

James 2:10-13 | Dave Stough

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[0 : 00] Okay, I really like that song. Come join the song of all the redeemed.! I hope to talk about that type of thing in this message today.! I have a title for this sermon today.

I don't always do that, but it was impressed upon me. I titled it, Be Real and Be Free. We have this picture up here I'll talk about in a minute.

I'm going to start out today with a story. It's a story from the Bible, but it was rewritten by somebody from the perspective of one of the people going through, who lived through this story.

I don't think it'll take you too long to recognize it if you've read the Gospel of John before. Here we go. Their insults fell on me like blows as if I were being slapped.

Shame on you, woman, they said. Imagine it. She was married, but not to the man whose arms she had been in. Suddenly the door burst open. Angry men dragged her, and her secret sin out into the street.

[1 : 14] Adulteress, adulteress, the words pierced her like arrows. A gathering crowd gawked at her with scorn. Her life was undone in a moment by which she had just done.

And it was about to be crushed. They were talking about stoning. Oh my God, they're going to stone me. God have mercy.

But God's verdict on her case seemed clear. If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die. The man who lay with the woman and the woman.

So shall you purge the evil from Israel. Deuteronomy 22. Both shall die. She was going to die. But where was he?

No time to think. She was half pushed and half dragged through the streets of Jerusalem. She was despised and rejected. Wait a minute.

[2 : 16] Why are we entering the temple area? She thought. Suddenly, she was thrust in front of the face of a young man. Someone behind her said, Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

Now the law of Moses commanded us to stone such a woman. But what do you say? A teacher looked at her and her accusers.

And then he knelt down. Why was he writing in the dirt? She thought. The impatient prosecutors demanded a ruling. He stood back up.

She held her breath, looked down at her feet. Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her. The crowd was hushed and confused.

She glanced up at the young rabbi and he wrote in the dirt again. She heard mumbling behind her and then the shuffling of feet.

[3 : 16] People were leaving. None of her accusers grabbed her. It took some courage for her to turn around and look. They were all gone.

She turned to the teacher. He was standing, staring at her. Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?

She said, no one, Lord. And Jesus said, neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. Now, that's a popular story.

It's kind of refreshing to hear it from that perspective, I believe. Forget for a moment, though, the self-righteousness of the accusers in this story or the absence of the man that apparently may have been on purpose.

But did you hear what Jesus said? This woman's guilt was real. She committed the crime of adultery, which is very serious, God's law.

[4 : 22] God's law commanded her death. But the Son of God said, neither do I condemn you. How could he possibly do that?

If God violates his own commandment, we have a huge problem. Is God unjust? Absolutely not. God fully intended for this sin of adultery to be punished to the full extent of his law. But she wouldn't bear that punishment. She would go free. We have a picture up here today that captures kind of the essence of this story.

I've seen this before, but I never really understood it until recently. If you look at it closely, you can see a reference of James 2.13 below the word mercy up there.

And it says here, mercy triumphs over judgment. And that phrase is in our text today in James. And we will be in James 2.10-13 in a few moments, so you can turn there if you like.

[5 : 34] The Greek word for triumph is found only in two places in the New Testament. I found it interesting. Here, James 2.13. And in Romans 11.8.

And it means to exalt over or to glory over something. The picture of the dove above the scales of justice symbolizes God's mercy surpassing his condemnation.

The dove represents the Holy Spirit in life, while the scales signify God's justice.

It shows us that in the heart of God, mercy is desired, not instead of justice, but that his mercy is found in the midst of his justice, glorying over it.

It's kind of a cool picture, right, when you understand it. As we go through our text today, my hope is to drive that point home. All the places, I had to chuckle a little bit when I thought about this for a little bit, but of all the places in the Bible that has a significant passage talking about mercy, I find it surprising to be the book of James.

[7 : 00] If you have read the whole book through a few times for yourself, you know what I mean. It can be hard to understand James sometimes in a few places.

Or maybe I should better say it's hard to align what he's saying with the rest of the teachings in the New Testament on grace through faith. Let's review it a little for some clarity, and then we'll read our passage.

Some of this you guys have already heard, but I think it's important to remember, so let's go over it again. Because it really does help us significantly to better understand what was written.

Excuse me. This is one of the first books ever written in the New Testament. It was wrote sometime around AD 48.

Some people place it even earlier. This was probably the first ever letter written in the New Testament.

[8 : 09] The first one written after Christ ascended. James' letter has a Jewish flavor to it. What do I mean by that? Well, he right off the bat addresses it to the 12 tribes scattered abroad.

We have to keep in mind that the church at this time was largely Jewish. The epicenter of the church was in Jerusalem. The temple is still standing.

And how the Old Testament law related to this new covenant was still being figured out. The fact that Jew and Gentile were in one body. And these people who had lived under the law their whole lives were starting to understand this.

But as we went through Acts, you could see that that was a process. And like I said, don't forget, most of the believers at this time are Jewish.

It's clear that James addresses his letters to those who have placed their faith in Christ. James 2.1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with partiality.

[9 : 20] There's no reason to conclude this letter is not written to the church as some do. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek, whether slave or free.

And we have all been made to drink of one spirit. As has been pointed out in previous sermons, the way James writes can lead us to think he's kind of random in his thinking.

But I don't think that James was as ADD as we may think. If you read the entire book, or maybe just listen to it being read all the way through in one sitting, if you do that a few times, you will notice a common theme that emerges.

A theme that puts his thoughts together. The Holy Spirit through James is telling us that we will behave according to what we treasure up in our heart.

We will behave according to what we have treasured up in our heart. Someone once said to me in the past, James is saying, what's down in the well is what comes up in the bucket.

[10 : 38] The country way of saying it, right? As was said weeks ago from this pulpit, these letters to the church were written to be read all the way through.

And I would encourage you to do that if you haven't done that yet. Take 10 to 15 minutes. Sit down and read it once or twice before next week. James is a rubber meets the road kind of letter. He says, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then your life should look like this. He points to several things when he does that.

He admonishes us to not just talk the talk, but to walk the walk. Emphasizing the fact that actions speak louder than words.

Now James' style of writing is somewhat different than Paul's. Right? You read? It's a straightforward, direct approach that admonishes us.

[11 : 41] You may feel like you're getting spiritually slapped around when you first read it. At least I did. Right out of the gate, in verse 2 of chapter 1, he tells us to rejoice when we go through hard times.

And then he points out that God is at work building his character in us. And then if we need wisdom, that we should ask him. But don't doubt.

Because if you're a doubt, you're double-minded. This is admonishment. When Paul talks about going through trials in Romans, he spends a couple chapters telling us about the forgiveness of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, and then the righteousness that God has imputed to us through faith alone in Christ.

And he says we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And not only that, we rejoice in trials.

Paul has us basking in the grace of God. And then he writes about persevering through trials. He reminds us that we share in God's glory as we go through this.

[12 : 59] And he points us to that time in the future when we'll share in his glory. And then he ends it off with saying, and this hope we have doesn't disappoint, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Two different approaches to the same subject. Not in contradiction, but complementing one another. Both under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Lately, I have been prayerfully considering both of these instructions when facing trials. We need both. To be admonished and to remember God's grace.

James is writing after the cross, right? And he does personally know of the grace of God and the forgiveness that was in Christ.

And he does point to it in his letter. James 4, 6. He says, But God gives more grace. And in this passage today, when he talks about the law of liberty and mercy triumphing over judgment.

[14 : 10] James, in his letter, he really wants believers. He wants us to see things the way God does. And then he shows us what that looks like in our everyday lives.

He mentions the grace of God, then he spends a lot of time admonishing us to go to it. I say all of this by way of introduction because it's absolutely key not only to understanding James, but also in growing in the Lord.

So let's read that passage. James 2, 10-13. Whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point is he is guilty of all.

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.

So speak and do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.

[15 : 23] Mercy triumphs over judgment. After reading this, you may ask yourself, well, why then does James press the law to believers in this age of grace?

was not the law a temporary covenant that God had with Israel? Yes, absolutely.

We're not under the law as a rule of life. Christ, not the law, is our pattern in our lives as believers. We look to Him instead of the law.

The reason for that is because where there is law, there's penalty. That's the condition of the law.

The penalty that Christ took for us, just as He did the woman in John 8. So why does James use the law so much in his letter?

[16 : 27] Well, if you look at it closely, you can see that James is not using the law in the Old Testament way or the intention is not to have people use the law to follow God.

I'll just say that. He is admonishing us to use the law. I'm sorry, he is not admonishing us to use the law to walk with Christ.

He is using the law to point out worldly attitudes that we can have as believers. He is using it as a way to tell us to not be conformed to the world.

There is no admonition of James to use the law as a means to obey God. He points to the law of liberty for that. So you want to pull up that first slide?

I copied and pasted all the times the word law was used in the book of James and then put them on a PowerPoint for us to see. And I think there's two distinct uses of it.

[17 : 41] And you can see that it's used I believe five different times in four verses. And three of those times are right in our passage that we just read.

Convicted by the law keep the whole law yet stumble in one point. You have become a transgressor of the law. And then James 4.11 he says he who speaks evil of a brother judges and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law.

So what is the use of this here? It's just simply what God has laid out in the Ten Commandments. It shows us His will and our sin.

James is pointing out a hard truth here. The law is like a chain of ten links. Break one link and the chain is broken. The whole chain won't be any good.

God does not want us to keep laws like we're going to a menu and we can pick and choose what we want. It's the same God who made every law.

[18 : 53] And if you offend in one point you've offended the same God that made them all. James is saying don't be like the world and have an idolatrous low view of God the legalistic way of approaching God and where obedience this kind of pick and choose obedience is really a display of a self-righteous attitude.

So James is pointing that out here by using the law to believers. Now to keep us in context last week Jeffrey spoke on the sin of favoritism and partiality.

don't forget he's talking to believers and he's in the exhortation for James is don't distinguish between people based on their wealth or poverty or any other worldly value system.

James is saying don't make light of the sin of favoritism and he uses the law to do that. And you in the the extreme instances of adultery and murder James is showing that it's absurdity to have inconsistent inconsistent obedience if you're looking to the law.

Don't forget these believers these Christians who he's writing to used to live they were used to thinking and living and looking to the law before they got saved.

[20 : 34] And I think what he's doing here he's trying to show them the flaw in their thinking. If you are going to use the law you're going to fall short.

And so he admonishes us that way. It's different for us but understand the context. And who knows these early believers could very well have Jewish friends who were not saved listening to this letter be read.

Just like you and I have friends and acquaintances that go to church thinking they will be right with God as long as they try to be a good person.

If you're here today and you're thinking you're not a bad person and God will probably accept you on the fact that you're trying to be good you need to hear what the law says.

If you're not taking God seriously about how he will judge sin you need to hear what the law says. If you think one day I'll take this Jesus stuff seriously later I think you need to hear what the law says.

[21 : 51] I have a video clip first one. It's of a brother he uses the law very effectively when talking to unbelievers.

Sorry Kurt I should have gave you more of a heads up there. I'll go ahead and make a comment about it that I was going to make afterwards. this brother goes out on the street and talks to people about the Lord and I know when I got saved, we got a commercial on YouTube there, I know when I got saved I was in the early 20s in Norfolk, Virginia, people would come up to me, hand tracks and start talking to me about the Lord.

And these are perfect strangers and that's why I like listening to this guy. God bless him for doing it. I don't agree with how he uses the word repentance but we're just going to watch him and how he uses the law here.

Do you think there's a wife after death? I do. Are you afraid of dying? No, I'm not. Because I feel like once you're dead, there's all the worries and all the pain is gone.

You know we talk about people passing on. Where do people pass on to? Well, I like to eat heaven, right? Like the other side. Have you ever read the Bible? I have months.

[23 : 21] Have you ever tried to put an appliance together and you made a mess of it and you'll give instructions? Most men do that. And after things go wrong, they'll give instructions. That's what humanity has done with the Bible.

Heaven will give instructions. But it tells you how you can live forever. Did you know that? I did. See if you can guess what the Bible says on what you should do to go ahead of I think just overall being a good person.

You know, a lot of people, you ask if you think you're a good person, you are a good person. The problem is they judge themselves by their own standard. So let's say you're going to make a table. This is a big question. Do you think you're a good person?

Well, now you made me excited about that. Well, I think I'm a good person, yeah. That's normal, because you've got your own standard to judge by. God gives his own standard, the 10 commands. Are you familiar with the 10 commands? Okay, I'm going to take you through a few of them to see how you going to do on judgment day. And this is your measurement to see if you're a good person. All I need from you is your honesty.

[24 : 18] Can you be honest? Yeah. The 9th command says not to lie. How many lies do you think it's told in your life? I put them like again. What do you call someone who! tells lies? What do you call someone who steals?

A bad person. Yeah. If they would, this is worth it because it's going to show you how you need God's mercy and how you can get it and how you can find your lasting life. Have you used God's name in vain?

I have. Do you love your mom? I love her. Have you ever used her name as a word? No. Why not? Because that's bad. That's your mother.

God is the one who gave you a mother. He gave you a wife. His name is holy. You have his name as a customer. It's called blasphemy.

Very serious in his eyes. Can you hear something more personal? Sure. Not where we're here. Jesus said if you have lust sexual desire you commit adultery in your heart.

[25 : 25] Have you ever done that? Yes. Here's the salvation. This is you to judge yourself.

Guilty. Heaven or hell. Hell. Does that concern you? It does. It should. This is your life. Let me show you what we're doing. Imagine you're an adult and you have someone in front of you who thinks they're extremely well.

That's good. They look well. That is an effective use. The law. The law points out sin.

In the book of James he even uses it to warn believers not to take sin lightly. Again he's not teaching that we should use the law as a way to walk with the Lord.

He reminds us of our need for grace. Okay in the second slide. another way James uses the law it's actually the same type of way he's using it but it's a different description of the Old Testament law.

[26 : 43] It's called the royal law. In James 2.8 he uses the phrase royal law. it says if you really fulfill the royal law according to scripture you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You find it? No no no second slide sorry well that's very in there. It's okay.

It's alright the James 2.8 he calls the law in the Old Testament the royal law.

The royal law is a summary it summarizes what the Ten Commandments are trying to get at in a positive way. The royal law summarizes in a positive way the demands of the law.

There it is. If you really fulfill the royal law according to scripture you shall love your neighbor as yourself. To love God with all your heart soul and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself it is the noble goal of the law.

[28 : 04] It's God's will expressed through love. This was given in Leviticus 19 and it's repeated by Jesus in Matthew 22 and he said on these two commandments all of the law and the prophets hang.

I think it's called the royal law because it's the supreme law or like I say the goal of the law. It's what the law looked like when somebody who was perfect lived it the Lord Jesus and when he taught it. Now James is using this the same way that he did when he just read the commandments. in essence he's saying you're not walking with the Lord if you're not loving your neighbor as yourself. So this describes the first way that James uses the law which brings us to the second and most significant way I believe the word law is used by James.

He calls it the law of liberty or as some of your translations put it the law that sets you free or the law of freedom you know when you read this that it's not a reference to the old testament law James 1

25 he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it this one will be blessed James 2 12 so speak and do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty he doesn't leave us in despair by only using the law in his letter he points us to the law of liberty what are we talking about here it's not about keeping rules it's about being set free when we're born again we receive freedom through forgiveness when we place our faith in the person of

[30 : 14] Jesus Christ we are declared righteous by God because of the blood shed by Jesus at the cross the debt was paid he comes to live in us through the Holy Spirit we have been restored to God and have tasted of the unconditional that love God has for us we're partakers of the new covenant where it says that God writes his laws on our hearts in other words we have a new nature in us that desires to love God back by obeying at him this was imparted to us when we believed we don't understand it all but we just know there's something new there we still sin but there's something new there James understood this because it was written in Jeremiah 31 and it was implemented by his half brother at the last supper his half brother according to the flesh he doesn't call him that here

Paul writes about the law of liberty this way therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death no condemnation being set free the spirit this is what Romans 8 2 saying for the law of the spirit of Christ has set me free from the law of sin and death the law of liberty that James is talking about is the spirit in us this is freedom freedom from the fear of condemnation or punishment from God freedom from the bondage to sin when we walk with the Lord freedom from the fear of death we have been given we have been given this in life because of what

Jesus did at the cross we who have believed have that spirit living in us second Corinthians chapter three says now the Lord is the spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom and we all with unveiled face behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord or being transformed from one glory to another for this comes from the Lord who is the spirit you can take that slide down if you want what that verse is saying since we have Christ in us through the Holy Spirit we can look to him through his word and see his glory the glory that when we look at it transforms us and we can behold that just like we're looking in a mirror and we see our faces being transformed into his image the glory of the

Lord is reflected in our lives as we behold his glorious being through his word he has given these great and precious promises in his word to us personally and that Holy Spirit that lives in us is constantly wanting us to listen I've been admonished by reading this book and other things that have happened in the last few months to learn to listen to slow down so we are free to be new free to be who he created us to be free to walk in the good works that he predestined for us before time began Ephesians 2 10 we're free to do that his will is a gift to us doesn't seem though that way doesn't seem that way when we're going through trials though does it it's not really if you're like me pertinent in my mind well

James in his letter exhorts! us to have a right view of God in ourselves when we're facing trials in the past few months the Holy Spirit has been speaking to me about two things one because God made me a new creation in Christ I really am not the person I was before salvation I'm really not that person I'm not in the bondage to the shame of the old life I am free to be his child with the new life that he gives I'm learning to start out my day Gina and I have been talking about this start out our day in our waking moments by trying to take our thoughts captive to the truth James does say in chapter one receive with meekness the implanted word that you may be able to grow thereby the word that's able to save your souls he's talking about deliverance so I think about that and then I start thinking about those verses in

[36 : 25] Romans 8 and Ephesians 1 about the sonship that we have in Christ then I start talking to the Lord about him while I'm drinking my coffee of course the other thing the other reality floating around in my mind the last couple months is another truth that James points us to do it's the truth that our savior has a good and faithful and loving purpose for us to go through trials things that we don't like he's building his character in us that character where we're transformed into the image of Christ Christ and he wants us to rely upon him he is faithful and good to be there not only to be there but to take us there to take us through it to lead us through it and then he says that we will share in his glory the glory that he has promised us as part of our inheritance so I'm free free to be new and have the liberty to rely on him when situations are hard or even when I blow it

I'm always free to go him to find mercy and help in time of need the Lord is calling us to be real with him so we can be free now James says in verse 12 that we are to speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law of liberty I believe that's referring to the judgment seat of Christ we'll be judged by the law of liberty at the judgment seat of Christ in other words we have to live like someone who knows what mercy and forgiveness feels like God has been merciful to us and he expects us to extend that kind of mercy to others by the way you can't really get caught up in the politics too much and think that way I will say from experience as a side note talk about that later I don't know all about what the judgment seat of Christ will be like I do know a few things I do know it's for believers only it is not the great white throne of judgment where condemnation in the lake of fire is waiting on believers the judgment seat of Christ will be a time where our works as believers will be judged our words and the deeds we've done will be examined by the one who saved us the ones done for his glory will remain the deeds and words not glorifying him will be burned up I picture it this is conjecture it's using a as I've heard it said using an informed imagination and take it for what you think it will be

I picture it as a time where the one who loved us and gave himself for us will be rewarding us for the acts of faith and obedience that gave him glory and also a time where he will be asking us why didn't you trust me more for the times we lack faith or selfish and disobey we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ this has been a sobering reminder to me speak and act as those who will be judged by the law of liberty the Lord Jesus wants us to trust him we have the musicians come up video clip I want to end with the last video clip we hear it's a practical and powerful example of mercy triumphing over judgment can you rewind that

I said what do you mean she said well I can't explain it but it's with me on I said what do you mean she said well I can't explain it it's the only room in the whole place with no running water I said young lady they called you stupid would be to defame the word I said you owe your mother an apology for the day you were born and I just laid her the words just got coming I sat in the seat of the scornful theater finally after a couple minutes I said you still there I said you got anything to say she said well since you asked I got one thing to say I said what's that she said I go to a Bible college where you come preach every year I said hey you knew I was kidding right I don't need water who needs water she said brother Gibbs I don't have hardly any money but I pray for your ministry every day and every month I send a few dollars because I believe in what you're doing and she started sobbing and she said I'm so sorry I failed you I went down to that front desk literally got on my knees and I said listen what I didn't do

[42 : 14] I never want somebody through to my wife or daughter I broke God's heart I sinned she said no it's my it is not you by the way it doesn't matter what someone is to be always with grace those are Bible for me about a year later I met her in church when I met her pastor and she said you know a girl in my church said she met you at a motel where she was working I said how about that I mean sometimes you just try to play stupid right but I didn't see if I could just get out of this I said well just how much she loves you and how she loves praying for you I said that's all she said he said yeah I said could you let me tell you what I did to her and I told her the whole story she didn't tell you any of that he said no he said but yes when you told her you owe your mother an apology for the day you were born she doesn't know who her mother is she has no idea what her birthday is she doesn't know who her mother and father are the comrade she has nothing except Jesus and she never complains I said pastor I love what she said what does it take to make me what does it take to make me sometimes it's just rush hour and by the way be careful what your eyes and ears are what you are watching which news are that they're all right and they want you to be upset about what they're upset about so I called down to the front desk man

I think that young lady knew what she had in Christ and it served as a needed reminder to that preacher notice the humility and mercy of both of them at the end this is what God's calling us to he wants us to be real so we can be free let's pray thank you Lord for the gift this great gift Lord help us to have eyes of faith to see your glory help us to know you more know the love that surpasses all understanding know to know Lord the power that you have given us help us to consider these things personally throughout our day in Jesus name amen