



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 2:1-13

James

“The Royal Law”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the time that we have together this evening and the opportunity we have again to open up the book of James to read the text together and then spend some time considering its meaning. We pray that you would bless our time together. We pray that you would deal with each of us as only your word can do. We pray that the Spirit would teach us and convict us and encourage us to live the kind of lives that James instructs us to live. We can only do that, Father, in your grace, by the power of the Spirit, and so we seek that, and we seek to be men and women, young people and old people alike, who are pleasing your sight and are an effective witness to the world. So, as we come upon what is a problem common to all of us, we pray that you would deal with us in the Spirit, but the word, and may we be instructed through our time together. Bless our time together, bless the young people as they meet. We pray that you would give them a helpful and enjoyable time together, and we pray that you would bless our time of prayer afterwards. May it be a time of good worship as we approach the throne of grace on behalf of those in need. We pray these things in our Savior’s name. Amen.

[Message] Our text is James 2:1-13, and let me read the text and then we’ll look at it. “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 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, 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,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves and

become judges with evil motives? 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? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 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. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.”

May the Lord bless the reading of this word and our time together in it. I have entitled our lesson this evening “The Royal Law,” which James appeals to in verse 8. We could call it the Golden Rule because what the royal law is is the Golden Rule that we learned when we were young, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and that is the instruction that James gives in this passage, and the reason he gives it is because the Christians to whom he was writing, we don’t know who they are – that’s why this is one of the general epistles – we don’t know the specific group, though he was obviously writing to a very distinct, specific group, probably a Jewish congregation of Christians north of Palestine. These people were not doing that.

They were not loving their neighbor as they were loving themselves, and that problem is one that, as we consider ourselves and consider our own situations, we must say we are all guilty of, and so that failure is the next issue that James addresses in his epistle, the problem of prejudice or the problem of partiality in the church. It is an issue that follows naturally from the last verse of chapter 1, where James condemned formalism and called it worth less religion, that is that which is simply done as an outward show and there’s no inward reality, there’s nothing really to it. He writes of pure religion, that which is true religion. The only religion that God approves is that which cares for others. It is to visit widows and orphans in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Well, we read something very similar to that or a similar **exhortation** in Romans 12:2 where Paul says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed.” That’s a constant struggle. We come into the new life, we come into the Christian life with a lot of the world within us, a lot of the world’s perspective, its outlook firmly fixed in our hearts, and the world continually, constantly is exerting its pressure upon us to conform. That’s why Paul gives that exhortation, and that’s why James warns us about the world and instructs us not to be stained by it. So, this is a constant battle that we face, and so we have the same perspectives about life very often that the world has, and what that involves very often, to be very specific with the issue that James is dealing with, is valuing the rich over the poor. That is, as I say, the specific problem that he addresses here in chapter 2.

Christians were showing deference toward the rich and they were ignoring the poor. It is conduct and it is an attitude that is wholly inconsistent with pure religion with a true or a proper, genuine relationship with the Lord. Well, James introduces the problem in verse 1 by saying, “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.” As I said, that attitude is inconsistent with ones relationship with Christ. It’s a relationship with Christ. It’s a relationship that we have, as James points out, through faith, “Don’t hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of favoritism.” We have that relationship through faith alone. It is not because of any personal merit, it’s not because of any high standing that we have.

Salvation is all a gift from beginning to end. The relationship that we continue to have with our Lord is all based upon grace. We don’t merit anything from Him at any time. We cannot gain more approval from God than we have the moment we entered into the new life when we were justified and accepted into His family, adopted into His family. It’s all a gift, and so the implication would be from that that we who have been brought into God’s family have been shown such great favor. We have become the objects of His grace. We, above all people, should not hold one person above another. There’s no place for favoritism, there’s no place for discrimination in the church of Jesus Christ.

Well, in verses 2 and 3, James illustrates the problem in a way that it might commonly manifest itself, in fact in a way that it probably had manifested itself in this particular church, by describing the two visitors who enter the assembly, enter the

meeting of the church. Literally, the first two is, “For if a man comes into your synagogue.” It’s translated, at least in the New American Standard Bible, as entering into your assembly, but literally the word is synagogue, which indicates the people to whom James wrote were, as I have said tonight and in our introductory lesson, most likely a congregation primarily of Christian Jews who still thought very much like Jewish people. They spoke of the church, the assembly as a synagogue, and in this place some visitors come in, some people from outside, and both of these visitors who entered this assembly, this synagogue, this church, want seats.

The spiritual condition of the two is not given, but we might assume, and most do in their treatment of this passage, that these are not Christians; they’re unbelievers, maybe Jewish people who have come in out of interest or curiosity, and they come into the assembly. One is obviously a rich man. He’s wearing a gold ring on his finger and is dressed in expensive clothes. The other is described as a poor man in dirty clothes. Well, the gold ring and the fine clothes caught the eye of the congregation, and they responded to the two men in two very different ways. They court the rich man by offering him the best seat, while someone says to the poor man, “You sit over there, or you stand over there or you sit down by my footstool,” so one man is given a comfortable chair and the other man is offered the floor.

In verse 4, James condemns that. He writes, “Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil motives?” Well, obviously they had. But why had they done that? It’s obviously a wrong thing that they had done, and how can you account for that kind of behavior, that kind of attitude? Well, I don’t think we have to think very hard or very long to know the reason for that. The rich can offer something that the poor can’t offer. In fact, the rich can offer a lot that the poor can’t offer. The poor can’t really offer very much at all. The rich man can offer a great deal of money, and he can supply a lot of things that the poor man can’t, and one of the things that the rich man can particularly supply is prestige. It’s a nice thing to have a wealthy man, a prominent man associated with your assembly, and so that would add perhaps some respect.

Well, whatever the reasons, James doesn’t go into those, the motives, he says, were evil. They were thinking like the world thinks. Their motives were selfish. They were following worldly values, and that is his rebuke, and then his rebuke to them is reinforced 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. Verse 5, “Listen, my beloved brethren,” and you can tell by the way James addresses this congregation he’s very fond of them, he knows them well, he’s very concerned about them. He began the chapter, “My brethren,” and now in verse 5 it’s, “My beloved brethren.” He’s very concerned to reach these people with the proper exhortation, to bring them around to the proper way of thinking, a proper conduct. “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?”

Now, the two men who have come into the congregation represent two classes of people: the poor and the rich, generally. What James is saying here is God’s choice and blessing has been upon the poor. One of the commentators, [Guy King](#), who has written a nice devotional commentary on the book of James, develops this idea quite well on how God has favored, God has chosen the poor. When God became a man, He wasn’t born in a rich home, He wasn’t born in a prestigious town, just the opposite. He was born into a humble home. He was born into a poor family in an insignificant town. He moved to despised city of Nazareth, where He grew up. He didn’t live in fine clothes or have an easy kind of life as the rich do. He was a laborer. He worked, we assume, as a carpenter at Joseph’s bench, and He had a hard life.

That’s the life and the world into which God sent His son. He sent Him to the poor. When He became a man and began His public ministry, He associated with both the rich and the poor, and He dined with the rich, He healed the children of the rich, but it was mainly with the poor that He associated. He fed the poor multitudes of Galilee. He healed the outcasts, the sick, the lame, the blind. He dealt with the poor in so many different ways, and His disciples were not rich men. They were simple men. God has not limited His choice to the poor, but generally it is true that He had drawn His people from their ranks. The vast majority historically of people who have been brought into the family of God upon whom He has shed His grace have been the poor. Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, and I’ll just read part of it, verses 26 and the first part of 27, “Consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world.”

They’re not God’s choice because they are poor. There is no virtue in poverty. There’s no merit in being poor. But poverty, and I think this is the point, poverty has

not prevented His choice of them. He has not discriminated against them because of their poverty, and poverty should not be the basis of discriminating between men. Now, someone might say but to read that statement in 1 Corinthians 1 might suggest that there is some favoritism on God’s part, that He does favor the poor it seems like. He didn’t choose the noble, at least not many of them. Mainly, it’s the ignoble that He has chosen. He has discriminated in favor of the foolish, hasn’t He? Doesn’t that make God a respecter of persons, and some people have used that objection against the **doctrine of election**, for example, and this is talking about God’s choice, lest you think I’m just finding a way to get back to election, as I seem to do.

That’s in the text, and he’s talking about God’s choice of them, and so one might say, “Well, doesn’t that show that God is a respecter of persons? He chooses one over another?” It is true that God does not treat all men alike. Now, we have to admit that. We must say that. The Bible is clear on that, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” We won’t go into the meaning of all that, we’ve dealt with that before, but it does show a distinguishing work of grace in the way God deals with men. That’s Romans 9:13, Malachi 2:1. But God does not treat anyone unjustly, which is what a respecter of persons does. Favoritism is prejudice. It withholds what one person deserves and it gives it to another person. God doesn’t do that. He doesn’t choose one and reject another based on race or wealth or social class or something that might benefit God by choosing that person over another.

He blesses those who do good, whoever they may be, and He deals in justice with those who do evil, and everyone, regardless of who he or she may be, everyone receives better than he or she deserves. That’s true universally. If you receive one good thing in this world, you’ve received better from God than you deserve. God blesses the wicked with much – wealth, health, all kinds of things. It’s the wealthy that are mainly the noble and the wise of this world, so God has been gracious to all people. That’s what we call common grace, and common grace can be found also in the **Proclamation of the Gospel**. It goes out to all. We don’t discriminate against certain individuals in preaching the gospel. We preach it to all without distinction, all without exception. Men are generally called to repent, they’re called to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. People don’t do that, not because of election.

Election doesn’t shut people out. People don’t do that because God prevents them from coming or because those who do come He doesn’t like and He sends away.

It's very clear, “All who come to me, I will **in no way cast** out,” our Lord said. No, the reason that people don't come is because of sin. It's because of the hardness of heart. Unbelievers are to blame for their unbelief. God is not obligated to save any. Salvation is all a gift. It is undeserved, and so partiality, respecter of persons in the sense that an objector to election would use it is impossible in the \_\_\_\_\_ of grace. It does not apply, it doesn't apply to God, which really, I think, supports James' overall point that he's making here with these Christians, because those who have been saved have been saved by God's grace. They have received grace from beginning to end, and most of them were probably poor. They were in that class of people that God has shown so much favor to, and all were sinners, and so Christians, of all people, should not have an attitude of personal favoritism.

It is, first of all, inconsistent with who we are, and James says in verse 6, “It dishonors the poor. God has honored the poor as a class.” It doesn't mean He's honored every individual who's poor, of course, but as a class He has shown favor to poor people by calling them, choosing them, calling them, saving them, blessing them infinitely and internally, and James qualifies that, “Those who love Him.” Not everyone, but those who love Him, and they love Him of course by His grace, so He has honored them in that way. Verse 5, “They are rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.” They are rich presently, those who love Him, those who believe, and rich with all the spiritual blessings that are part of salvation. God is presently blessing them, blessing every believer unconditionally, unfailingly, and so regardless of where we are economically, regardless of our station in life socially, we are rich because the God of the universe is caring for us without fail, and we also have a certain hope of future glory, heirs of the kingdom; we will inherit the earth. That's our future, and it cannot fail.

So, if God has so honored the poor, we should never despise them or dishonor them. That is inconsistent with God's attitude toward them. But favoritism toward the rich is also inconsistent with what Christians have experienced, at least the Christians in James' day. They had not experienced good things from the rich. Speaking of them as a class, they have not treated the Christians of James' day particularly favorably, verse 6, “Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?” In other words, the very people, James is saying, that you're fawning over or that you're flattering and favoring, they don't treat you with kindness, they

don't treat you with grace and partiality the way you treat them. Just the opposite. They sue you. They drag you into court. Now, there were exceptions to that. There were wealthy Christians in the first century, and there were kind, rich people. This is not an absolute statement. But, generally, it was the case that the rich oppress the poor, and to some extent we see that in our own day.

**James Moffat** gives a relatively modern example from India which he suggests is similar to what James had in mind, because there, he says, the wealthy Hindu, I think he says speaking of the **Brahman** class, would bully and treat with disrespect and physically harm the low class, the outcasts, the people who were the lowest who had found a place in the church, who had been brought to faith in Jesus Christ and were Christians. They would mistreat them. That could be seen, and that can be seen in our own day. But the main offense of the wealthy who oppress, and which makes flattery of them so strange is what James speaks of in verse 7, they dishonor Christ. They not only persecute Christians, but they blaspheme the name of Christ, the fair name by which you have been called.

Our experience today may be somewhat different from what James is describing. I don't think we see in our situation rich people oppressing poor Christians in this sense. But, in principle, the same thing applies because you look at the people that are so admired in our day, modern celebrities, intellectuals, the opinion-makers, the wealthy people, they don't admire Christianity or Christians particularly. They don't care about the things that we care about. Very often they mock our values. They deny God. You watch them on television or you read what they have to say, and that tends to be the nature of it, and so the question which still applies to us, why would a Christian honor these people at the expense of someone else who very likely is interested in God's truth or very possibly is interested in God's truth and is being drawn by His spirit?

Well, the solution to this problem, of course, is not to do the opposite and treat the rich with disrespect, and James wasn't suggesting that. The right response to strangers who enter the church, whoever they may be, rich or poor alike, is to treat them all the same. It's to treat them with love, with genuine disinterest, meaning without seeking our own advantage, being free of selfish motive. That's the way we're to look at people, not to see, “Well, this person offers me a certain advantage or our congregation an advantage.” No, we're not to look at people like that at all. The



rich and the poor alike are to be treated equally with love. While James probably knew that some had not done that, had not been evenhanded, that’s the occasion for this letter in this exhortation, this word of instruction, probably knew of specific individuals who had violated that. Nevertheless, he probably also knew that there were others who did do that, who were loving and kind, and so he writes in verse 8 a kind of qualification. He says, “If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.”

So, he commends those who are doing that, and he speaks of their obedience in terms of the royal law, which probably means love. Now I say probably because there are various ideas on what that word “royal” means, why James used it. It may refer to the whole law of God and is called royal because it’s God who gave it. He’s the king of the universe, and what He gives is royal, or it may be the royal law because it governs the Kingdom of God. I think, though, that it is probably a description of love. He’s describing it as royal because that is what governs all of the laws and the principles that govern our relationships with men, that regulates our relationships with other people, the love of God, and I say that because that is what this is about, it’s about relationships, and that fits with what our Lord has said in other places.

For example, in Matthew 22:37-40, the Lord summed up the law of Moses in two laws. He says to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and to love your neighbor as yourself. What is to govern man’s relationship with men? It’s to be love for one another. That holds true in the new covenant just as it did in the old covenant, and James says if we do that, if we treat others with love, we are doing well, and he supports his statement from the Old Testament by quoting Leviticus 19:18, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” So, remember, James is writing to a congregation of Jewish Christians who still followed Jewish customs, who still valued the Mosaic law. They probably obeyed the law in its detail, in its diet and all of the aspects of the law that would touch on their behavior and their relationships with others, they valued that, and so James brings the law in as a witness to the truth of what he said, somewhat I think like Paul would do when he wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:33, and he quotes a very common proverb among the Gentiles.

Some think it may have come from a Greek poet, [Menander](#), or maybe even from [Euripides](#), but its Greek author was probably the one who penned it when he

says, “Bad company corrupts good morals,” and so he illustrates his point that way. James is doing something similar here when he quotes the law. He reinforces it. I say that because I don’t think that the quotation here of Leviticus 19:18 would suggest that we are under the authority of the Mosaic law. We’re not under the law of Moses, but it is God’s Word, and he cites it as authority to support the very point that he’s making, just as Paul would cite a source such as the one that he cites in 1 Corinthians 15. The law of Leviticus 19 has been greatly expanded in the new covenant, and our Lord did that. In Leviticus 19, the neighbor is limited to the Israelite, but Jesus broadened the scope of it.

In Luke 10:30-37, He tells the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan, and there the idea of the neighbor is not just the Israelite. That seems to be the mentality of the Jewish men, the priests, the others who bypass the man who had been injured. But, with the goodness of the Samaritan, it’s very clear that the neighbor is every human being whom we are able to benefit, whom we can help, and so it broadens the scope of who it is that we are to love, and then the Lord was instructing His disciples in the upper room in John 13:34 and 35, and He modified, or maybe we should say He intensified, the standard of love. No longer are you to love as yourself but as Christ loved us. There’s this even greater standard, and so He calls that a new commandment. It’s a new commandment because it has a new standard, and obedience to this new instruction would be a powerful witness to the world.

When they see how Christians love each other, how they care for one another, how they treat each other as equals regardless of their social standing, that would be a great witness in the world. In fact, our Lord says that this is the sign of discipleship, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” But if the church holds its faith in Christ with an attitude of favoritism toward people of the world, that would discredit any show of love within the church. The poor man who comes into the congregation and he’s treated as he’s treated here, who’s treated **disfavorably**, dishonored, would conclude that Christians, they’re no different than the men and women of the world, they’re no different from non-Christians, and that would lead to a rejection of Christianity, or certainly the possibility of it.

So, in verse 9, James states how serious it is to show partiality. “If you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” In

other words, this is no minor thing, this show of dishonor for the poor, this not showing him the same respect that's shown to a rich person. It's not a trivial fault. It's not simply a matter of bad manners. Favoritism is sin, it is lawlessness – that's what sin is – it violates God's will as it was revealed in the Old Testament, as it's revealed in the New Testament, in the law of liberty, as James has called that which governs us. We can't pick and choose what laws we will or will not obey because, as James explains in verse 10, one sin counts a lot. In fact, one sin counts for all, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point,” and he's being hypothetical here, but just taking an example like this, one who keeps the whole law but he stumbles in just one point, “He has become guilty of all.”

Now, the reason for that is the nature of the law. It is a single entity. It is a unity. The law is not like a window with a number of different panes, like we have back here in the back. You could throw an object through one of those panes and it would break, but the others would remain intact. It's not like that. It's like a picture window, and if you break one part of the window, the whole thing is shattered, and that's the law. You can't just pick and choose what laws you're going to keep and what you're not going to keep, and so the law that God gives us in whatever form it is revealed, whether it's the law of the Old Testament, whether it's that of the New Testament, **which we are** under, a person who seeks to keep it must keep all of it. We can't pick and choose the commandments, the instruction that we might want to keep and might want to ignore.

James is showing in that certainly by application that you cannot be saved by law-keeping. No one can keep the whole law, but we can certainly use that to show that a person who seeks to do so, who seeks to be justified by works of the law, cannot do that because everyone has sinned, and one sin makes one guilty of violating the entire law. But James' point here is really not that, it is that we are to be righteous individuals, we are to be obedient people. To say that we're not under the law of Moses is not to say we don't have principles of conduct. We certainly do. Much of the Old Testament is brought into the law that governs us, we are governed by principles, and we must seek to obey them and be righteous and live righteous lives. We cannot separate some of those principles out from others and keep just the ones that we find preferable. We must be consistent in our behavior.

Now, this principle that all laws are important and that the law is a unity, a complete whole that must be obeyed is illustrated in verse 11. James writes, “For He who says, ‘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, and the point that he’s making here is it’s foolish to think that a person who keeps one of those commandments can violate the other commandment or any other commandment without any consequences. You can’t violate one and keep the other and still be an obedient individual. It’s all a whole. The one God gave all of these commandments, and so the two commandments are an expression of the will of the one God. God can’t be divided; His word can’t be divided. It is His will, it is a whole, and nothing can be separated out from it. We can’t pick and choose what we will obey. We can’t do that. We can’t show partiality to people. We can’t be good in one area toward certain people and not toward others. It’s to be taken as a whole. We must, to be specific to the problem that James is dealing with, we must love all individuals.

Now, James said in verse 9 that if they show partiality, if they show favoritism, they are convicted, they’re guilty, and guilt carries consequences, even for Christians. We tend to think that because we are justified as believers in Jesus Christ we won’t have to give an account of ourselves someday. Our sins have all been washed away, they’ll never be remembered, they’ve been separated as far as the east is from the west, will never come up before God again, and in terms of justification, that’s true. Christian salvation will never be questioned. God will never review it in the future. It is a finished fact, it is forever a settled issue. We will never stand before the great white throne, judgment of Revelation 20:11.

But, having said that, Christians will give an account of themselves someday, and that’s supported in verse 12 where James say, “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.” That’s the standard by which God will judge us, the law of liberty, which is the Word of God which has been implanted in the heart of every believer. It happened at regeneration. The Word of God dwells within us. That’s the promise of the covenant. God has written His law on our heart, and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to keep that law, to be obedient, and that is what’s going to judge us. We’re going to be judged by the Word of God in the future, that’s the standard, and so there is a judgment that we will face. There is a time of

reckoning. Paul makes that clear in Romans 14:10. He warns against judging a brother and holding a brother in contempt, and then he says, “For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.”

In 2 Corinthians 5:10, he becomes even a little more specific. He says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” the \_\_\_\_\_ seat of Christ, “So that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Before that, in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, Paul gives a kind of dramatic or illustrative description of that judgment that will come. He writes that each man’s work will be revealed, will be evident when it is revealed with fire, and if a man’s work is judged, it will either remain or it won’t remain. If he built his life on the right foundation, with gold, silver, precious stones, then there will be reward that will last. But, if what he built his life with is wood, hay, and straw, then that’s going to be burned up. It won’t last. He will last, but his works won’t.

So, there’s a time of judgment, there’s a time of reckoning; we all must stand before the judgment seat of God. Our lives will all be tested. That is a fact, and that should be a motivation to us to live a righteous life, the very kind of life that James is exhorting here. He’s dealing with one particular issue: people showing favoritism, people being partial towards the rich and ignoring the poor. It’s a terrible witness, it shows a wrong attitude or wrong spirit of the heart, but it applies to so many things. We’re to be a righteous people. We’re to be living in conformity to God’s Word, His standard. It should be a motivation to righteousness, and so James says, “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged.” Remember, you’re going to give an account, and then he explains in verse 13, “For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.”

May God give us all a desire to conform to the law of liberty, to live lives that are consistent with God’s Word, live lives that are consistent with who we are as children of God, specifically lives that are free of prejudice and favoritism. May we be increasingly like the Lord Himself who loves the sinner, who is not partial, who blesses all kinds of people – rich, poor, male, female, Jew, Gentile, whatever – that’s the kind of people that we need to be. That’s the kind of character that we need to reflect. As I said, may God help us to do that, because only God can do that. Only God can produce that kind of attitude within us, and so let’s close with a brief word of prayer and ask Him to do that.

[Prayer] Father, we do ask you to change our hearts. We see a problem in this first century congregation that is a problem that we all have. It's part of human nature to value certain people over others. May we be like you, and we pray that you would increasingly change us and make us like your Son. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.