

# The Law of Indiscriminate Love

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn now to God's Word, and we are continuing through the letter to James, and if you don't have a Bible with you, please turn. We have plenty of visitor Bibles around the place, so do grab one.

And we are in James chapter 2 and reading from verses 1 to 13. So page 1011, if you're using the visitor Bible.

So, James chapter 2, and we're reading there from verse 1. My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit here in a good place, or you say to the poor man, you stand over there or sit down at my feet, have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him, but you have dishonored the poor man.

[ 1 : 28 ] Are not the rich the ones who oppress you and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law's transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

For he who says, do not commit adultery, also said, do not murder. If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgression of the law.

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. Amen. Oh, my God. Bless his word to us this evening. Will you turn with me to James chapter 2?

[ 2 : 45 ] And if you don't have a Bible, as Paul said, there's some at the sides and the back. It's good if you're able to have it in front of you and follow along with what we're saying. Now, it shouldn't surprise us how consistent the apostolic teaching of the New Testament is.

Writing very late in the first century, the Apostle John says this, By this, it's evident who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Whoever does not do righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

And he goes on to say, If anyone says I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Well, as we've seen, James, who's writing many decades earlier than that, probably perhaps as early as 45 AD, he is just as focused on the belief that behaves, on the faith that not only hears, but does the word of God.

And he warns those that he thinks are in danger of wandering away from the true faith, into self-deception, into worthless religion. He warns them that to believe truly in God our Savior means to obey truly Jesus Christ as Lord.

[ 4 : 16 ] To be those who show that they truly belong to the Heavenly Father by displaying His likeness in their lives. He's the one who brought us to new birth from above.

We saw in chapter 1, verse 18, that we should be His first fruits. That means we should be set apart for Him, to be like Him. Utterly distinct from the pollution of this rebellious world.

Unstained from the world. Chapter 1, verse 27. And last time in chapter 2, verses 1 to 7, we saw that partiality, especially with respect to persons, it contradicts entirely the true faith.

The only religion that is pure and undefiled before our God and Father. Treating anything, but treating especially other people, according to what the world values, and the world thinks is important, is telling God that our treasure is not really the true glory of His kingdom, but in fact, it's just the glory of the world.

And that is seen very vividly. The glory of God in the Lord Jesus Himself, in His cross. We are told that He is, in verse 1, the glory, the Lord Jesus, who is the glory of God manifest in our world.

[ 5 : 43 ] But instead of glorying in that, partiality shows that our treasure is actually in this fading world. It tells us, therefore, that our heart is fatally divided. We're not wholeheartedly in love with the Lord our God.

Because to show partiality in whatever form is to deny God's true glory. And that is what His true family should be like.

To show partiality dishonors God's grace, because God has chosen those that the world thinks of as nothing to be His family. And in fact, James also said it's to despise Christ's church, because very often we're allying ourselves very much with those who are actually opposed to Christ and His people.

So the command there in verse 1 is very clear. My brothers, show no partiality as you hold to the true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true glory. But now in verses 8 to 13, James turns to the positive command.

To live in the very opposite way. Not of partiality to the few, but in fact, to indiscriminate love for all. Living not to take for gain, but to give like God.

[ 7 : 02 ] And in doing so, he moves to broaden out the horizon to more general considerations, because partiality is just one of the pollutions of the world that we need to be unstained by.

Just one of the things that defies God's command that His true people are to follow. That defies the character of what the true children of God are to exhibit in this world.

And that's the force of these verses. Well, verses 5 to 7, as we saw last week, show that an attitude of partiality puts you at odds with God's family choice, those He wants to belong in His family.

What verses 8 to 13 make clear is that it also defies God's family code. How He wants the behavior of His family to be.

So having told us very clearly how not to deal with the poor in the world's eyes, He now puts it in a supremely positive way, showing us what our attitude and our actions are to be, not just towards the poor, but towards everyone.

[ 8 : 10 ] And what it all comes down to is keeping the law of the king. Look at verse 8. Let me read it to you as the New American Standard Bible translates it, which I think gets the sense better than the ESV or the NIV.

It shows the contrast. If, however, in contrast to what's gone before, you are fulfilling the royal law according to Scripture, you shall love your neighbors yourself, you are doing well or doing right. That is in contrast to the selective few of partiality, do and act according to the great commandment, truly loving indiscriminately, do that, and then you will be blessed in your doing.

to put it the way James does in verse 25 of chapter 1. Because you are showing who you really are. That you're a child of our Father of love. For as John says in his letter we quoted from earlier, this is the love of God that we keep His commandments.

And His commandments are not burdensome. But here's the thing. Many Christians think that any talk about commandments, any talk about the law of God, any talk about obedience, is burdensome.

[ 9 : 24 ] That any discussion of that kind of thing is taking you into legalism. Back into Old Testament ways. Surely we've been liberated from that. Well, James takes the opposite view.

He sees God's commands, God's law, as something that we're liberated for. And something that actually liberates us. Twice here, in chapter 1, verse 25, and in chapter 2, verse 12, notice, he calls it the law of liberty.

So either James is confused or many modern Christians are confused. I'll give you clues to which side I'm on. James understands very clearly the wonderful blessing that the law of God is to a New Testament believer in Christ, just as it was, always, to a true Old Testament believer.

James would sing with the psalmist of Psalm 119, Oh, how I love your law. It's my meditation all the day. And he would sing it no less in the light of Christ's coming, but in fact, even more.

In fact, James' whole letter is almost a rhapsody on Psalm 119, verse 113. I hate the double-minded, says the psalmist, but I love your law.

[ 10 : 39 ] And so should you. That's what his message is. If you want to truly love God as heirs of his kingdom and its crown of life. So let's try and see what James is saying here.

So let's try and help us be very clear about how all the Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, shows us that God's law is the true law of liberty and of life.

And that is because it is the law of indiscriminate love. Look at verse 8 first, then, which states clearly the commandment. The commandment for true kingdom people.

There is a law, there is a code that we must obey as his people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. It's what James calls the royal law.

He's quoting from Leviticus 19, verse 18. And Jesus himself, of course, placed that right alongside the command to love God with all your heart and soul and strength as the command that he said expresses all the law and the prophets.

[ 11 : 44 ] That is the whole of the Old Testament faith. Notice I read the words faith there, the Old Testament faith. Because it's crucial to understand, to not misunderstand, what is meant by this command to obey.

Many people do completely misunderstand. And they think that the Old Testament message was a message of do these things, obey God's laws, obey God's commands, and if you do, if you do well enough, you will qualify to be one of God's people.

You'll earn favor with God. You'll find salvation. Friends, that is absolutely not what the Old Testament teaches. Not ever. Whether in the Old Testament or in even the New Testament.

All the way through the Scripture, we are commanded and called to live by God's commands. But not to become God's people, because we are God's people.

We're brought forth by the word of truth, as James puts it. That means we're born anew. We're born anew by the living and abiding word, as Peter says. And we're born to be his children.

[ 12 : 53 ] And this is how his children behave. because they're children of the king, the king of heaven, the king of love. Now we know, don't we, that a royal prince must behave according to the royal family code, because he's born into royalty.

And much is therefore expected of him, precisely because of the privilege of his birth. And he's got to live up to that. And if he doesn't, it's a terrible scandal. It's a public scandal.

As alas, we've seen all too close to home, haven't we, in our nation in recent days. And that sharpens the focus for us, though, doesn't it?

Because James is saying, you have been brought to birth in a royal household by God's generous grace alone in order to be, in order to be, seen to be his first fruits, his holy people, his heirs, his royal family, who live by his royal command in all of life.

So there is a law that we must obey as his family. And in this New Testament era of fulfillment that we live in, even more than in the Old Testament era of promise, we've been brought into God's household, haven't we, by his sheer sovereign grace, by his sovereign choice, by the blood of our Savior.

[ 14 : 16 ] And we've been brought into his house to live under his lordship at his command, expressing what it means to be these kingdom people saved by the grace of God. Think of another covenant relationship that's familiar to us, the relationship of marriage.

A woman who is a wife promises to be faithful, she promises to love and honor and cherish her husband, not in order to earn her husband's love, but because he's given her his love, he's asked her to marry him, and she said yes.

And that continues right through their marriage because they are married. He behaves like a faithful husband and she behaves like a faithful wife because that covenant relationship, that marriage is real already.

And it's just so in the Bible, in the Old Testament, God's law was given at Sinai to the Israelites who had already been redeemed, rescued, saved out of the land of Egypt by God's free grace, by the blood of the Passover lamb.

And in Exodus 20, God says, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and therefore you shall have no other gods before me.

[ 15 : 33 ] And the Decalogue, God's commands and all the exposition of God's law follows on, His Torah, His instruction for their life as a redeemed, liberated people. God is their redeemer before He's their ruler.

And indeed, He's their gracious redeemer and His gracious redemption is to liberate them from slavery and into His gracious rule.

Not any longer under the grim rule of Pharaoh, but under the gracious rule of the Lord. And God's law, you see, is an expression of His character.

That's what all law is. Laws express the character of the governments and the people that make them. We've got the budget coming next month. That will tell you plenty about the character of our government.

And sadly, the many ghastly laws that have been passing through our parliament in recent years tells you awful things about the nature of our governments and the nature of our population.

[ 16 : 40 ] But thank God, His laws are very different from that. His laws express the goodness, the beauty of our Creator and of our Redeemer. And we are His people and we are called to be like Him and joyfully to be like Him.

In Leviticus 11 verse 45 expresses the refrain that you get again and again throughout the Old Testament. I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God.

You therefore shall be holy because I am holy. Pure, wholesome, beautiful, gracious, good.

Obedience for God's people, you see, has never been anything at all to do with winning merit from God.

That's what false human religion is all about. Human religion is about trying to win merit and gain favor with God or the gods. But not the true faith.

The true faith in the true God has always been about showing gratitude, showing love, showing joy for the one who has first loved us and has saved us. God called His people in the Old Testament to be His treasured possession, He called them.

[ 17 : 57 ] Among all the peoples, to be a kingdom of priests, to be a holy nation, to show forth His goodness and grace to all the nations of the world, to be a living witness in the world.

That's what God says to Israel at Sinai in Exodus chapter 19, explaining why they're to have the great privilege of having God's own revelation, God's instruction for life.

So in that sense, God's law is never just a question of what we must do, it's far more a question of what we must be. It's there to awaken our desire to please the God who first loved us, so that all of our doing springs from love of the One who's revealed Himself to us as our great Savior.

And it's exactly the same in the New Testament era in this time of fulfillment in which we have the enormous privilege of living. We have in far greater fullness what all the Old Testament saints had only by promise.

We have not just a redemption in history, but for all eternity. And the great reality of what the Exodus from Egypt just foreshadowed and promised, to which all the other prophets in the Old Testament promised and longed for.

[ 19 : 17 ] But at last, God would, as Jeremiah promised, renew His people forever. I will make a new covenant with my people, said the Lord, despite all of their repeated sins and their failures and their unfaithfulness to me, their husbands, says the Lord.

I will forgive their iniquity. I will remember their sins no more. And God will save His people from their sin, but also for righteousness, for holiness like Him.

I will put my law in them, and I will write it on their hearts, says the Lord, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. forever. And so it will be forever.

Forever. And that's a repeated refrain there in those chapters of Jeremiah. Forever. God will establish an everlasting covenant. Forever. And He goes on to say that it's absolutely impossible that it will ever be broken.

There will be a son of David on the throne ruling my people forever. God's people, under the rule of His great king, His royal law, and holy like Him forever.

[ 20 : 29 ] Prophet Ezekiel, we saw it when we studied Ezekiel a year or two ago. He speaks in just the same way of this great ultimate redemption and what it will mean for God's people. I will put my spirit in you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to do my rules.

And you shall be my people, and I will be your God, and I will deliver you from all uncleanness. And He goes on to speak in chapter 37 that everlasting rule of the Messiah king.

My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd, and they will walk in my rules, and be careful to obey my statutes forever.

Blessed wonderfully in their doing of God's law of liberty and of life. life. And that is what is being fulfilled now in this gospel area that we live in.

As the spirit of the risen Lord Jesus is bringing new birth to His people through that living and abiding word. And as they, to use James' word, as they receive with meekness the implanted word of God's beauty and truth which is able to save our souls.

[ 21 : 43 ] And you see what Jeremiah, what Ezekiel, what all the prophets foretell, none of that will be complete until, well, until the great consummation when the Lord Jesus returns and we receive the resurrection bodies of true life like His.

And we have at last and possess that eternal life that Jesus promised at His return. That's what Jeremiah foresaw so wonderfully. Or Ezekiel foresaw as well with those dry bones coming back to life and the great picture of resurrection.

God says, I will open your graves and raise you from the graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit in you and you shall live. The final wonder of that will not be until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But that is what has begun. with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He's the first fruits, Paul tells us, that guarantees our resurrection. And Paul speaks of that of that resurrection and that great liberation that has therefore happened to us already through Christ's resurrection.

Liberation from the grim yoke of slavery to sin into, by contrast, the gracious yoke of our Savior. And to serve our Savior, Paul says, is perfect freedom.

[ 23 : 09 ] In Romans chapter 6, he says, thanks be to God that you who are once slaves of sin have become obedient, notice the word, obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you are committed and have been set free from sin and become slaves of righteousness.

Do you see, what he's saying is that through faith in Christ, we're liberated from slavery to sin and for wholehearted obedience to the life-giving ways of God.

And the fruit of this slavery to God, he says, is not death. That's the only wage that our master sin ever paid. But no, the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ, our Lord, rescued from the lawlessness of sin and for the holy and righteous good commandment of our gracious God and Savior, our ruler, our redeemer.

And that's why the apostle Peter, likewise, in 1 Peter chapter 2, uses the very language of Israel at Sinai to refer to the Christian church. You now, he says, are a chosen race.

You are a royal priesthood. You are a royal holy nation. You are a people for God's own possession. So that, so that, in this gospel era of the latter days, in a far greater way, in a worldwide way, you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into light.

[ 24 : 46 ] And Peter echoes exactly the words of God to Israel from the very beginning. As obedient children, Peter says, just like James, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct since it's written. You shall be holy for I am holy. And as you call on him as father who judges impartially, notice, according to each one's deeds.

You see, he's saying exactly the same as what James is saying. What he says here about living, verse 8, according to the royal law that we find in Scripture.

God chose you. He gave you birth through the word of truth. Therefore, receive with meekness that implanted word written in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

Don't be a hearer only, but be a doer of the word. And verse 8 here, live therefore so as to fulfill the royal law.

[ 25 : 54 ] It's all just different ways of saying the same thing. You are a holy people. You are a royal people. So live as if you are. Be what you are. That's the constant refrain, isn't it, of the apostles of Christ in their letters all the way through the New Testament.

Once you were darkness, says Paul to the Ephesians, but now you are light. Walk as children of light. Be what you are. And he turns them, where? To God's commandments to find out the things that please the Lord.

So to know how to walk as children of light. It's the same in Galatians, where people often think that this is an anti-law letter, but it's actually nothing of the sort.

Paul calls them to obedience, repeatedly. But obedience to God's truth, not to man's false religion. Who stopped you from obeying the truth, he says? For you were called to freedom, brothers, but don't use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but rather, through love, serve one another. Because the whole law, says Paul to the Galatians, is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The royal law. Not a hint of difference between Paul and James.

[ 27 : 06 ] It's astonishing to think people think there is. So it says, since we live by the Spirit, says Paul led us all to walk by the Spirit, just like James. Live it. Don't just talk about it.

Do it. Be doers, not hearers. Be what you are. And he says exactly the same thing in another way to the Colossians. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

And whatever you do, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. What we express in life, how we treat our neighbor in all things, exposes the real truth about us.

That's what all the apostles of Christ are saying. It tells you whether we are a child of God or not.

See, a prince who shows no royal dignity, no resemblance to his regal parent, who behaves quite at odds with his birthright.

Well, he can't be called a prince anymore, can he? By your fruit. You will know them, said Jesus.

[ 28 : 15 ] And the fruit of true faith, faith in the Lord Jesus, who is the true King and Lord, is to live so as to fulfill his royal law, the King's law of love.

That's the commandment for true kingdom people. There is a law, there is a code we must obey because it expresses the very character of God our Father himself.

And that brings us to the second thing you see which flows from it, and that is therefore the character of true kingdom people. God's law expounds for us what the obedience of faith looks like in life because God's law expresses his whole kingdom, which is a kingdom of indiscriminate love. The royal law of love lies behind all of God's law. Lies behind all God's revelation of himself because he is love.

He is perfect love, and therefore we who are his children must necessarily love like him. That's why his royal law is our kingdom law.

[ 29 : 27 ] In verse 5, James says here, we are heirs of the kingdom. The word is *basileia*. It's the word meaning kingdom. And in verse 8, the word royal law is *basilicon*.

It's the kingdom. It's the law of the king for his kingdom people. And Jesus made that law, didn't he? The root of all his teaching about the kingdom of God.

In Matthew 22, verse 37, as we said earlier, he sums up the whole of the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, and says the entire Old Testament revelation is summed up in one positive command.

You shall love. Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. And Christ's apostles do exactly the same.

In Romans 13, Paul echoes Jesus in saying the one who loves has fulfilled the law. And he says all God's negative commands, all the ones that say you shall not, and in fact any other command, he says, is summed up in this one word.

[ 30 : 27 ] You shall love your neighbor as yourself. For love is the fulfillment of the law. Where there is true loving, he means, there's no need for any of those negative commands.

So far from Jesus coming to abolish the commandment of God, his kingdom fulfills it.

Indeed, in many ways it supersedes it. The original royal law spoke of your neighbor as your Israelite, your fellow Israelite. But Jesus, well, what did he say?

Love even your enemies. As he did. And as he brought to us in the flesh the fullness of the revelation of the love of God our Heavenly Father.

Hence his command, you therefore shall be perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect. And James is saying to love like this is to be a doer of the word.

[ 31 : 32 ] It's to express truly the response of real faith in every part of life that shows that we have experienced the mercy of God to us in Christ. It's crucial, by the way, to see what real love actually is when James is talking about it here.

It's not merely a sentiment, is it? It's not merely an emotion or a feeling. It's a command to be obeyed. And it's a call to a moral response, an ethical response.

And James defines it, all through his letter, in terms of care, doesn't he? That's what we do for ourselves. We care for ourselves. We look after ourselves. We tend to ourselves.

We help ourselves. And to love, James says, is to treat others' concerns as our own. Even the unlovely.

It's to care for them even as we care for ourselves, even though it costs us. It's like if you live in a flat and you're in the downstairs flat.

[ 32 : 38 ] And the upstairs flat is getting water leaking into it because the roof's leaking. That's not really your problem, is it? Downstairs, you're nice and dry, but it's a shared roof. So unlike a politician who says, we're in it together, you actually say to your neighbor upstairs, we're in this together.

And you actually mean it. And you go halves on the repair of the roof. You're not getting wet, but you'll cough up your share because you love your neighbor. And you want to show them that real care.

You would care for them as though the water was dripping down on your head. Well, James says, that's how you show your true paternity from above in your lives.

You love. And he's asking the question to those he's writing to here, well, is that on show in your life? In your church? How are you giving yourselves to one another in loving service like that?

Because, well, James is saying to them, from what I'm seeing, it doesn't seem to be that. Read on in his letter, I'm seeing self-serving agendas everywhere. I'm seeing competing relationships.

[ 33 : 44 ] I'm seeing all kinds of selfish ambition. I'm seeing jealousy. All kinds of disorder. Well, if James was zooming in on our church tonight or zooming in on your house and your life, what would he be saying?

What would he be seeing? Are we doing well? Are we loving according to the royal law? It's a challenging question, isn't it?

And that brings us to the third thing, which is the focus of verses 9 to 11, which is the conviction. The conviction. The conviction of true kingdom people.

Because not only does God's law challenge us to obey, it convicts us, doesn't it? It humbles us. God's law expounds the obedience of faith and it expresses God's kingdom of love.

But in doing so, the truth is that it exposes our need for mercy, doesn't it? Because even as believers in Christ, with the Holy Spirit within us, with God's law implanted in our hearts, we've all constantly fallen short of our Heavenly Father's perfection, haven't we?

[ 34 : 58 ] We fail to love as we ought. That's James' point here. That's what murder is. It's a catastrophic failure to love. That's what adultery is.

Adultery is often dressed up as love, isn't it? Oh, we fell in love. But adultery is not saying, I love her. Adultery is saying, I love me and I want her. And I'll steal from the one to whom she belongs, truly.

Partiality, he says in verse 9, is the same. You see, it's the same failure to love, the one that you scorn. Breaking every command of God's law is a failure to love. It's loving yourself more than you love God and more than you love others.

So you lie for yourself. So you steal for yourself. So you curse, or whatever it is, to have what you want. And you see, the more God's law shows us His character, His surpassing holiness, His righteousness, the glory of His nature, the more it shows us that, the more it deals a crushing blow, doesn't it, to our own sense of self-righteousness.

We must obey our Lord. That's the truth. He's our ruler. But we want to obey Him, don't we? Because He's our gracious Redeemer, who's liberated us for true life in His kingdom.

[ 36 : 21 ] And He's put His Spirit within us, so we can obey Him. And when we do obey Him, as James says, we are blessed in our doing. We experience true freedom, true life through obedience to God our Father.

We're liberated then to be who we truly are in Christ. But you see, friends, we're in a battle, aren't we? And our old nature, our old heart is still warring against that new life.

And far too often we fail, we fall. And not just in one point. And James says here that one point is clearly enough to floor us completely. But we don't just fail in one point, do we?

We fail in many points, many ways, many, many, many times. We might not commit actual murder or actual adultery.

But our hearts do, don't they, many times. Remember what Jesus said about that. And we show partiality. And myriads of other sins that repeatedly, continually make us culpable.

[ 37 : 33 ] When even one such, as James says, makes us sin. That word means to fall short. It makes us transgressors who deserve all the penalty of that sin.

And what James is trying to say to us, friends, here, is that the truth is we just don't take sin nearly seriously enough. But the Bible tells us that our sin is such a vast insult to the majesty, to the holiness of God, that it evokes the fearsome wrath of the judge of heaven and earth.

And so when we even begin to take that seriously, when we read God's commands in Scripture, especially as they're taken up by Jesus and his apostles in the New Testament, when we begin to take that to heart, if we are in any sense humble Christians, then it will constantly convict us, won't it?

It will drive us to utter poverty of spirit. And we know that it's only, only the sheer mercy of Christ. It means we can receive from him the love that in any way, in any way, we need in order to fulfill his royal law of love.

We realize that our only hope is in God's grace alone. Because we've got nothing. We can offer nothing. We are nothing. But then we remember that the Lord Jesus said so wonderfully, blessed are the poor in spirit.

[ 39 : 11 ] Because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Because the poor in spirit seek it the only way it can be found. In the sheer mercy of God in Christ.

And so you see, knowing that we have received mercy, the mercy that triumphed over our rightful and just judgment, knowing we've received mercy, surely we must reflect that in our lives.

And surely we must live lives that are characterized by that mercy. And that's the command, isn't it, of verses 12 and 13.

Do you see? So speak and so act. In other words, live your whole life in this way, as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty, reflecting that mercy that triumphs over judgment.

See, these verses speak finally of the compassion of true kingdom people. And what he's saying is that God's law, if we live it truly, it will make us merciful.

[ 40 : 20 ] It'll steer our lives to show the compassion of our Lord. And we'll be people who judge others as He judged us, with mercy. We'll be people who love others as He loved us.

And we'll do that only if everything we say and everything we do is constantly shaped by the reality of both the judgment and the mercy of God. That's the force of verse 12.

Do you see? In this way speak and in this way act, as those who are literally about to be judged by the law of liberty, it has the force of an ever-present reality.

Always hold the reality of God's judgment before your eyes. And everything you think, everything you say, and everything you do, let it permeate your whole attitude to life.

What does he mean by that? Well, I think he means that the supreme place where God's judgment is set before us is at the cross of Calvary.

[ 41 : 24 ] It was a fearful judgment place where the wrath of God, the personal, deep anger of God, was poured out on human sin and on human flesh.

And yet it was also the place of supreme mercy, the place of ineffable love, where the God who is love loved us, says John, and sent His Son to be the propitiation of our sins.

And that's the glory of the gospel. Great is the gospel of our glorious God, where mercy met the anger of God's rod.

A penalty was paid, and pardon bought, and sinners lost. At last to Him were brought. And we're to live, you see, always holding before us the cross, where we are judged by the law of liberty, where we were set free from the curse of God's law, set free from the just punishment we deserve, by God's sheer love and mercy alone, at infinite cost, in the blood of His own Son.

Liberated from that curse, but for a life of loving response, loving God and loving our neighbor, and likewise showing mercy as those who have been made into people of mercy, people who share the divine compassion of our Heavenly Father, which was made known abundantly in the Lord Jesus, as our Savior, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

[ 43 : 08 ] You see, James is the probing heart doctor, isn't he? And he's asking us, is that how you always speak and act?

Is that how you show your judgment of others? Or are you, in fact, deceiving yourselves? Is your so-called religion just, well, worthless?

See the logic of his whole argument here, verses 1 to 13. He's saying in verse 1, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the glory of His salvation has shown extraordinary, unmerited mercy to you.

You can't be unmerciful. You can't live without compassion to others. And if you do act with selfish partiality and not with merciful love, then you deny the true faith in our Lord and Savior. And if you deny that true faith, then, well, it isn't real a faith at all, is it? It can't be anything other than worthless religion. And without real faith, verse 13, well, you will be judged, not with mercy, but with the just judgment you really deserve.

[ 44 : 27 ] John Blanchard puts it this way, here's a man who has shown no mercy in his own life. His life has been centered on self. Now, what can we say of such a man?

Surely this, a man without mercy is a man without love. A man without love is a man without grace. And a man without grace is a man without God.

And for him, there will not be judgment without justice, but there will be judgment without mercy. And you see, James is forcing us to examine ourselves, isn't he, and asking, do our lives show the evidence of the mercy that's been shown to us?

Does mercy triumph over judgment in the way we deal with our friends? Never mind those less desirable to us.

Never mind our enemies. See, James' answer to becoming and to being people who show true compassion, who show the mercy of true kingdom people, is to live always as those who are about to be judged in everything we say and do.

[ 45 : 45 ] By the law of liberty that set us free. I suppose another way of saying that is simply to say, live every moment of every day with the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ before you.

Live every day in the wonderful shadow of the place of judgment and mercy. Fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ and see in him all that God requires of you, the perfect law made flesh. and then look inside yourself. Think deeply of what it is that we justly deserve for all our sin, for all our transgression.

And then wonder at the triumph of mercy over judgment. And the Son of God bore in himself the wrath of God and the punishment for your sin, for my sin, all laid upon him.

And understand that as Alec Mateer puts it, this is our position before God. Judgment looks at our deserts, mercy at our needs.

[ 47 : 02 ] And God himself looks at the cross of his Son. Friends, if we live like that ever in the shadow of the cross of Jesus, it will become impossible to glory in the things and the standards that this world glories in.

It will be impossible for us to be what James calls judges with evil thoughts, won't it? No, surely we will be people who glory only in our Lord Jesus Christ, the true glory.

And his cross will become, won't it, the pattern of our lives. And that's how we will grow in love for him. That's how we'll grow in love for others. as we become more like him.

His people. People in whose lives mercy triumphs over judgment. It wins in our hearts. And I think that's what will win other hearts also to our great Savior.

Isn't that how you want to live? Blessed are the merciful, said our Savior, for they will be shown mercy.

[ 48 : 26 ] Let's pray. Savior, Thy dying love Thy gavest me, nor should I ought withhold, dear Lord, from Thee.

In love my soul would bow, my heart fulfill its vows, some offering bring thee now, something for Thee. Give me a faithful heart, likeness to Thee, that each departing day henceforth may see some work of love begun, some deed of kindness done, some wonderer, sought in one, something for Thee.

Lord, help us to live near and under the shadow of the cross of our great Savior who is the glory. And now we praise You for His mercy to us. Amen.■ Amen.■