12 and 13 to give these saints a sober admonition. First of all, let's look at verse 12. We're just walking through the text here. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." And what James is saying is this, you know, God is still going to judge you by his law. You might be selective in your obedience to his law, but God is not going to be selective in his judgment. He will be consistent in how he carries out judgment. So speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. Don't speak and don't do as those who will be judged according to your own law, but speak and do as those who are going to be judged by God's law. That's the point.

Now there's more that we need to look at in verse 12. I'll get to that in just a moment. But then verse 13, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy." And with that reference to mercy, it's clear that James is once again thinking about this issue of showing favoritism in the churches. You see that poor man walking into church who's in vile clothes? Show him love. Show him mercy. You see the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions? Care for them. That's pure religion. Live according to the law of love. Love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself because this is what God delights in and calls you to do and the clear message of verse 13 is this, if you don't show love to your neighbor, but you only show respect of persons, well, really, you can only expect God to treat you the same way. That's what he's teaching in verse 13. If you don't show mercy to your fellow man who is needy, why should you expect God to show you mercy in your need? Instead of expecting God to treat you with unconditional love and mercy, the way you're acting, you can expect God to treat you according to your spiritual poverty, and your spiritual ugliness, and your spiritually filthy appearance.

And to bring this back to the idea of selective obedience, we can think about it this way, in exactly that part of God's law that you choose to ignore, in exactly that part of God's

being himself that you want to ignore, and it's an inconvenience to you, and you want to get rid of it, in exactly that part, God will keep himself from you. Think about it this way, you want to pick and choose which commandments to keep so that you don't commit adultery but you do kill your neighbor, so that you don't really like who God is as a God who calls you to prevent your neighbor's hurt as much as in you lies? Well then don't expect God to prevent your hurt as much as in him lies. You don't like who God is as a God of rest, a God of the Sabbath day? Well, then don't expect God to bring you into the enjoyment of his eternal rest. And again, you don't like who God is as one who shows mercy and kindness to helpless, poor, needy sinners who are perhaps making the church poorer than it already is if they should join and you'd rather have the rich in church than the poor? Well, then don't expect God to show you that mercy.

That's verse 13 and again, what's the point? The point is not that somehow our act of showing others mercy is what earns us the mercy of God. The point is not that we become legalists. It's actually exactly the opposite from that. The point is simply this: in your Christian life of gratitude to God, you can't be selective in your obedience to God's law. You can't just keep God's law in a superficial way. You can't pick and choose which commandments you will keep. Humble yourself. Really humble yourself. Don't put yourself over God's law and don't put yourself over others as if you were better than them. We read that this morning, Philippians 2. In a certain sense, we can even put it this way, you think you're keeping God's law pretty well, you think you're a good Christian, right, you have your ducks in a row. Just one question, what does your love for your neighbor look like? What is your attitude to that poor person, that needy person, that hurting person, that sinful person who's walking into church? Are you ready to judge them up and down, look down on them with disapproval and disdain, maybe shaking your head inwardly because they clearly don't have their ducks in a row like you do, and then it gives you opportunity to gossip about them, talk smack about them with your friends in your little circle? Are you ready to just slap some kind of label upon them and then dismiss them as not your problem? Is that the gospel that I want to communicate to them? Or do I have a heart of mercy and love towards them? I'm ready to feed them. I'm ready to have them home for Sunday dinner maybe, even if they stink, right? They're in that vile clothing that they've been living in for the last two weeks straight.

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." And then I get back to verse 12, this is where we get back to verse 12, and you hear it put that way, the law of liberty. And then we quickly head to the cross, don't we? And we remember the unspeakable mercy God has shown to us in Jesus Christ, and what our relationship to the law right now actually is. Who was I before I knew Christ? I was a conceited respecter of persons. Who was I before I knew Christ? I was the one lost in sin. I was the stinky one. I was the one who didn't have my ducks in a row. To be truthful, I still don't have all my ducks in a row. Others might, and they might judge me for it, but I still don't have my ducks in a row. Who was I before I knew Christ? I was one under the curse of the law. The law was not this law of liberty for me. The law was a taskmaster, a cruel taskmaster. But you see, God has shown me mercy. He is no respecter of persons towards me. I was the chiefest of all sinners but he showed mercy on my soul. He took me out of the pit, and he set my feet on solid ground. He removed that curse of the law from me. He is the one



who loved me, even as he loves himself, even giving himself up to the death of the cross, so that I might be saved and have life. He has given me a spiritual washing. He has given me food and nourishment for my empty soul. He has given me all my needs, all my supplies, and much more besides. He's written his law in my heart. And he's even given me to experience this glorious experience of knowing the law is the law of liberty. Walking in love with my neighbor so that this law of God is no more grievous to me but actually in my personal experience it is this law of liberty so that in the way of God's law, I am experiencing joy and rest and happiness and a good conscience and peace with God. I'm living by faith and now I'm bringing forth the fruits of faith. And that is joy. That's freedom. And now comes this admonition, so speak ye, and so do, as those who will be judged by that law because that's how the law is now coming to you. Not as a taskmaster, but for you who are in Christ, you who have been begotten with the word of truth, it comes to you as the law of liberty.

And there you already see the encouragement that James is giving these saints but if that wasn't encouragement enough for them as they dwelt on this letter, remembering how the law is the perfect law of liberty, James gives them more encouragement, and he gives us encouragement at the end of verse 13. This is where we come to the added encouragement, "For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy," and then this, "and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Mercy rejoiceth against judgment. And that sounds nice, doesn't it? But now the question is, what does that actually mean? Well, there are different ways of understanding this. One of the better ways of understanding it is like this, a truly merciful Christian who's living out of a merciful heart, who's living according to that law of liberty, he's going to be looking forward to judgment because he knows that he has nothing to fear. He knows he will enjoy the mercy of God. That's one way of understanding it. For various reasons, I think a much better way of understanding it is like this, that James here isn't talking about man's mercy, about the mercy that I'm showing, but James here is suddenly completely switching gears, you might say, and he's talking about the mercy of God so that this phrase kind of jumps out from the page as an exclamation. God's mercy triumphs or rejoices against judgment.

You see, James is writing here a pretty severe word. Maybe we've even sensed that tonight, right? He's dwelling on how guilty they are before God's law and that the way they've been living is actually very offensive. They deserve judgment. Maybe as this word's been applied to us by the Spirit in our own hearts, we might have that same response. I deserve judgment. But now at the end of verse 13, James, as it were, says, but remember God and remember Jesus, and remember how on the cross, the mercy of God triumphed or rejoiced against judgment. Triumphed over judgment. Not because God compromised his justice but because what we've been looking at in the Catechism preaching, because in Jesus Christ, the judgment of God against our sins was fully borne, was fully endured, so that now, in Jesus Christ, only mercy is shown to us. God's mercy towards his children triumphs over the judgment that we deserve. In Christ, mercy triumphs over judgment. That's our hope. and that's our confidence. That's where James wants to lead these saints as he's pastorally trying to steer them towards spiritual maturity.

And that gets at the heart of everything, doesn't it? The reason I want to love my neighbor as myself is because I'm thankful for the mercy of God shown to me in Jesus Christ. The reason I want to keep the law of liberty and I'm jealous over every part of it is because I want to honor my King who shed his blood for me. The reason I want to keep this law is because I know the mercy of God. I've had enough of serving self. I've had enough of being my own idol God, living for myself. I've had enough of selective obedience. It's misery. It's bondage. And I know, I know it's not right. I want to serve God. I want to show God my thanks. I want to love God. I want to enjoy this freedom of loving my neighbor as myself, exercising perfect trust in God, walking in his good commandments. I want to reflect the glory and mercy of God in showing acts of mercy to others. Knowing the goodness that I have been shown in Jesus, I want to show that goodness to others. Enough of this spiritual immaturity of legalism. Enough of this spiritual immaturity of being a respecter of persons. I want to live the life of walking according to the law of liberty. That's the life of true faith. That's faith expressing itself in good works, bringing forth fruit to the honor of my God. That's the life that is pressing towards spiritual maturity. Church of Jesus Christ, may God give us more of it, more of that spiritual maturity. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, thy word is timeless, and it is good for thy people in all generations, and it is good for us tonight. We thank thee for this instruction. We know thy word is true, and it is right, and in its admonitions, we experience the love of Jesus for us. We pray that it might so be, and we pray that that will strengthen us in our trust in thee, strengthen us in the enjoyment of living according to the law of liberty, and give us the pleasure of doing others good, loving them as ourselves, showing them mercy, knowing that we're honoring thee through it, and knowing that we are a good reflection and a good witness of the glorious mercy and goodness and grace of Jesus Christ, our King. Bless this preaching to our hearts and to our lives, we ask it in the name of the King, thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*