

11.07.10 / James 2:8-13

Passage Insight

This passage continues the theme of verses 1-7, which essentially ask the question, "Where is your faith and hope for provision, in the Lord or in something else?" Verses 8-13 teach us that when we are saved by Jesus we find ourselves under a new law, the law of liberty. Let's explore the reasons for this.

As verse 10 shows us, in order to please God we must be infallible in our obedience to His Law. This is true for all mankind, and the reality is that there is not a single person apart from Jesus who has been able to demonstrate this level of performance. Romans 3:23 says, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...", and Psalm 14:1 says this:

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,
there is none who does good.

The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.

They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one.

Therefore, we are ALL to be held accountable for the entire Law of God because NONE OF US apart from Christ has ever been able to obey it in full. Because Christ was, however, able to obey in full and live in perfect obedience to the Law, we are afforded the privilege of placing our hope in HIS life and not our own as we seek to please the Lord. It is Christ's righteousness imputed to us that puts us in right standing with God and puts us under, as we see in verse 12, the law of liberty. While the words "law" and "liberty" may at first glance seem to be mutually exclusive, in reality this is not the case. At least not in God's reality. Here's why.

God's Law portrays a life of complete and total obedience to the Father. Freedom, TRUE FREEDOM, is bound in complete obedience and total conformity to that which has no flaw. This Jesus whom we follow is able to grant the gift of freedom itself – in other words, He is the SOURCE of freedom. John 8:36 says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." We are made in His image, and when we are saved, we are being transformed more and more into His likeness, and we take on more and more of His very nature (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Furthermore, when we follow Jesus, we are given new hearts that now reflect God's Law. Hebrews 10:16-17 says, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." This means that as God's Law becomes part of who we are as free men and women in Christ and we are transformed into the image of God, we see that being like God, the source of all freedom itself, means having the Law written on our hearts. Obedience to God's Law is TRUE life where we are, in fact, "free indeed." This is the law of liberty.

As a result of our salvation, this gift of ultimate freedom, we are called to speak and act in a manner that accords with such a gift. In other words, we are called to respond to the gospel in such a way that reflects the very nature of God to

others. Regarding mercy, Matthew 18:21-35, shows us that we are called to be merciful as God is merciful, that we are to show mercy to others in the same way that the Lord has shown mercy to us as sinners who were rebelling yet were still offered adoption into the perfect family of God by HIS sacrifice, HIS work, HIS choice, and HIS power. The Lord is most definitely a merciful God (Exodus 34:6), and if we truly belong to and follow Him and have His law written on our hearts and minds, we too will be merciful because He is changing us to be more like Him. Therefore, when we show mercy, this mercy it is not currency that is used to gain the Lord's favor, but rather an indicator of our true faith in Him.

So let us speak and act in mercy and love as does the one who offered us mercy and who first loved us when we least deserved it. Praise God.

Application Questions

Call to Speak and Act

- 1) Once we are saved by Christ, God empowers us to speak and act like Him, thus reflecting Him and His nature at every turn. Where is your reflection to the world like God?
- 2) Where is this reflection like you instead?
- 3) What do you need to repent from as a result?
- 4) Mercy triumphs over judgment (verse 13), and the Lord is merciful to us when we repent! You have the Lord's mercy! What is now the proper response in gratitude for this mercy?

Mercy and the Law of Liberty

- 1) According to Webster, mercy is "compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power." According to this passage, mercy is evidence of our faith in Christ. Consider those in your life who sin against you or offend you. Where do fail to show mercy to these people?
- 2) What are you trying to keep from them when you do this?
- 3) What are you trying to maintain for yourself?
- 4) How is this evidence that you are trusting something other than the Lord?
- 5) What does the Lord desire for you instead?

Sources

- Prayer
- Bible Speaks Today
- Bible Exposition Commentary