



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 2: 1-13

Summer 2021

"Debtor To Mercy"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth and good morning. We are continuing our studies in the Book of James, and we're in chapter 2 this morning. It's a lengthy passage; it's James 2 verses 1 through 13. And now James begins to pick up some subjects that he's going to deal with throughout the book. And his first one has to do with favoritism in the church and among Christians.

2 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of personal favoritism*. **2** For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, **3** and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," **4** have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? **5** Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? **6** But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? **7** Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. **9** But if you show partiality, you are

committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

James 2: 1-13

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it.

(*Message*) One of the hymns we sing is *A Debtor to Mercy Alone*, by Augustus Toplady. In fact, the words of the title are the first words of the hymn. Toplady was a good theologian and a good poet who understood well grace and mercy. The hymn has lines like,

"The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete." And,
"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The souls of the blessed in heaven."

In other words, believers in Jesus Christ are secure forever. Not because of our strength, not because of anything within us; but due to His strength, due to His faithfulness—He saves us forever. Now that's God's mercy—and His mercy never fails.

Now I mention that because I think, if we really believe we are debtors to mercy alone, we would do what James urged Christians to do in our previous passage: Chapter 1, verses 19 through 27, "Prove yourselves doers of the word." That passage, and

specifically those words in verse 22, state the basic lesson of the Book of James. In fact, they've been called, 'The bedrock on which the book rests.'

Chapter 2, and the rest of the book, applies that principle in various ways. The application in our passage is given positively in verse 8 with the instruction to fulfill "the royal law"; which is the law of love—loving one another, loving others.

My Hebrew professor, Dr. Bruce Waltke, defined righteousness in his book, *An Old Testament Theology*, as "willingly disadvantaging self in order to advantage others." Well that's righteousness—and that's love. And that's the lesson of the passage. But it is given, not only as an application of being 'doers of the Word', but also as the solution to a problem that James knew was prevalent—'favoritism' in the church.

That's where the passage begins in verse 1, with a problem that is common to all of us, and yet, a complete contradiction of the grace of God that we have received. This is written to genuine believers—so this is written to us as James begins, "My brethren..." Now that's pretty clear that he's speaking of people he considers to be genuinely saved. But they weren't behaving like they were genuinely saved. They weren't behaving like brethren, because he warns, "...do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism."

Practicing discrimination based on personal preference is an offense to the glory of Christ whose love and sacrifice were equally for all kinds of people—even the very worst of them. What it shows is a fundamental failure to understand the nature of our salvation and the basis of our relationship with the LORD; that we are all, without exception, debtors to mercy alone.

Well, James then illustrates the problem in a way that it might commonly manifest itself by describing two visitors entering the assembly, the meeting of the church. (Literally, verse 2 is, "For if a man comes into your synagogue..." —which indicates the people James wrote to were Jewish Christians who still spoke of the assembly as a synagogue.) So he describes two visitors entering the church and both

want seats. The spiritual condition of the two isn't given. They might be Christians; they may not be; these may be unbelievers who have entered the church. We're not told but one man is obviously rich. He's wearing a gold ring on his finger and he's dressed in very fine, expensive clothes. The other is described as a poor man in dirty clothes. He's a beggar.

The gold ring and fine clothes catch the eye of the congregation—and they respond to the two men in very different ways. They shamelessly court the rich man by offering him the best seat; while someone says to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool." (v3). Now that's the idea, "by my footstool", but literally it is "under my footstool", which highlights the disparity of treatment that the two men are shown—and the indignity that's shown to this poor person. One man is given a comfortable chair, a seat of honor, probably, and the other is offered the floor.

In verse 4, James condemns that, "...have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?" That's a rhetorical question. The answer, of course, is, 'Yes, they had.' But why? Well, he doesn't say, but I think it goes without saying, it's because the rich man can offer something that the poor man can't. It may be money. It may be prestige. In fact, if a wealthy man attends the church, the congregation can really feel good about itself and have an elevated sense of self-respect; 'Oh, we have a celebrity here. We have a wealthy person who attends our assembly!'

But whatever the reasons, James says that their motives were evil. They were thinking like the world thinks. They were thinking with motives that were selfish and with values that were worldly. But this is common to human nature—and so common to us all.

I came across an illustration of this from a book that was actually popular back in the 1970s titled *Reunion*, by a German author, (Fred Uhlman), who told the story of a friendship between two very different 16-year-old classmates. It takes place in Stuttgart in 1932, when things were becoming politically very turbulent. The main character, the one who recounts the story, is Hans. He's a Jewish boy. His friend, Konradin, is an

aristocrat described as being from the most noble family of Swabia—and they were Nazis.

Hans is middle class. His father was a well-respected physician but when he brought his new friend to his house for the first time he was embarrassed for him to meet his parents because, as he put it, he felt that, “They weren't grand enough.” Hans had always been proud of his parents but because he valued the friendship of this model aristocrat he behaved, he confessed, “Like a beastly little snob.” Now it's fiction, but fiction is good when it imitates reality; and that scene illustrates what is true about human nature—that there is ‘some snob in all of us’. And sometimes circumstances bring it out—and it's shameful.

This rich man entering the church exposed something that many may not have realized was in them. God uses these little providences like this to show us our weaknesses. They function kind of like the Law—you'll remember James compared it to a mirror. You can't see what's on your face unless you have a mirror—and then the mirror exposes it. Well these kinds of providences reveal things that are there within us; the sins that lurk in the dark corners of our soul—the things of which we need to repent.

And that's what happens here. The fault in this scene is not the rich man. Praise God for the rich. Riches are a blessing and a reward. Now I know that they can be an idol and they can be a danger. In fact, later, toward the end of the book, James takes up the subject of the rich. But in and of themselves, riches are not bad and they can be used for good—and are used for good. It's a blessing, as I said.

The failure here was not the rich man. The failure here is in the people who fawned over the rich man. James gave this example because it's common; this problem of prejudice, “of personal favoritism”, of snobbery. He calls it “evil”, and that would seem to say it all.

But then he reinforces the rebuke in verses 5 through 7 by reminding them first that their attitude is contrary to God's attitude. ‘He has shown favor to the poor’, James says: verse 5. "Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to

be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"

The two men represent two classes of people. And God's choice in blessing has been on the poor.

Guy King, in his commentary, developed the idea: When God became a man, He wasn't born into a rich home but a humble home, to a poor family in a completely insignificant town. God chose the poor for His Son. He had "nowhere to lay His head", (Luk 9:58), that's what Jesus said. Foxes do. The Son of Man doesn't. When He went out on His public ministry He associated with both rich and poor—but it was mainly the poor that He blessed. His disciples were simple men, not wealthy. God has not limited His choice to the poor, but generally, He has drawn His people from their ranks.

That's, I think, generally true throughout history—it's certainly true of the early church. That's what Paul said, you remember he reminded the Corinthians, (who thought quite highly of themselves), who they were and from where they had been drawn. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 26 through 29, "Consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty..." {now he doesn't say there weren't any wise or any mighty. There were some, but that's not the majority. It's not "many" of them), "...not many noble, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world." They are not God's choice because they are poor.

Now, let me qualify that. In a sense they are. God chose the foolish to show the world that His foolishness is far greater than the world's wisdom. He chose the weak, purposely, to show the world that His weakness is far stronger than their strength.

But they weren't chosen, (the poor, the weak, whatever), because there is some virtue in poverty. There's no virtue in poverty. But the point is, poverty has not prevented His choice of them. He's not ashamed of them and He has not discriminated against them because of their poverty. And poverty should not be a basis for our discriminating between people.

Now someone might say, "Wait a minute. I know you. I know what you teach. You teach Calvinism and you call yourself a Calvinist. I can't believe you'd do that, but you do

that. I know what your position is on things. And you would say, 'God shows partiality in His choice of some for salvation and not others.' "

Well, that's the objection that sometimes is raised against the doctrines of God's grace—the doctrine, specifically, of unconditional election. And it's true that God does not treat all men alike in terms of salvation. "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." Romans 9:13 and Malachi 1, verse 2. That's Scripture. That's God's Word. We can't argue against that. God chose one over the other.

But God does not treat anyone unjustly—which is what the 'respector of persons' does. Favoritism is prejudice. God doesn't do that—doesn't choose one and reject another based-on race or wealth or social standing. In fact, in Revelation chapter 5, verse 9, the author and the heavenly chorus praises His grace because it's so widely diverse and widespread that He redeemed with His blood some out of "every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

Divide the world any way you want; rich, poor, ethnically...however you choose, God has redeemed people out of every part of His creation. And He blesses those who do good. He is treating men, in one sense, completely fairly. He blesses good, He punishes evil. He is fair. He is just with all. But when it comes to salvation, what we must say is, 'Yes, His mercy is great.' In fact, His mercy is great in any way we want to look at it, because people get better than they deserve. And that's true of everyone.

God blesses the wicked with much in terms of temporal blessing—with wealth and health. That in fact, you remember, is what troubled Asaph in Psalms 73, 'The wicked prosper. Why do they prosper?' Well, they prosper because God gives good things to the world. That's called common grace. In special grace, in terms of salvation, the Gospel is given generally—in other words all are called to believe and repent. People don't do that, not because of election, but because of sin and hardness of heart. Unbelievers are to blame for their own unbelief.

God is not obligated to save any. All are lost and all are guilty and all deserve nothing. Salvation is a gift. It is an undeserved gift. It is mercy. In fact, faith is impossible apart from election and irresistible grace. So partiality, in the sense that an objector to

election might use that, in the sense of prejudice, that's impossible in the sphere of grace. God does not do that.

Which supports James' point because those who have been saved have received grace. Many of them were poor. And all of them were sinners. Every one of us is a sinner—we're not deserving of any good thing. We are all undeserving. So Christians, of all people, should not have an attitude of personal favoritism. It's inconsistent with what we are, but also it's inconsistent with what God has done—blessed the poor eternally.

James says, He has chosen them (*the poor*), "...to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom..." Rich presently, as we all are, with spiritual blessings that are a part of salvation. We are in Christ right now, as a believer, receiving His life within us through the Holy Spirit. We are constantly under the present guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit—it is constant, unfailing care. We may not sense it; we may not see it. We don't...but it's true. We're in His hand and can never be plucked from Him.

Now that's us in the world right now. But they, (speaking of the poor; speaking of all of us, for that matter), they have the hope of future glory. What we have now is a little down payment. The greatness of it all, is coming—and it's eternal. We have the hope of glory. We, and He's speaking specifically of the poor, "will inherit the earth." That's lasting riches—and it shows that social snobbery against poor Christians is poor sighted and based on shallow values. They may be poor now—but for all eternity these are going to be rich, rich people, as all of us will be who put our faith in Christ.

Now again, there's no virtue in poverty. It's not meritorious. And it is not all the poor in the world that are honored by God—only those who believe and put their faith in Christ. Still, God chose much of the church out of poverty. He honored them with eternal blessings. So it contradicts His affection and His action to dishonor them by preferring the rich over the poor.

And it ignores history, which has a long record of mistreatment by the rich. James reminds him of that in verse 6. "...Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?" Yes, it is, and there's a long history of that. Isaiah spoke of that back in

Isaiah chapter 3, verse 15, describing the rich, the privileged, the princes of Jerusalem, as “grinding the faces of the poor.” What a way of describing oppression: “Grinding the faces of the poor!” That's the history of the rich and poor—that's the history of the strong over the weak.

So James was asking the obvious: ‘Why are you so enamored of these people and put them above the poor, when these are the very people that work against you? Oppose you. Why do you do that to, really, the detriment of the Gospel?’

But the main offense of the wealthy who oppress, (and what makes flattery of them so strange to James), is that they dishonor Christ. Verse 7, “Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?” That's actually a question. It's the third of James' rhetorical questions. The first is, ‘Didn't God choose the poor?’ —And the obvious answer to that, he knew and they knew, is, ‘Yes’. And secondly, ‘Don't the rich oppress you?’ And ‘Yes, that's true.’

Now here thirdly, ‘Don't they blaspheme Christ's noble name?’ And the answer to that is, ‘Yes!’ Now we see that today in our own society. That certain class dismiss us; dismiss Christians, dismiss Christianity, as something foolish. That's something that we see throughout the ages—this blasphemy of the name of Christ by those who are in power, those who are the cultural elites. So James was asking, ‘Why would they reward that with giving preferential treatment?’ Well the reason is—it's due to vanity on the part of those who were doing that.

Now the solution, of course, is not to do the opposite. It's not to treat the rich with disrespect. James wasn't suggesting that. The right response to strangers who enter the church is to treat them the same—with love and genuine interest, being free of selfish motive; and while James probably knew of some who had not done that, (which is the reason for his correction here), he also certainly knew that there were others who did—who behaved well. And so he wrote, in verse 8, "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to Scripture," (and he knew that some were and then quotes it),

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself," he says, "you are doing well." So "the royal law" is love. He defines it for us there.

James didn't explain why he called it *royal* and so we're left to speculate on that. It maybe because of its lofty character or because it's the law of God's kingdom. Probably, I think, it's because love is the supreme law that governs human relationships. It's the summation of such laws. That's how Jesus explained law and love, in Matthew 22, verses 37 through 40. He summed up the Law of Moses in two laws: 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.'

That holds as true in the New Covenant today as it did in the Old Covenant in Moses' day. And James says, 'If they do that, if they treat others with love, they do well.' It's the right way to behave. And he supports his statement from the Old Testament by quoting Leviticus 19, verse 18. "Love your neighbor as yourself." James is writing, again, to Jewish Christians that had grown up on the Law. They would have been very familiar, I think, with that text of Scripture. And so he brought the Law in here as a witness to them of the truth of what he was saying.

But the Law of Leviticus 19 has been greatly expanded since Moses and since the time of the Old Testament—greatly expanded in the New Testament. In Leviticus 19, the neighbor is limited to the fellow Israelite: 'So who is your neighbor?' 'Well, he's the person in this tribe that I belong to; Judah, or Ephraim, or whatever; he's a fellow Israelite.'

But Jesus broadened the scope of it. In Luke, chapter 10, verses 30 through 37 he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. And there the idea of a neighbor is enlarged to include every human being whom we are able to benefit, every person that we see in need and that we can help. And then the LORD, when he was instructing His disciples in the upper room in John, chapter 13, verses 34 and 35 modified and actually intensified this standard of love from 'as yourself', (love others as yourself), to: 'As Christ loved us.' That's a whole different standard right there.

He calls it a New Commandment because it is so different. And obedience to this new instruction would be a powerful witness to the world of the change that has

occurred in the lives of Christians. And it is a fundamental, supernatural change that is taking place within us: Being born again, becoming new creatures, having the law of God written upon the heart of every believer in Him.

If "righteousness is willingly disadvantaging self in order to advantage others," then so is love. It's what Christ did. It's very much how Paul put it in 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, verse 9. "...though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." He divested Himself of all the rights and the privileges that He had. He put Himself under the Father as a man, became that for us in order that we would be rich. And so Jesus said, that is the sign of discipleship, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jhn 13:35). We sacrifice for one another.

But if the church holds its faith with an attitude of favoritism toward people of the world that would discredit any show of love within the church. Now the poor man, as I said, is described as entering the church but we're not told whether he is a saved man or an unsaved man. But assuming that he's not saved and he's treated dishonorably, he would conclude, naturally, that the Christians that he had come to visit were no different from the non-Christians that he had left. That's no apologetic for Christianity—that's an invitation to reject it.

And so in verse 9, James states how serious it is to show partiality, "But if you show partiality", he said, "you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors." In other words, it is no minor or trivial fault. It is not just a matter of bad manners. Favoritism is sin. It is lawlessness. It violates God's will as it was revealed in the Old Testament in the Law of Moses and now, as it's revealed in what James called in chapter 1, "the law of liberty." It violates the example that God gives of Himself and that the LORD has shown here in this chapter in verse 5 of showing favor to the poor.

Obedience is not optional. We can't pick and choose what laws or principles of conduct that we will follow or we will not follow because as James explains in verse 10, 'One sin counts for a lot.' In fact, one sin counts for all; verse 10, "For whoever keeps the

whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all." The Law is not like a window with individual panes of glass, like these windows we have here. You could break one of those panes, (I think there are 12 of them in there), and the other 11 will be fine. But the Law's not like that. It's not like you break one, and that's the only one that's broken. The Law is not like those windows. It's like a great picture window; and when one part of that window is broken, the whole window is broken.

Now that applies to God's law, in whatever form it is revealed, and shows the impossibility of salvation by law keeping because everyone sins. And when one sins, he or she has broken the entire law—and it's broken forever.

Now James is not referring to that. James, here, isn't refuting the notion of salvation or justification by law keeping. That, I think, applies—but his point is the saved, God's people, must live righteous lives and cannot discriminate against the laws any more than they can discriminate against people. All of the laws and revealed principles of conduct are important. All of them. They fit into a whole so integrally and harmoniously that we cannot violate one without violating all.

It is so important to understand that unity and harmony in the law, in the revelation of God, that James illustrates it further in verse 11, "For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder". Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you become a transgressor of the law."—of all of it.

The point is, it's foolish to think that if a person keeps one of those commands that he can break the other without consequence. One God gave both commands. And so the two commands are expressions of the will of the One God. His will is indivisible—His commands are too. They cannot be separated, all those of the commands of Scripture. The LORD requires that we live consistent lives—we can't pick and choose what we will obey. And we can't show partiality to people. We're to love them all. We're to be even handed, fair and just.

Now James said, in verse 9, that if they “show partiality”, if they show favoritism, they are “convicted”—they are guilty. And guilt carries with it a penalty—even for Christians. We might tend to think that because we are justified through faith we will never give an account of ourselves to God—for our sins have all been washed away. And now that's true in regard to our salvation it's true in regard to justification. A Christian's forgiveness and salvation has been settled eternally. As another of Toplady's hymns put it, "My Savior's obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view." We will not stand at “the great white throne” of judgment of Revelation 20, verse 11.

But Christians will give an account of themselves someday. That's supported in our verse 12, "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty." Paul makes that even clearer in Romans chapter 14, verse 10. He warns there against judging a brother and holding him in contempt. And then he says, "...For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 10, he's more explicit where he says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ", (this is the *Béma Seat* of Christ), ‘where we will be recompensed for our deeds, whether good or bad.’ What we do in life matters—eternally, as Christians. There'll be an accounting that takes place. Someday the LORD will require that of us. He will take a look, as it were, examine our lives; examine what we did with the lives that He gave to us; and with the lives of people that we encountered in His providence...He'll look at these things and how we behaved.

Now that's sobering to me—but not frightening because we will, “...be judged...” James says, “...by *the* law of liberty.” That's the law of the New Covenant which the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to keep. We're not like those under the Law of Moses or as unbelievers under the Law that we cannot keep...but we must keep. No, we are under this law of liberty—and the Spirit of God is within us. It's been written on our hearts and we are able to do it—we can be merciful. And as James says in verse 13, “...mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Where mercy is shown to the poor, to anyone for that matter, where all people are treated without partiality, there will be great reward. When that is true of the

Christian, when we are merciful, then, as one writer put it, "The believer will be able to smile triumphantly in the time of judgment. It'll be a glorious time."

Again, the virtue of mercy is singled out by James because we, of all people, should show it. The saved are debtors to mercy alone. And the more we understand that the more we understand grace and mercy; the more naturally we will show it; the more naturally we will practice it.

I often quote Thomas Erskine because I love this statement that he made: "In the New Testament, religion is grace, and ethics is gratitude." You can't understand Christianity if you don't understand grace. And if you understand grace, well, then you will naturally carry out the ethics of Christianity. Understanding grace produces gratitude and gratitude is the energy of good behavior—in the Christian life it is. We do things rightly because we want to. That's a work of God within us.

We all lack, to some degree, this understanding and this good behavior. James wrote to beloved brethren who fell into snobbery—and I think the warning here is to be alert to that. We all can do that. We all have this problem within us. But the Word of God brings correction, the Word of God here in chapter 2 brings correction. But as we read through the Word of God and constantly are feeding upon it, it convicts us of these things that are within us and that need to be changed. And as it exposes these flaws within us, God's grace, through the Holy Spirit, effects change; enables us to recognize that; and to be different.

That's the Christian life. He empowers us to do the law of liberty—to live life as we should. That, theologically, is sanctification—this constant change that is going on within us. And this passage may have had a real effect upon the early church. Should have an effect upon us but it seems to have had an effect on that early church.

And I say that because Edward Gibbon, in his *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, described the growth of the early church as being in part due to the mercy that early Christians showed to the poor and the outcasts of the world—something that the world did not show to its own. He stated that the help and kindness of the church was

an allure, that is, it was an attraction to, as he put it, "...those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, of sickness, and of old age."

Christians rescued great numbers of infants, he said, who according to the inhuman practice of the time had been left by parents to die on a hillside by exposure. That was a common practice in the ancient world. Parents didn't want a girl—and there are examples of that; there are letters. We have a letter that was written in about the second century by a man who is telling his wife about his business dealings. He'll be home, 'At this time or that'. I think he's in Egypt, and he said, about the child, "Oh, expose it—we don't need her." That was not uncommon. And what Gibbon was saying was Christians came along and rescued these little infants on these wind-swept hillsides and raised them as their own. The early church learned the Book of James—and it was merciful.

If you're here without Christ, you need mercy. There's a day of judgment coming for you; and you're not prepared for it. The Savior's blood will not hide all your transgressions from view. It does that for those who join themselves to Him through faith, and faith alone—not through the works that you might do to gain God's approval—it will not gain God's approval. There are works in the Christian life, and God's ordained them for us to walk in, but they mean nothing to Him until one puts his or her faith in the LORD Jesus Christ. So you need to recognize your need. —Your need is great. You are poor—poor in righteousness. I don't care what your bank account says, you are poor in righteousness. Turn from indifference. Trust in Christ. He will receive you, and He will make your life one that counts for all eternity—a life of mercy and blessing to others.

May God help all of us to become like that.

Father, we thank You for that great truth. Thank You for Your mercy, which plucked us as 'brands from the fire.' We were helpless and we were undeserving; help us to remember that. And as we do, that should affect our conduct in all kinds of ways:

Make us more like Christ and the people that please You in all that we do—helpful to others, and living lives that bring glory to You. We thank You for Your mercy. We thank You for Christ.

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)