

Walk The Talk

- James 2:1-13

➤ Free Will Baptists Church Covenant

- This is a statement of what we believe personally & collectively as a church. It is important to know what we stand for, b/c if we don't know what we stand for we won't stand for anything. But I will tell you this, it does no good to recite our Church Covenant if we don't live by it.

- Having rules & laws is great; but if no one lives by the, they are useless.
- In the same manner, it is just as useless to memorize scripture if as Christians we are not committed to living by it.

➤ In our study on the book of James, the writer jumps right in here in chapter 2 in addressing how we treat others & he begins with an example in the church.

- He sent two visitors to a church service, a rich man and a poor man; and he watched to see how they were treated. *The way we behave toward people indicates what we really believe about God!* We cannot—and dare not—separate *human* relationships from *divine* fellowship.
 - I John 4:20 – “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”
- Jewish people in that day coveted recognition and honor, and vied with one another for praise. If we are not careful. The exact same thing can creep into the local church today, and there is no church that is not subject to it.
 - In the world today, it's known as “Climbing the Ladder”.
 - Politicians rub shoulders with one another, not for the betterment of the people, but for their own gain.
 - People “get in” with those high in authority in corporations so that can receive personal gain from those relationships.
 - These type dealings are completely inappropriate out in the world, but James is stressing that they absolutely cannot be when it comes to the church.
 - This is not a place to promote yourself or your agenda. This is a place where we lift up our Lord & He alone above all others.
 - Church is not a place where we come to gain personal profit. We shouldn't go to a church b/c it benefits us financially, nor should we go to a church b/c of cliques or to rise in leadership.
 - Many of the believers James wrote to were trying to seize spiritual offices, and James had to warn them pretty severely later on in chapter 3.

➤ But tonight, James deals specifically & quite pointedly about the issue of

1. Accepting Others Equally.

- Sad as it is today, there are many who are not welcomed at the House of God.
- Now I understand that our church may not suit everybody ... I don't know why ... but I have come to except that realization.
- However, there is a vast difference in our church not suiting someone & them not feeling welcome, or even worse, pointed out in a crowd.
 - James describes 2 very different men who come to the church or to the local assembly.
 - Rich Man – He has his fancy gold ring on display, his fine clothes & his designer sandals.

- Poor Man – Then comes in another man who is just a mess. The description is a man who is destitute or in need. The same term was used of Lazarus in Luke 16. His clothing was far from designer and wasn't even clean.
 - Both of these men enter the sanctuary at the same time and the ushers are running to meet the rich man & escort him to the front, while at the same time they are rushing the poor man to the back corner where he can stand or even present himself as a footstool to others (v.3).
- Then James delivers the indictment as it were in v.4 – “Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?”
 - Aren't you making class distinctions in your mind?
 - Aren't you setting yourselves up as able to judge the true quality of other people?
 - Aren't you having evil thoughts towards others?
- These are serious indictments. Just because a person is better dressed than another person or has a better vocabulary and more refined manners does not prove him to be a better person.
- As a matter of fact, when Jesus Himself judged others it wasn't at the outward appearance, He looked at the heart.
 - The poor widow who gave her only mite in His eyes was better than the Pharisee who boastfully & proudly gave his donation.
 - The disciples didn't even understand Jesus at times as he went to meet the woman at the well, who was a known sinner, but Jesus saw her heart.
- Yet sadly in many churches today, we don't even give others the benefit of the doubt.
 - When visitors come into our churches, we tend to judge them on what we see outwardly rather than what they are inwardly.
 - Dress, color of skin, fashion, and other superficial things carry more weight than the power of God working in & through their lives.
 - We cater to the rich because we hope to get something out of them, and we avoid the poor because they don't fit in or are an embarrassment to us.
 - Well bless your heart. You & I ought to be thankful that God didn't raise the standard too high when it came to His offer of salvation.
 - He had to make it accessible to sinners b/c that is who you & I are.
 - He had to make it free b/c we are too broke in and of ourselves to purchase it.
 - He gave it freely b/c of His great love for us & not b/c we deserved it or chose to follow Him.
- **As James bring this problem to the forefront, he brings an intriguing thought to our minds. We need to quit seeing others through our own eyes & start seeing others through the eyes of Christ!**
 - If a visitor comes to the service, we accept them not b/c of what they have to offer, but b/c he/she needs Christ just as much as we do.
 - If they are saved, then we should accept them b/c they are a brother or sister in Christ, Amen?
- **What a foolish & ridiculous thought for churches to be established only for certain classes or certain types of individuals. Jesus was no respecter of persons, what right do we have to be?**
 - Look at the disciples, every one of them would be classified as “poor”.
 - What about the prophets, most were not among the “elite”.
 - Go throughout God's Word & you will find that many of the people that God used were not well off to say the least, but were humble enough to allow God to use them.
 - Moses was the son of a slave by birth, but he was rich in faith.
 - David was the least of Jesse's sons, but he was an heir to the Kingdom of Israel.

- What about Jacob? Jacob had no money, even had to work for his wife. But he had great riches in his faith in God.
- What I am saying is this, the things of this world can come & go in a moment; but our faith & our relationship with God holds eternal value.

2. The Value of God's Grace

- **As Warren Weirsbe so eloquently put it, "If salvation were on the basis of merit, it would not be by grace. Grace implies God's sovereign choice of those who cannot earn and do not deserve His salvation. God saves us completely on the basis of the work of Christ on the cross and not because of anything that we are or have."**
- **God in His infinite wisdom knew that salvation could not be something we could achieve on our own b/c then our faith would be in ourselves instead of Him. Yet many today feel as though they can "buy" their way to Heaven or do enough to persuade God to let them in.**
 - In v.6, James addresses such an issue. John Phillips said this, "Money can buy most things in this world. People who can command large sums of money often become arrogant. People whom they cannot buy, they bully. Those whom they cannot bully, they belittle. Those whom they cannot belittle, they try to bury."
 - What we do as a church, who we reach out to, when & how we worship, should not be dictated by the financial or political pressures of others.
 - You know why some churches don't preach about holiness & separating yourself from the world & its sins? Because it would affect them financially.
 - Do you know why some Christians aren't being the bold witness as they should in the workplace & in public? Because it might affect them personally or politically.
 - Do you know why many churches are beginning to openly accept sin & sinful practices among its congregation? \$\$\$
- **What James is stressing is this. A "class" church is not a church that magnifies the grace of God nor is it a church that brings honor to Him.**
 - Jesus died for the world, for Jews & Gentiles, for blacks & whites, for rich & poor, He died for all. May we as a church never rebuild the walls of separation that Christ has broken down through His death on the cross.
- **You say Pastor, why in the world would you take the time to go over such an elementary subject? The answer to that question is found in v.10.**
 - "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."
 - A person might not be tempted along a dozen different lines. But just let him succumb to his weakness, and he is an instant sinner and a lawbreaker.
 - We might be doing a lot of things right in our own personal lives, but what is that one weakness that has the potential to render us ineffective?
 - For some people, its money,
 - For others, its power,
 - Friendships,
 - Coveting what others have,
 - Our attitude,
 - The love of this world,
 - Our language.
 - Whatever that one sin is in our life, we stand before God guilty.
 - I am reminded of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19. He lived a pretty good life, thought he had eternal life all wrapped up on his own. But Jesus found his weakness.

3. Our Works Will Be Judged

- **Thankfully as a Christian, every sin I have ever committed is under the blood & I don't ever have to worry about being judged for my sins.**
- **However, we are clearly told that we will all be judged & rewarded according to our works.**
 - Romans 14:10-13; II Corinthians 5:9-10
 - a. Our Words Will Be Judged (v.3)**
 - i. What we say, how we say it, even the carelessness of our speech will be judged.
 - ii. Though that seems unfair at first glance, we will be judged on our words b/c it reflects what comes from the heart.
 - 1. Ever said something you wish you hadn't said?
 - 2. Ever said something you couldn't believe you said?
 - 3. Ever wondered where those words you spoke came from? Answer → Heart.
 - b. Our Deeds Will Be Judged**
 - i. Colossians 3:22-25 – “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”
 - ii. Though God forgives our sins, sin affects our character & our works.
 - c. Our Attitudes Will Be Judged**
 - i. Mercy and justice both come from God.
 - 1. Where God finds repentance and faith, He is able to show mercy; where He finds rebellion and unbelief, He must administer justice. It is the heart of the sinner that determines the treatment he gets.
 - 2. The parable Jesus gives in Matthew 18:21-25 illustrates this law of mercy & justice. If we forgive our brothers, then we have the kind of heart that is open toward the forgiveness of God.
 - ii. James closes out in vv.12-13 by discussing the “Law of liberty.” Rather than try to break down all the specifics of what that means, I will read to you an excerpt that I believe illustrates this law wonderfully.
 - iii. In the Gospels, we read of the occasion when the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Three facts are connected with that little animal.
 - 1. It had to be *redeemed*. The Law of Moses commanded that the firstborn of an ass had to be redeemed by a lamb, or its neck had to be broken. So, this little donkey was born under the sentence of death. Either the donkey had to die or a lamb had to die in its stead ([Exod. 13:13](#)).
 - 2. It was redeemed, it had life, but it was tied to a post. It had life, but it did not have liberty. It needed to be *released* ([Matt. 21:1-9](#)). That is the condition that James has in mind. We are set free.
 - 3. But, then, that donkey had to be *ruled*. It was not set free so that it could roam & do as it pleased. Instead it was brought to Christ and put under His authority and restraint. That illustrates the perfect law of liberty.
- **James concludes with v.13 by exclaiming, “mercy or no mercy. Judgment or mercy smiling in the very face of judgment. If we want to have mercy, we must show mercy.”**
- **If God's mercy has truly touched your heart, then we can't help but offer that same mercy & grace to others. As we think about what God has done for us & forgiven us for, what right do we have to hold forgiveness from anyone.**