

Sermon or Lesson: James 2:12-13 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: A Warning To Be Merciful

INTRO: As a believer sitting every Sunday morning in the church pew, do you ever pause to contemplate whether you regularly extend mercy or not? We tend to focus usually on practicing the main disciplines of the faith, like reading our Bible, praying, going to church, staying away from sinful indulgences, and etc. But does the subject of your extending mercy ever occupy your thinking, analysis, and critique? Perhaps it has not, because the extending of mercy does not seem to be a pressing high-priority subject for living a good Christian life.

Well, our study of two verses in James right now should give you pause to consider this subject and its importance.

READ: James 2:12-13

[Lesson Question: How do verses 12-13 fit into the discussion in the previous verses about not showing favoritism?]

SECTION POINT: Verses 12-13 address the impending judgment, when God will hold each of us personally accountable for having shown favoritism.

- - From the context, we make ourselves judges and therein use our own standards as law when we show favoritism (v.4), but yet in showing favoritism we are in reality hypocritically breaking God's law because we are substantially violating the royal law (v.9) to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (v.8).
 - - In verses 10-11, we are being warned about how serious God regards the sin of showing favoritism.
 - - Now in verses 12-13, there is being added further warning about how God will judge us that correlates to our showing of favoritism.
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v.12 - READ

[Lesson Question: What specific action are we believers being commanded and exhorted to take?]

SECTION POINT: We believers are being commanded and exhorted to always speak and act in a manner that keeps the law in Scriptures.

- - In verse 12, the original Greek contains the word "so" connected to the word "speak" and another "so" connected to the word "act" or "do", declaring that we are told to so speak and so act, i.e. "in this way" speak, and "in this way" do. (Strong's #3779)
- - The double usage of the word 'so' adds extra emphasis and reinforcement to the imperative inflection of these commands.
- - As such, we are both exhorted and commanded to be sure that our words and our actions comprehensively align with the law, including the law to love our neighbor. (v.8)

[Lesson Question: What are we believers being advised about motivation for always speaking and acting in a manner that keeps the law?]

SECTION POINT: We believers are being advised to keep in mind that we "are going to be judged by the law" for the speaking and actions we have done.

- - The next phrase in verse 12, "as those who are going to be", indicates that we are to live these 'in this way speak' and 'in this way do' actions in a manner that follows or abides by what is prescribed in these verses because judgment is coming, which will specifically use the law as the standard for judgment determinations.

- - Therefore, we are additionally being advised to stay within the parameters of the law and to proceed following the guideline of the law.

- - The law being discussed here is not exactly the Old Testament Law in its original sense because it is referred to here as the law "of freedom" (Strong's #1657), which carries a connotation of having the same or similar general moral directives as the O.T. Law without the corresponding strict demands, dire consequences, and condemnation. (cf. Romans 8:1)

- - In other words, we believers are being advised to obey the essentially same freedom-and-righteousness-producing laws of God from the O.T. as if we are going to be judged by them even though we are not going to be judged by them in their fullest strict O.T. form.

- - By implication then, we believers have liberty and freedom to now obey the law from a new position of wanting to, rather than from the former O.T. position of being forced to or else face dire consequences.

v.13 - READ

[Lesson Question: What are we believers also being warned about, that is coming in the future?]

SECTION POINT: We believers are also being warned that unpleasant judgment awaits anyone who fails to speak and act in a manner that keeps the law in Scriptures.

- - In addition to the initial exhortation with commands, the sentence structure of the content in these verses 12-13 also has the word "because" (v.13) followed by a description of unpleasant action God will be taking upon disobedient believers one day.

- - We believers are being warned, accompanied by a serious motivating reason for us to heed this warning.

- - The warning pertains to unpleasant judgment that will befall "anyone" (v.13) who fails to "speak and act" in a manner that is consistent with the law in Scriptures (v.12).

- - By implication, we believers are being warned and informed in advance for our benefit, so that our personal judgment will go well for each of us.

- - By implication, at the judgment, all of us believers will individually be subject to this accountability.

[Lesson Question: As cited here in verse 13, what is one of the criteria that will be used when we all individually stand before God in judgment?]

SECTION POINT: One of the criteria that will be used when we all individually stand before God in judgment is whether or not we have been merciful.

- Verse 13 contains disclosure of a criterion God will use as He determines and pronounces judgment in regard to our showing of favoritism.
- The criterion is that God will steadfastly judge us "without mercy" based upon how we have treated others without mercy, which includes through our showing of favoritism.
- Believers who spoke and acted without mercy will incur unpleasant judgment determined and characterized by the devoid of mercy they practiced.

"without mercy" = Strong's #0448 "will be unmerciful; inexorable"; 'inexorable' = (AHD) "Not capable of being persuaded by entreaty; relentless"

- This criterion is stated in the negative in verse 13, suggesting that our faulty speaking and actions (v.12) have been devoid of not only loving our neighbor (v.8), but also devoid of being merciful.

"mercy" = Strong's #1656 "mercy; compassion (human or divine, especially active)"; 'mercy' = (AHD) "compassionate treatment, especially of those under one's power; clemency; a disposition to be kind and forgiving; alleviation of distress; relief"

- The implication here is that showing favoritism is devoid of and contrary to extending mercy, and conversely, showing love to one's neighbor extends bountiful godly mercy.

- Additionally and by declaration in verse 13, if we practice extending mercy in this life, our personal judgment by God will go very well for us because our merciful speaking and actions will give us "triumph over" negative judgment, resulting in a joy-filled positive beneficial judgment. The mercy we extended in this life defends us at God's judgment seat.

"triumph over" = Strong's #2620 "exults over"; 'exults' = (AHD) "to rejoice greatly; be jubilant or triumphant; to leap upward, especially for joy"

NOTE:

- Our faith is based on New Testament teachings that we true believers have permanently obtained eternal mercy from God through our faith in Christ. (e.g. see John 10:22-30)
- However, if we in essence deny our faith by showing favoritism / judging / being unmerciful, our faith is not "acceptably pure and faultless" (v.1:27), and for some persons perhaps may never have been real or actualized to begin with (see vv.2:14-17).
- From numerous other verses in Scriptures though, for actual but sin-filled believers, unpleasant judgment will not contain a loss of salvation but rather will be dominated by a permanent stripping away of potential highly-valued eternal rewards, accompanied by

a sharp rebuke from God in public that will not be forgotten. (Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; Matthew 16:23; Revelation 20:12)

BIG IDEA: God will judge and hold us believers accountable for showing favoritism, which intrinsically includes not extending mercy to our neighbor.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Are you prepared for the day when you will stand before God in judgment?
 - - Will that judgment go well for you, with great rejoicing about the mercy you have extended in this life?
 - - Or instead, will that judgment be unpleasant for you because you failed to extend mercy and love and equal treatment to others?

 - - What concrete steps can you start taking right now, and today, and this week that will correct your speaking and acting in order to extend mercy, love, and equal treatment to others?

 - - What beliefs or perspectives do you need to restructure so that you fully align and comply with what these verses in James are exhorting and commanding and warning you to do?

 - - Do you truly have mercy in your heart, active compassion that dominates your regard and treatment of others?
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