

## James Chapter 2B

The more we study this Epistle of James the more it becomes obvious that James was deeply inspired by the Teachings of his big brother, the Lord Jesus and it seems that He was especially moved by the Sermon on the Mount.

- So much of James' writing has the same penetrating, convicting effect as the words of Jesus in that particular Sermon.
- How many times have these words afflicted your soul?

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard, that it was said, to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

Like these words of Jesus the commands of James are often hard and convicting. They raise a legitimate concern over the ongoing internal struggle that we face between the flesh and the Spirit.

- This is the same struggle that Paul faced in Romans chapter 7.

Romans 7: 14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

- Certainly, this internal struggle is uncomfortable and yet it is a normal part of the sanctification process.
- Because God has given us a new heart we cannot continue to live a life that is driven by the lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life.

Throughout his Epistle James provides various tests that are designed to evaluate the reality or the vitality of our faith.

- The underlying theme of his writing is this, true and saving faith will be demonstrated by good works.

If we labor to keep a tight rein on our tongue. If we express loving care for widows and orphans in their distress. If we strive keep ourselves free from the pollution of the world.

- Then according to James, there is clear evidence that we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

James keeps bringing us back to His point that "True Religion" must be visible in our everyday lives. Observable in our communications, our care and our conduct.

- Last week we took a careful look at our communications, our care and our conduct concerning the various people that God sends into our churches.

- Do we welcome visitors with open arms? Do we hold forth the grace of God indiscriminately to everyone who walks through our doors, OR do we show favoritism.
  - DO we give preferential treatment to those who are wealthy because our budget could really use a shot in the arm.
  - Do we Ignore the poor man who visits, because we view him as a liability

As we move on in Chapter 2 James will help us see that when we show favoritism we break the Royal Law of God and we do not display the fruit of true, saving faith.

#### OUTLINE?

1. Fulfilling the Law - We do well if we fulfill the Royal Law.
2. Breaking the Law - We break God's Law when we show partiality
3. Judged by the Law - We will be judged by the Law of Liberty

#### 1. Fulfilling the Law

James 2:8 **If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.**

- James speaks of the "Royal Law," the kingly law, the supreme or sovereign law.
- So we have to ask: What is this Royal Law?
- I believe that James is referring to the summation of the Law that was given by the Lord Jesus when he was questioned by the Jewish leadership:

Matthew 22: 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 first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

- You might remember that the Law of Moses was broken down into two tablets.
- The first tablet dealt with Man's vertical relationship with God and the second tablet dealt with his horizontal relationship with his fellow man.
- Jesus tells us that both tablets of the Law are fulfilled when we live a life of love.
  - If I Love the Lord with all my heart, all my mind and all my strength I will have no other God's before him, I will not make any graven images, I will not use His holy name in vain.
  - If I love my neighbor as myself, I will not steal from him, lie about him, I will not covet his spouse, his servants or his property. I will rejoice with him, when he rejoices, and I'll mourn with him when he suffers loss.

When you think about it:

**"Love your neighbor"** is both what the King commands and what the King does. By his incarnation Jesus, the eternal second person of the Trinity became our neighbor.

- He lived a life of love: giving sight to the blind, rescuing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, caring for widows, laying down His life!

John 15:13 **Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.**

- Through his suffering, his affliction and his death on the cross he demonstrated the full extent of his love for us.
- When WE obey the Royal Law we display the fruit of our new life in Christ and we live a life of love. Paul commanded the Ephesian Believers:

Ephesians 5: 1 **Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.** 2 **And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

- We see this Royal Law in multiple places throughout the Old and New Testament.

Romans 13: 8 **Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.** 9 **For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.**

- What does the Lord mean when he says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself?" I suppose we have to ask: HOW do we love ourselves?
- Do we wake up in the morning with rapturous feelings about ourselves?
- Do we look in the mirror and fall in love all over again?

Let me share a quote that I heard earlier this week:

"If we want to know how we are to love our neighbor then we must ask a prior question, how do we love ourselves? Certainly, it is not with an emotional thrill. Rarely do we love ourselves with much sense of satisfaction. Mostly it is with wholesale disapproval. Often our feelings with regard to ourselves are filled with complete loathing. And yet we always treat ourselves with genuine concern, care and attention."

"When we catch sight of our faces in the mirror first thing in the morning, the word Ug, comes spontaneously from our lips. Yet when we take that revolting face into the bathroom, we wash it and try to make it as presentable as nature will allow. So, in a very practical way loving ourselves is simply providing the care and attention that is necessary for life. This is the model on which we are to base our relationships to all to whom we owe neighborly duty."

- So often, we get caught up in the ways of the world defining love in emotional rather than practical terms.
- We need to know that the Scripture defines love in simple caring terms.

It is this kind of Love that Jesus described in the parable of the "Good Samaritan."

- I encourage you to read that parable this week from Luke Ch 10.

- Bottom Line: This Samaritan found a man, a man he did not know, lying half-dead by the side of the road and had compassion on him. He bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.
- When I love my neighbor as myself, I seek to meet the basic practical needs of those whom God in His sovereignty brings into my life.

Now that we understand the Royal Law we have to ask, DO we fulfill that Law or do we break that law? That brings us to our second point.

2 We Break God's Law when we show partiality.

There is a sharp contrast between verse 8 and verse 9

Vs 8: "You are doing very well if you can obey the royal law and love your neighbor as yourself."

- If you are obeying the royal law of love you are doing WELL! (doing well)
- That phrasing reminds me of the words that all true believers long to hear, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." BUT!

James 2;9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

- This word "IF" would be better translated "SINCE." Since you show partiality, you break the law and you come under God's righteous judgment as law-breaker.
- You see, partiality is a transgression of both the "Royal Law" (the law of love) AND the Law of Moses.

Leviticus 19: 15 "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

- I have to ask: How sensitive are you to the demands of the LAW?

Very often we approach the Commands of God in a similar way that we approached the TESTS that we were given in High School or Exams that we faced in College.

- If I can come away with a "B" then I'm doing OK. If I can land somewhere between 85 – 90 I will be satisfied!

(Consider the Law) If I can overcome Idolatry, Immorality, if I can refrain from stealing and remember to call my Mom, then I am doing OK. BUT the sins of Favoritism and Partiality, well they rarely make it to the top of my "To Do" list.

See that's one of the problems, we tend to look at our obedience as if it were a pile of individual good deeds.

- Every time that we act in obedience, we throw another brick on the pile. And we think the bigger the pile the more God accepts us. (*we couldn't be more wrong*) Our

acceptance before God is based upon the righteousness of Christ apart from our good deeds. There is nothing that we can do to improve upon His perfect righteousness.

James helps us understand that while we are not justified by our works everyone who is justified will DO good works.

- Our obedience to the Royal Law is the natural, loving response to the grace that God has lavished upon us in Christ.
- We love because He first loved us. We lay our lives down for him because He laid His life down for us.

So how important is it that we don't show partiality? It is vital to our testimony as children of God.

James 2:10 **For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. 11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.**

- The Scripture clearly teaches us that if we violate just one of God's commands we are accountable to God for breaking the Whole Law. (WHY?)

We need to understand that the Law of God is actually an expression of His Holy Character.

- Each individual commandment serves to reveal an unchangeable attribute of God's divine nature. Just as you cannot remove one attribute without distorting God's nature, You cannot neglect one command without perverting his image.

Now that we are thoroughly convicted by the Word of God. Assured that we are accountable to God and deserving of his righteous judgment, James introduces us to another law, The Law of Liberty.

3 We (*who believe*) will be judged under the Law of Liberty.

James 2:12 **So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.**

13 **For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**

We, who believe are to live our lives, We are to speak and act continually with the understanding that we will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.**

- Knowing that we are accountable to God, understanding His heart for the poor, His care for the alien, the widow, the hurting and oppressed,

- Knowing that we will stand before him to give an account for the grace and mercy that he has lavished on us; SHOULD we not be a people who display HIS mercy?

Matthew 25: 31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

The basis of that final judgment as you can clearly see is a living faith that exhibits itself in, or is evidenced by good works.

- We do not enter into our eternal reward because we feed the hungry.
- We receive eternal life and are freed from wrath by the grace of God through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the full payment for our sins.
- AND that saving faith will always display itself in benevolent behavior toward those who are in need.

When James says: 13 **For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**

- He is saying, those who do not display the mercy of God through a transformed life will in fact face a merciless judgment.
- BUT for those who believe, the mercy of God that has been revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ Triumphs over judgment.