

# **Love Your Neighbor, Not Your Creditor!**

## **James 2:8-13**

Churches like ours sometimes practice subtle favoritism

- friendly smiles to well-dressed professionals;
- cordial–though less enthusiastic–greetings to less-favored or troubled.

Such discrimination may escape human detection; God sees=>Danger when partiality infiltrates God's people.

**James writes to persecuted church to show us what *living faith* looks like.**

**Faith faces problems of rising pressure**

**Living faith doesn't favor powerful people**

Due to affliction they're sinning against brothers & sisters

**They favor rich to get preferential treatment.**

They hope that by honoring powerful people,  
powerful people will treat *them* better.

Each schemes to save their own skin

James warn us of danger of focusing on riches,  
of confusing wealth with worth . . .

**Summary 1** "*Stop showing partiality!*"

**Problem:** They're discriminating against poor,  
showing favoritism to rich & powerful 2-4

**Explanation of his concern 5-11**

**Election of the poor 5**

God's method is *not* to choose rich & powerful.

God takes poor, powerless people, makes us rich.

*God's children* look down on people God made rich!

## **Mistreatment by the rich 6-7**

They're honoring people who oppress them,  
rejecting people God has chosen.

## **How should God's people treat each other?**

**God's law teaches us how to treat each other:**

## **Love your neighbor without favoritism 8-11**

**8** summarizes discovery from OT: *"If you really fulfill the royal law according to Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you're doing well."*

**If we love our neighbor as ourselves,  
we're doing right**

***"Love your neighbor as yourself"* is royal law. 8a**

–chief command, basis of all God's commands.

## **What does this look like in real life?**

**Ernest Gordon:** Japanese concentration camp holding allied prisoners was sea of mud & filth, scene of grueling labor & brutal treatment; hardly any food; law of jungle pervaded—every man for himself. 12 mos later camp was clean. Huts rebuilt. 2,000 men gathered to worship.

*What happened?* During yr, 1 prisoner shared last crumb with another in need. Then died. Among belongings they found Bible. Some who witnessed his act of love wondered if that Bible might be reason he gave. Prisoners read it. H.S. changed lives. Revival filled camp. Royal law worked

For us it may mean:

giving up afternoon to help needy person  
spending time with child of single parent;

helping a widow repair house;

buying gift for prisoner's kid who'll never pay you back

Ch. 1: *that's what authentic religion looks like!*

**When we keep that law we're doing right. 8b**

[BUT... ] **9** *"If you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors."*

**SHOWING FAVORITISM IS SIN**

This is serious! –it's *SIN!*

Discriminating against poor & powerless violates God's royal law.

When we pick people who are "good enough" for us to sit with, avoiding less privileged people; choosing to identify with "our kind of people," we offend the royal law.

**Showing favoritism makes us lawbreakers**

**People who show favoritism are guilty**

**10-11** *"For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of law." [a law breaker]*

**Breaking one law makes us guilty of breaking the law. 10-11**

**Doesn't matter if we obey every law but 1**

we're still guilty of breaking God's law

**Breaking any law is breaking the law**

Same Author wrote all the parts. 11a-b

Breaking 1 law makes us law breakers 11c  
 Shoplifter arrested. "But I didn't kill anybody!"  
 Even if we keep royal law & do what's right all the time,  
 showing favoritism makes us law breakers!  
 When we play favorites, we aren't showing love for each other.  
 We're thinking about ourselves.

We have broken God's royal law—we're "law breakers."  
 We have it from our Lord's lips:

if we love God *and* our neighbor, we fulfill whole law.  
 God's people are offenders—they've broken God's law!  
 They haven't loved their neighbor as themselves.

Whoever fails to obey law—*ANY* law—is law breaker  
 James isn't trying to put us back under law!  
 He's trying to show us that this is *serious!*

In God's sight, how we treat less-privileged people, & prefer  
 powerful people, is as serious in GOD's sight as adultery or  
 murder. *It's no trifling matter!*

**Conclusion: 12** *"So speak & act as those who're to be judged  
 under law of liberty."*

**Speak & act as people who will be held  
 accountable for how we treat others.**

Result is *not* loss of salvation. But will be judgment!

Reality of reckoning day—God *will* weigh our works— ought to  
 make difference!

**Judgment should affect how we treat others We  
 should be careful what we say.**

In persecution, not criticizing people making different choices—not turning in brother to save your own skin.

May mean not criticizing people with different opinion:

how they discipline their kids,

what political party Christians should support;

**We should be careful what we do.**

In persecution, it means not abandoning a brother

to seek special treatment from a rich friend;

hoarding food for our family, if brother has none.

For us today, it may mean:

helping someone in need;

buying gift for friend's child, instead of HDTV

**We're judged based on law giving freedom**

We don't fall back under law of Moses.

We're judged by law of liberty—not how we think of *law*!

That's a *grace* standard; but it *is* judgment.

When we obey God's law, it frees us from sin & enables us to walk in liberty.

True liberty is freedom to be all God wants me to be.

We find that when we *love neighbor as ourselves*.

**We'll be judged on basis of mercy **13**** *“For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

**Those who refuse to show mercy will be judged without mercy.**

***It won't do to plead mercy, UNLESS we're willing to show mercy!***

If we want God to show *us* mercy,  
we deal with *others* in mercy.

He does NOT say we *earn* mercy by showing mercy.

It's impossible to earn *mercy*.

The heart which has received mercy will be merciful.

People who show favoritism to powerful people reveal an unmerciful spirit.

People who show mercy don't ignore the poor,  
to obtain privilege.

**But, mercy triumphs over judgment.**

Mercy produces better results than judging does!

When we're tempted to do whatever it takes to get that promotion—even if we have to spend more time away—  
—or have to make another person look bad

Remember: *Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

Mercy *WINS!*—*it beats judgment any day!*

Mercy overcame justice to give US eternal life!

Therefore, we should *show* mercy!

Mercy overcoming justice enables us to receive people as they are, without showing favoritism.

To avoid law breakers' condemnation, we must care about other people as we care about ourselves.

**God's people should love 1 another & not show favoritism because we'll be judged based on love & mercy we show others.**

***If God deals with US based on love & mercy we show others...***

***We'd better love one another without preference to powerful people around us!***

Golden rule—the royal law—the law that gives liberty

—boils down to one fundamental principle:

***Do unto others as we want GOD to do unto us!***