



JAMES—A STUDY (PART FIVE)
CHAPTER 2 VERSES 8 TO 13

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This is the fifth in a series of messages on the book of James. The previous messages can be found on our “Messages” page at www.thewellhonduras.org

*If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. (James 2:8-9) The whole law is fulfilled in this one command, in the law of love. God expects us to walk in it. We can't earn our salvation by obeying it, but we *do well* if we walk in it.*

What does it mean, to love ourselves and our neighbor? We know who our neighbor is: Jesus taught that our neighbor means everyone. But what must we do to love him or her? Our ideas of love aren't always what God means by love. **God has to show and teach us what it means to love.** He does this as we walk with Him open-heartedly. And as we learn and realize what love means, how do we then put it into practice? There is only one way: walking by the Spirit.

(Galatians 5:13-25 KJV) *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This is an example of the command to love, then an example of what it looks like to not meet that command. 16This I say then, (referring back to loving one another and not attacking each other, how do we do that?) Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts If you are in Christ, your old man (referred to here as the 'flesh') is dead and you are free; you don't have to walk in the old. But there is a problem that keeps us bound at times. Believe it or not, the problem is the very law of God! When we try to live by the law, we end up walking in the flesh... 25 If we live in the Spirit, (He lives in us and we in Him) let us also walk in the Spirit.*

If you walk in the Spirit, you will fulfill the royal law of love. How do we walk in the Spirit? There is no formula. Open your heart to God and He will show you.

As we just read, if we are led of the spirit, we are not under the law. What does this mean? Which law are we not under?

There are two laws set forth in God's word. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2) The law of rules and regulations (the law of sin and death) and the law of liberty (the law of spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the law of love.) Let's look at each one separately.*

HOW DO WE LOVE
OUR NEIGHBOR?

The Law of Sin and Death

This is primarily the system of rules and regulations given in the Old Testament, which includes laws of different types with various purposes. Examples are practical laws, ceremonial laws, and moral laws. Practical laws addressed, for example, how to deal with certain illnesses (see Leviticus 13:1-3), and clean and unclean foods (see Leviticus 11:7.) Ceremonial laws were given so that God's people would draw near to Him in the correct way, for example making various animal sacrifices (Leviticus 16:9), using the correct clothing for the priest (Exodus 28:4), and having correct life habits (Deuteronomy 22:9-12.) These practical and ceremonial laws were the shadows of spiritual realities expressed in Jesus Christ. For example, the command not to eat pork represented not contaminating yourself with the world and its ways; the various animal sacrifices pointed to the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; the priest's clothing represented the garments of righteousness with which all believers are now clothed through Jesus, indeed all believers now being kings and priests before Him; the instructions to not wear clothing of wool and linen woven together represents not being unequally yoked with unbelievers, not mixing worldly perspectives into our life. The moral laws, for example the Ten Commandments, expressed and codified God's holiness.

**JUDGE YOURSELF
BY THE LAW OF
LIBERTY.**

The Bible itself doesn't distinguish between these three types of law; indeed some laws contain practical, ceremonial and moral aspects. But the law was a complete system of how to please God and thus receive His blessings.

Most Christians agree that there is now no need for us to try to keep the practical and ceremonial laws of old (not many churches ban pork sandwiches or slaughter lambs at Sunday service). However, some churches have returned to observing certain aspects of Old Testament Law (for example the Sabbath), while many churches make up their own new systems of ceremonial law (for example, banning women from wearing trousers or makeup; insisting that prayers be conducted at a certain point in the service or in a certain way, etc.) And most Christians believe that in some way they should base their lives on the moral laws, in order to gain or maintain their salvation, or so as to maintain a good relationship with God.

But what happens when you base your life on the law?

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 (James 2:10-11.) Some may think that one of these sins is worse than the other. But to God, all sin is sin, because every single sin is rebellion against Him and against His authority. Thus by failing on one point of the law you become guilty of failing it all!

Therefore, if you are going to live by the law, you have to fulfill it all. You may say, "I haven't murdered anyone, I haven't committed adultery..." but, do you love your neighbor as yourself, and do you love him according to God's love and not your own ideas of what love should be? If not, you are failing part of the law and therefore the whole law...

Obeying God in one area doesn't win you forgiveness for your sins in others. And just as we can't win God's forgiveness and be justified before Him by keeping the law, so we can't win His acceptance nor His presence in our lives by keeping the law, because by failing one point we fail it all.

If you try to live by the law of rules and regulations you will always fail in some way. If you base your salvation, or your daily relationship with God, on your success or failure at keeping the law (including modern "Christian" laws), you will end up frustrated and feeling like you are cursed.

This is to be expected, *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.* (Galatians 3:10) How many sins would you need to commit in order to go to hell? Just one! Thus we know that our salvation can't depend on our keeping of the law. We are saved by trusting in Christ. And how many sins would you need to commit so that the Holy God could no longer live in your heart? Well, according to the law, just one. Hence neither our salvation, nor our daily walk with God can depend on us keeping the law! Rather it depends on us trusting that He fulfilled the law for us, and that we are in Him. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* (Matthew 5:17)

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? 2This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? 4Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. 5He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 6Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (Gal 3:1-7)

So what happens when you try to live by law? You try but you fail. Time and time again. Like the Galatians, you lose the joy of your salvation. You feel terrible, like you are cursed. The law shows you how sinful you really are. You realize you can't do it, so that stirs up more sinfulness; sometimes you may even give up and sin even more. This leads to spiritual death.

But deep in your heart you still want to follow God, so, glory to God, you realize that you need a Savior, not just to save you from hell but also to save you and to be your righteousness in your daily life. And thus you come to the very reason God gave us the law – to show us that we can't keep it, and that we need a Savior! "These are the laws and I can't keep them. God, I need You!" *What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." (Romans 7:7 ESV) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:24 KJV)*

The laws are good and righteous but as believers we are not supposed to live by trying to keep them! It is a wrong basis for our life in Christ... In fact if we try to live that way it actually stirs up sin in us. *For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. (Romans 7:9-11)* That's the problem- we are new, but when we try to live by law it stirs up the sin in us. When that happens, we end up being reminded of our need for a savior! *12Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (Rom 7:9-13)*

Did Jesus destroy the law? No! *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. (Matthew 5:17)* Christ fulfilled the law on our behalf! 'Fulfill' here means to carry something through to the end, to show us the true purpose of the law... That we cannot keep it, and that He will be our holiness!

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully: 9Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; 11According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. (1 Tim 1:8-11) We must learn to use the law lawfully, for the purpose in which God intended it. That means we must understand that as believers we are no longer under the law; we are righteous in Christ and it was not made for us as new creations. That said, please note that as a believer, if you refuse to walk in the Spirit in a certain area, God may apply the law to you until you realize your need for a Savior in that area. Also, the law (together with everything in the Old Testament) shows us a whole lot about the character of God and so it is worth studying it in order to know Him better. **But you must understand that your Christian walk begins and ends with freedom.** You are not under the law! The main purpose the law was given was to show us that we cannot keep it and that we need a Savior.

The Law of Liberty

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12) We are not under the law, so James must be talking about a whole different kind of law here. We live by the *law of liberty*.

What is the law of liberty? Well, unsurprisingly, it has a whole lot to do with LIBERTY!

THE LAW IS A
WRONG BASIS FOR
OUR LIFE IN
CHRIST.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4 (KJV) AMEN! This is the key!

There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus. We are forgiven of our sins, past, present and future!

We have been set free from the curse of the law of sin and death, because as new creations we have been set free from the power of sin, of Satan and of the law.

The Holy Spirit of God lives inside us and is our guide. He Himself is our salvation, our holiness and our wisdom (see 1 Corinthians 1:30.)

We are not slaves under laws; rather, we are sons. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* (Romans 8:14-15)

Our walk with God is not based on laws, but on relationship with Him. *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. 11But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:10-14) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:23-26)*

So we are free. Free to do as we please? *For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. (1 Peter 2:15-17 NIV)* There is no freedom more satisfying than the freedom to serve the God of love, and not just as a servant but also as a dearly loved son. This is not a burdensome servitude, because in serving God we are set free from slavery to people's opinions, to the things and standards of this world.

As we walk in the Spirit we will naturally fulfill the royal law. In fact we go way further than those who live under the law. *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20 ESV)* God requires holiness! The Pharisees and scribes obeyed the law but they did not fulfill the law of love, and they remained enslaved by their sin.

My righteousness is greater than theirs; it exceeds theirs, because it is not my righteousness! I am in Christ and He is my righteousness; and His righteousness goes way beyond theirs. And, living by the Spirit, the law of love is fulfilled in my life because the divine life of Jesus expresses itself through me. We are not saved by our own holiness but rather by the holiness of Jesus Christ; and by the Spirit we walk in that holiness that we have been given.

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.(James 2:12) God will judge you by the law of liberty! Glory to God! So, judge yourself by that same law of liberty; and judge others the same way.

“Speak and act” Both our words and our actions should agree with our new life in Christ, with the law of liberty that granted us that new life.

**OUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS IS
NOT OUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

As James exhorts us in chapter 1 verse 25, we should study the law of liberty – the gloriousness of the mercy and forgiveness and righteousness and holiness that we have received and continue to receive in Christ.

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. (James 2:13) God has to judge sin, and He did judge it in Jesus. He loves people, and that's why he meted out judgment on Jesus. Hence mercy is offered to us. Those who don't accept that mercy will not receive it from God. If we have accepted God's mercy but do not believe it applies to us in our daily lives (not showing ourselves mercy,) we will have trouble experiencing its reality. Equally, if we have accepted it we should show it to ourselves and to others, not denying our sin or others' sin, but acknowledging the mercy available.

Some translations state, "mercy triumphs over judgment." The KJV uses "rejoices" because the Greek word implies that mercy is like a person who is joyful because they are being taken into account more than someone else (the 'someone else' being 'judgment.')

What a beautiful metaphor - in fact more than a metaphor, a reality in our lives.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25) The law was by no means nullified. It was fulfilled in Jesus and He lives in us. Mercy has triumphed in our lives. We live by the law of liberty, and as we walk by the Spirit the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us; the law of love which fulfills all other laws. Amen.

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“IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK”- JESUS
(JOHN 7:37)