

## Defined by Faith # 11

James 2: 10-13

Tonight as we continue our study in James, I want to draw our attention to the verses we considered in our previous study. There James addressed the issue of our tendency for partiality and discrimination toward others. We all possess that tendency to a degree; even though we are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

As we begin our study this evening, we must keep in mind the words of our Lord.

**Matt.22:37-40 – Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. [38] This is the first and great commandment. [39] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [40] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.** James emphasizes this truth in **V.8**. In our text this evening, James deals with those who seek righteousness through keeping the law. These verses are tied to the previous verses. He is still speaking to those who show partiality and prejudice toward others. Clearly they have not fulfilled the Royal Law. Partiality and prejudice always prevent love as God commands.

We are considering a relevant and urgent passage. James dealt with these issues in his day and they remain in ours as well. The majority of religions teach justification through works. They teach that we must keep a certain set of rules or guidelines and live our lives in such a way as to be acceptable to God. I trust you know that such religion is vain, and absolutely worthless. We do not possess the will, the knowledge, or the ability to secure justification through works. So, I want to consider the **facts** disclosed in the text as we think on: **Defined by Faith**. Our lives should not be measured or dictated by works of the flesh, but by our faith and commitment to the Lord.

**I. Justification and the Law (10-11)** – Here James discusses those that seek justification through works, of keeping the law. Notice:

**A. The Desire (10)** – **For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.** Clearly there were those who sought justification through keeping the law. Keep in mind James is dealing with Jewish Christians. He is speaking to those who were raised according to the Law of Moses and have put their faith and trust in Christ. Surely there were those who desired, or at least were tempted, to seek justification through their works. Some taught that Jesus was unnecessary; all one needed to do to be accepted of God was keep the law. As we will see, this is quite difficult, even impossible, but there were those who had those desires anyway.

- There are those who seek justification through works today. Many believe that they can live good enough, do enough good deeds for the good to outweigh the bad and be acceptable to God. Many desire and hope that their good deeds or moral living will result in justification.

**B. The Difficulty (10) – For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.** We all deal with sin. We all fail and miss the mark from time to time. I don't know of anyone who lives above sin. However, Satan is a master of deception. When we do fail, often he will slip up next to us and tempt us to minimize our sin. "Really it wasn't that bad. Consider all the good you have done. Look around; there are a lot of people who live much worse than you. Surely God wouldn't deny you entrance to heaven for that one, little sin."

- James speaks of the difficulty of such a task, revealing that it is impossible for us to keep the whole law of God. Satan may tell us that one sin would not cause condemnation, but the Bible teaches something vastly different. **We could keep the whole law, and offend in one point, and be guilty before God.** To **offend** means "*to fail in duty; to fall in sin.*" It has the idea of a road that is long, having rough spots along the way, and as we travel, stumbling over those rough places. I know of no one who hasn't stumbled somewhere along the way in this journey of life. Living in a body of flesh we will stumble from time to time. There are none who live in sinless perfection.

**C. The Declaration (10-11) – For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.** [11] **For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.** These verses really put things in their proper perspective. In essence they reveal that it is impossible to achieve justification through the law. We cannot live good enough to merit the righteousness of God. If we stumble and fall in one area, any area, in regard to the law of God, we are guilty of transgressing the entire law. This is absolute; there are no exceptions. I am amazed that people could read this passage and still hold to a works based salvation. We must understand that we will not be judged according to the opinions or standards of men. You may live better than everyone else around you, but that isn't enough. We will be judged according to God's holy standard, absolute perfection. No one can achieve that perfection apart from Christ!

- You might say, well my life hasn't been that bad. I am really a good person. That may be true, but yet you are guilty. Have you ever told a lie? Guilty! Have you ever coveted something others had? Guilty! Have you ever been selfish, not caring for the needs of others as you have yourself? Guilty! You see you don't have to be a murderer or an adulterer to be guilty of transgressing the law. One sin, any sin committed, and you are guilty of them all. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We have all sinned today. There is none righteous, no not one! As God looks on every single person who has ever lived, He sees those who are guilty of

transgressing His law. The only remedy for sin is salvation in Christ. [Gal.3:10 – For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, \*\*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.\*\*](#) If you can't keep every law according to God's holy standard, then you are guilty of them all.

## **I. Justification and the Law** (10-11)

**II. Obligation in the Lord** (12a) – [So speak ye, and so do.](#) James was aware that some still struggled with their faith, whether seeking justification through keeping the law, or even in their treatment of others. This is a simple statement in that regard, but it offers a stern and sobering warning. It also reveals a challenge for the believer. Consider:

**A. The Expectation Involved** – James is basically saying: Don't just talk the talk; you are accountable to walk the walk.

- Some might view this as an encouragement to seek justification through works, but I see it as just the opposite. James further emphasizes the difficulty of such an endeavor. It is easy to talk about good works. It is easy to try and rationalize our behavior compared to the deeds or actions of others. However, justification through works isn't that simple. Each and every action, thought, and deed we commit must be consistent with God's holy and righteous standard revealed through the law. If one will honestly examine their life, they would have to admit that it is impossible to keep every aspect of God's law. If you are determined to find justification through works, be sure that you have never in the past, or will in the future transgress any portion of God's law!
  
- While we are here I feel I need to address God's purpose for the Law. It was never given as a means of salvation. God didn't give the Law to Moses in hopes that the Israelites could keep the law and be justified by it. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was in view before the foundation of the world, long before the Law was given. The Law served as a schoolmaster. It was given to show the holiness of God, the depravity and inability of man, and to point them to Jesus. It was never intended to produce salvation! [Gal.3:21-26 – Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: \*\*for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.\*\*](#) [22] [But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.](#) [23] [But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.](#) [24] [Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.](#) [25] [But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.](#) [26] [For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.](#)

- The believer can rejoice that he has been set free from the bondage of sin and the law. We have been redeemed of Christ, set at liberty in Him. We have an obligation to walk in a way that reveals our relationship with Him. We know that our righteousness is in Christ alone and we understand the expectation to walk with Him before men.

**B. The Expression Involved** (12a) – *So speak ye, and so do.* James reveals that our faith ought to be evident for all to see. The believer is continually responsible to portray a godly witness.

- I have known some godly saints that I loved and admired greatly. Their life challenged my faith. But I can honestly say that I never met anyone whom I felt lived above sin. We all have our moments of weakness. One outburst of unjust anger would forever tarnish our testimony of complete righteousness to others and create guilt according to the law. There would be absolutely no room for error, not even the slightest of faults or mistakes. I hope you see how futile it is to depend upon works to secure salvation.

- Only in Christ can we live a life that pleases Him and bears testimony of our faith in Him. We must speak and live consistent with our faith. It ought to be evident for all to see that we are a Christian. Folk shouldn't have to wonder or ask. We must present a consistent witness for Christ, genuinely enjoying our relationship with Him. If we aren't true in our faith, how can we expect anyone else to desire what we have?

## **I. Justification and the Law** (10-11)

### **II. Obligation in the Lord** (12a)

**III. Examination through the Law** (12-13) – Now James turns his focus to judgment according to the law. Notice:

**A. The Certainty of Judgment** (12) – *So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.* This reveals the certainty of our judgment. There is coming a day when all will stand before the Lord in judgment. The lost will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment and the saved will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Believers will not be judged for their sin; that was judged and settled on the cross. We will be judged according to our works. Did we live according to God's will for our lives? Have we laid up any treasure in heaven? Will any of our works follow us home? Will they survive the judgment of God?

- That ought to be a challenge to each of us, especially as we consider this passage in its context. We have been exhorted to love one another without partiality. We desire the Lord to extend His favor to us as we stand before Him in judgment, and we should extend that same favor to others while in this life. How can we possibly expect to receive the blessing of the Lord as we stand before Him in judgment if we have refused to extend blessings to others when we were able in this life?

**B. The Contrast in Judgment** (13) – *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* This reveals what we can expect as we stand before the Lord in judgment. If our lives have been lived with little mercy or concern for others, we will be judged accordingly. If we withheld mercy and compassion when it was within our means to extend it, Christ will judge us consistent with our judgmental attitudes.

- On the other hand, if our lives were lived in compassion, showing mercy and kindness to others, we will receive reward for our obedience to the command of the Lord. Our mercy in this life will translate to His mercy in judgment. Keep in mind; this is not dealing with the believer's sin or salvation. This is dealing with the judgment we shall face for the deeds we have done in this body.

**Conclusion:** This has been a sobering and enlightening passage of Scripture. Clearly we see it is impossible to obtain the righteousness of God through personal effort or work. Salvation is obtained in Christ alone. Apart from His saving grace, all are lost in their sin.

We also find many challenges regarding our walk with the Lord. It isn't enough to talk the talk. As the old saying goes: Talk is cheap. We must be willing to walk the walk, put our faith into action and live according to the will of God for our lives. Everything we do ought to be consistent with His Word and according to His will. We will all stand before the Lord in judgment one day. What will that day reveal? Will we receive rewards for our deeds in this life or will they all be consumed as they are judged of the Lord? I want to have something to lay at His feet, something that will last beyond this life!