

James 2.8-13 Mercy Triumphs

Partiality Opposes the Royal Law, v. 8-11

- I. After considering our faith in verses 1-7, he shifts to the law given to us by our King (Ex. 20; Matt. 5-7).
 - A. In verse 8, James is beginning his argument to prove that they are transgressors of the Royal Law.
 1. He presents to them God's standards, not human standards of the law, catching them in their hypocrisy much like the Pharisees (and Peter, Gal. 2.11-14)!
 - a) We often dismiss partiality in the body of Christ as something small, but it is actually a sin.
- II. He binds them to the true standard of God's law and accuses them of transgression.
 - A. The entire law is interconnected. If we broke one commandment; we broke them all. Boasting in the law is faulty and it misses the point of Christianity altogether.
 1. Partiality is the same as murder (Matt. 5.22; Gal. 5.20) as it attempts to cut a person off from a life of fellowship, which we have in Christ.
 2. They are, not only partial toward their neighbor, but also partial toward God's law. This is binding on us all.
 - a) Hypocrisy and self-deception go hand in hand.
 - (1) They thought of themselves too highly and he is calling them to come down to the level of the "poor-man" (Rom. 12.16).

Partiality Opposes the Liberty of Mercy, v. 12-13

- I. Favoritism toward someone because of social rank or status puts us in the position of a judge. But we are to speak and act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.
 - A. The law of liberty, fulfilled in Christ, liberates us to love God and neighbor.
 1. To be judged in the coming judgment under the law of liberty, not condemnation, and is to recognize that your judgment will be based on our Christian liberty and what we have been liberated to do (see the following section). In other words, you won't be judged as you should for Christ's sake.
 - B. If we have not shown mercy, there will be no mercy (Matt. 5.7; 6.15; Luke 10.37).
 1. We are liberated to help liberate others and show mercy (Matt. 7.12).
 - a) Let us not waste our liberty on ourselves. We are no longer under the law as to be condemned by it but under the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9.21; Gal. 6.1-2).
- II. The main point of this passage (and the entire letter) is found in these four words, "Mercy triumphs over judgment." We are those who have been liberated *in order* to show mercy (Matt. 6.14; Matt. 5.7; 9.13; 9.27; 12.7; 15.22; 17.15; 18.33; 23.23. Luke 1; Matt. 18.21-35).
 - A. Paul calls his own ministry a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5.11-21), though with warnings always attached. As Christians, we ought to err on the side of mercy.
 1. Be merciful as you have received mercy (Matt. 10.8; 18.33; Rev. 21.6; Luke 6.36). This is what the Pharisees ignored (Matt. 23.23).
- III. Application. Why are we to be people of mercy? Because we are people of the gospel, which is a gospel of mercy. How can we not be merciful in light of the mercy God has shown us in Christ Jesus?
 - A. Or are we to treat others as the unforgiving servant finding reasons to "choke out" our brothers (Matt. 18.21-35) or looking for distinctions in the body of Christ.
 1. We can claim to be learned in the things of God and never have learned mercy (Matt. 9.13). Christ calls us to display the character of God as children of God who know God's mercy through the gospel of God.
 - a) Sitting at the table with Jesus is where we find true and lasting mercy that will triumph in the day of judgment.