

James – Life after Faith

James 2:8-12

“Giving what You Hope to Get”

**I. REMEMBER WHAT IS COMMANDED AND DON'T BE HATEFUL**

A. The priority of this command

B. The practice of this command

**II. REMEMBER WHAT IS CONDEMNED AND DON'T BE HAUGHTY**

A. We try to minimize our sin

B. We try to maximize our standing

**III. REMEMBER WHAT IS COMING AND DON'T BE HARSH**

A. The meeting we should all remember

B. The mercy we will all require

1. Did you hear about the two porcupines who tried to snuggle together during a cold winter night? As they got close, their quills began to stick and stab one another.

2. They separated, but soon began to shiver, so they came together again, only to find that their quills were still sharp and painful. The problem was this: they needed each other, but they kept needling each other.

3. That is kind of the way it is with the relationships of life. We need one another, and must relate to each other, but at times those relationships can be sharp and painful.

4. In many ways, the first part of James chapter 2 is made up of instructions on how the people of God should and should not treat one another.

5. Brother James has been described as “a moral theologian.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, he is as concerned with the practice as he is with the precept.

6. In this second chapter, having discouraged and condemned sinful favoritism, he goes in verse 8, to quote what he calls “the royal law”, which is, “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*”

7. In this passage, James urges us to treat one another based on what God expects from us, and also, as we will see, based on what we expect from God.

8. Human relationships can often be as complicated as a *Rubik's Cube*, and as messy as finger paints, but how we treat one another is a big deal to God, and therefore should be to us as well.

9. James basically teaches us that when it comes to our relationships with one another, we should always give what we hope to get.

10. As we study this passage, I want to draw out from it three truths that we should remember, and apply to our lives and how we relate to one another. First of all, I believe this passage speaks to us and says:

### **I. REMEMBER WHAT IS COMMANDED AND DON'T BE HATEFUL**

1. Look with me at verse 8. James says, *"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"*

2. In this verse, James takes one of the foundational teachings of Scripture, and reminds us of the important role it should play in our lives and in our relationships.

3. The truth is, if we all lived by this law, and loved others as much as we love ourselves, there would be no relationship problems at all.

4. If we would all simply remember what has been commanded, there would be no hateful conflicts and no hurtful confrontations.

5. Notice with me a couple of things we draw from this verse about this law of loving one another. First of all, notice:

#### **A. The priority of this command**

1. Look again at the wording James uses here in verse 8. He quotes the commandment, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"* and he calls it, *"the royal law"*.

2. Literally, James refers to this one command as "the King's law", or "the king of the law." It is the law of laws, if you will.

3. The Apostle Paul echoes this in his own writings. He says in Romans 13:8, *"...he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."* Again, in Galatians 5:14, Paul says, *"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."*

4. The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 was given to illustrate the carrying out of this particular command.

5. So often, people view the Christian life as an exhaustive and impossible list of do's and don'ts. They think they are thousands of things that Christ demands of them.

6. The reality, however, is that you could sum up all of a Christian's responsibility with one prioritized command, the royal law of loving your neighbor as yourself.

7. Just in case you are interested, the entire United States Code of Federal Regulations (all the laws of federal government) can be purchased for around \$6,500. It comes in 356 volumes, and takes up a total 55 ft. of shelf space.

8. Thankfully, we don't have to wade through thousands of pages, and hundreds of books to find out the Law of our King. James reminds us of the royal law of loving one another as we love ourselves.

9. Notice with me not only the priority of this command, but also as we think about what's commanded, notice with me:

### **B. The practice of this command**

1. Look again at verse 8, and notice exactly what James calls the "royal law". He says, *"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"*

2. The command is to love your neighbor as much as, or in the same way that you love yourself.

3. Essentially, the carrying out of this command does away with selfishness, and the whole notion of advancing yourself above others.

4. Generations of Americans have been raised to compete and to climb as far as they can. And so often, we celebrate and applaud those who rise to the heights of wealth and prosperity.

5. While there is nothing wrong with succeeding, real success should not be measured by how far you rise above the people around you.

6. In fact, if you carry out the command of Christ, real success is measured by how far you lift those around you.

7. The Bishop of Cambridge once gave a group of students a lesson in Christian grammar. He said, "We have all learned to say in school, 'First person – I; Second Person – You; and Third Person – He'."

8. He went on to say that in Christian grammar, this is completely wrong. He explained, "Christian grammar says, 'First Person – He; Second Person – You; and Third Person – I'."<sup>ii</sup>

9. Brother James teaches us that in our relationships with one another we must remember God's royal law, and be loving, not hateful.

10. Notice a second principle we draw from this text. The passage speaks to us and says not only, *remember what's commanded and don't be hateful*, but notice also that we find this principle:

## **II. REMEMBER WHAT IS CONDEMNED AND DON'T BE HAUGHTY**

1. James frequently writes in a style that is called "diatribe". In this style, James will anticipate an argument that someone might make against what he is saying.

2. In this passage, James anticipates someone saying something like this: "So I show a little favoritism, and mistreat someone here or there. That's not all that big of a deal."

3. He answers this kind of argument in verses 9 through 11. Notice in verse 9, he says, "*But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.*"

4. His language is very strong in this verse. There are basically two Greek words for sin in the New Testament, and James uses both of them in this one verse.

5. The point is this: lest we become arrogant, and try to dismiss how we treat one another as an insignificant issue, James reminds us of the fact that sin is sin.

6. Notice in these verses a couple of haughty and proud things we often try to do. First of all, James reminds us of how:

### **A. We try to minimize our sin**

1. If we are not careful, we will look at a failure in our own personal lives, and minimize it by comparing it to other sins.

2. We will say, "I know I gossip a bit, but I haven't killed anybody." Or someone might say, "I may struggle with lust, but at least I've never committed adultery."

3. To that kind of reasoning, James answers in verse 9, and says, "*...ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.*"

4. Notice that word "convinced". It is literally means to be rebuked, or convicted.

5. In other words, even though the particular sin in question is simply the act of showing favoritism toward one person, while mistreating another, James says that the Law of God still rebukes the sinner.

6. Be careful that you don't take a light look, or even a loose pride in what your sinful "rap sheet" does or does not contain. We must not minimize our sin.

7. Many years ago, in a book called *Respectable Sins*, John Watson explains that there are some shameful sins that no one wants to commit, and then there are some sins that are looked at quite differently.

8. He says that they are not really regarded as sins at all, but rather what he calls, "...failings of disposition, mere flaws in the marble of the Parthenon, spots upon the sun which do not gravely detract from perfection..."<sup>iii</sup>

9. With that being said, James reminds that we cannot be haughty because there are no such things as respectable sins. All sin is convicted as a transgression of the law.

10. Notice something else we often try to do in our pride and haughtiness. We not only try to minimize our sin, but also:

### **B. We try to maximize our standing**

1. Whenever someone tries to downplay their particular fault and failure, they inevitably do so in an effort to improve the appearance of their standing in comparison to other people.

2. It is like they are saying, "Yeah, sometimes I mistreat others, but I am not as bad as the thief, or the murderer."

3. Look at what James says in verse 10. He answers this kind of foolish arrogance by saying, "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*"

4. One writer says, "James sees the Law as a seamless garment which, when ripped in one place, tears the whole garment."<sup>iv</sup>

5. In verse 11, James explains that the same God who said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is the same God who said, "Thou shalt not kill."

6. The idea behind this passage is that regardless of which particular commandment you have broken, if you have broken one, you have broken "the Law", and you are guilty just the same.

7. The person who covets has no right to look down upon the thief. The person who dishonors their parents has no basis for thinking they are somehow less guilty than the person who commits adultery.

8. If you rank your sins, and try to rationalize your sinfulness, you will take on an unwarranted pride that will keep you from relating to others the way that you should.

9. In heaven there will be no gated communities for the minor sinners; nor ghettos for the major ones. We will all simply be sinners saved by the grace of God.

10. There is one more principle that I want to draw from this text. I believe this passage says to us not only, *remember what's commanded and don't be hateful*, and *remember what's condemned and don't be haughty*, but notice also that this text seems to say to us this:

### **III. REMEMBER WHAT IS COMING AND DON'T BE HARSH**

1. Remember, James is dealing with issue of how we relate to one another. He reminds us that we are commanded to love one another, and that we are all guilty of breaking God's law.

2. Now he starts to sum up this whole section in verse 12. He says, "*So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*"

3. In verses 12 and 13, James reminds us of something that should always be in the forefront of our mind whenever we deal with one another.

4. Notice what we must always consider before we are too harsh in our treatment and judgment of each other. First of all, think about:

#### **A. The meeting we should all remember**

1. There are some sobering words in verse 12. James says that we should talk and act like "*they that shall be judged...*"

2. Every word and deed of our lives should be carried out mindful of the fact that the day is coming when we are going to meet the Judge of all the earth face to face.

3. One day, each one of us is going to have to give an account to Jesus Christ for how we have lived the life that He gave us.

4. Paul talks about this in II Corinthians 5:10. He says, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*"

5. One day, Christian, though you may escape condemnation through the blood of Christ, you will not escape evaluation in the presence of Christ!

6. Oh, be careful how you treat one another! We are going to answer to Jesus for our conduct! We have a meeting with the Master!

7. When I was a kid, I normally looked forward to my dad coming home. I was excited to see him. However, there were times when I feared his coming home. Mom would utter that classic threat, “You just wait until your dad gets home!” That meeting would worry me.

9. We should live our lives in such a way that we need not fear the coming of Christ! Notice not only that we should be careful with one another based on the meeting we should remember, but also because of:

### **B. The mercy we will all require**

1. Don’t miss what James says in verse 13. He says, *“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”*

2. The idea behind that verse is that those who show no mercy in this life will find no mercy when this life is over.

3. I know those are strong words. They are supposed to be. James is reminding us of the importance of mercy!

4. We are going to need mercy when we meet Jesus! Likewise, the people around us need it from us as well.

5. Jimmy Draper, in his wonderful book on James makes a very insightful and convicting statement. He says, “If we were God, there are some folks we would enjoy punishing. That shows an area of our lives in which God needs to do some work.”<sup>v</sup>

6. When it comes to how we relate to one another, and how we treat each other, we must be careful to give each other what we hope our Lord will give to us – mercy.

7. In 1647 an old Puritan preacher named Thomas Hooker lay dying, and a friend tried to encourage him by saying, “Brother, you are going to receive your reward of your labors.” The old preacher responded, “Brother, I am going to receive mercy.”

8. Let us not be harsh with each other. Remember the judgment that is coming, and the mercy you will require. Let us love, forgive, and help one another as we trust our Lord will do for us.

1. You’ve all heard the little poem that says:

*To live above with saints we love,  
That will be grace and glory,  
But to live below with saints we know,  
Well, that's another story*

2. The truth is, there ought to be a grace and glory about the way we treat each other down here.

3. Though we will always find faults and failures in the lives of those around us, we must recognize that faults and failures plague our lives as well.

4. We are called to give to others what we hope to get. With that in mind, let us love one another, and show the very mercy that we expect our Lord to give us when we stand in his presence.

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<sup>i</sup> Hughes, R. Kent, James: Faith that Works, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 1991), p. 98

<sup>ii</sup> Zodiates, Spiros, Faith, Love, Hope, (AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, 1985), p. 174

<sup>iii</sup> Watson, John, Respectable Sins, (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1910), p. 3

<sup>iv</sup> Hughes, R. Kent, p. 100

<sup>v</sup> Draper, James T., James: Faith & Works in Balance, (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL, 1981), p. 84