

A Right Use of God's Law

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] James 2, I'll read the first 13 verses in your hearing. My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, Don't show favoritism.

Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring or sit on the floor by my feet. Have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him?

But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of Him to whom you belong?

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

[1:13] For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said do not commit adultery also said do not murder. If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom. Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Well, we're in James chapter 2 this morning. And in this letter, God is telling us to pursue practical holiness with all of our hearts because without practical holiness, our religion is worthless.

And now he gets very specific about what he means by practical religion, practical holiness. And the first thing on the docket is don't show favoritism.

Don't show partiality that's unjust and wrong. The example given to us was two visitors that come into our service.

[2:23] One is a very wealthy man by all appearances, and the other is just as poor by his appearances. And just because of their apparent financial status, we show special attention to the rich while neglecting and discriminating against the poor.

And we're told this is entirely inconsistent with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's discriminating and judging with evil thoughts. It's worldliness. It's the way the world values people. And it's acting contrary to God our Father, who has chosen a whole lot of poor people to be saved while we insult them.

And it's senseless when we see how the rich as a class were exploiting Christians and blaspheming the worthy name by which they were called.

Well, that brought us through the first seven verses of chapter 2. But there's more. There's much more. God knows that we tend to overlook and minimize this sin of favoritism.

[3:34] We excuse ourselves as if this favoritism were little more than just a case of bad manners, bad etiquette. It's just a little partiality, a little prejudice, a little favoritism.

We all do it. Is that so bad? And our God answers, as a matter of fact, it is. In fact, if you continue in this pattern without repentance, you will face judgment without mercy.

Showing favoritism is just that serious to God. So our text today then, verses 8 through 13, he builds his case against favoritism by calling three witnesses to the stand.

The royal law, the Ten Commandments, and the final judgment. And they all weigh in against favoritism. And so what we have in our text today is that it's as much about the law of God as it is about favoritism.

In fact, James is using the particular issue of favoritism to apply the law of God to it. And in doing this, he shows us the proper use of the law in the Christian life.

[5:00] And this is desperately needed in our day. Many in the church have bad attitudes to the law, about the law, the law of God. They view it as their enemy rather than their friend.

Something to despise, something to ignore perhaps, but surely nothing to love and nothing to use in my Christian life. Mention God's law and they respond, as a Christian, I'm not under law, but under grace.

By which they mean I don't have any obligation to keep the law of God, so don't put me on a guilt trip. Or some might say, I walk by the Spirit, so I don't need the law.

Or I have love. And that has replaced the law in the New Covenant. Many bad ideas, wrong ideas, about God's law and the Christian.

Bad attitudes toward the law and a desire to be done with it. After all, if it's powerless to save you, then it's useless to the Christian.

[6:07] Well, if that's the case, then you'll all want to throw away your hammers. That's right, the hammers, with claws and a head on it. You go home today and you find all the hammers and gather them up and throw them in the trash.

And whenever you speak about a hammer in the future, you must put a scowl on your face.

Hammers. Why? Because everybody knows a hammer is worthless in fixing television sets.

Haven't you found that to be so? That the more you use it, the worse the problem gets. They're completely ineffective for fixing TVs.

So let's throw them all away. And you would say, no, wait a minute, John. There are other uses. Put it in the drawer. Put it in the toolbox because you'll find that there are some jobs where that will be just the tool.

You need to hang a picture on the wall someday. You need to remodel your basement. You need to pull out a nail and that will be the perfect tool for you.

[7:15] It's the same with God's law. The law was never meant to fix our broken relationship with God. Never meant for that. And just because some people are using it for that and trying to use the law to save themselves doesn't mean that the law has no positive value to the Christian.

It only means that hammers weren't made to fix TVs. But when a sinner needs to see that he has no righteousness of his own to make himself accepted in heaven, when he needs to see that he comes short of what God requires for entry into heaven, well, there's no tool like this thing, the law of God, to show him, to chase him away from any trust in his own goodness and to chase him to faith in Jesus who has kept the law perfectly and therefore has a righteousness to give to every believing sinner.

Oh, for that, it's just the tool. And then as Christians, just because the law has no power to sanctify you, no power in itself to make us more holy, we don't therefore chuck it as worthless.

It only means hammers weren't made to fix TVs. But when the Christian needs to find out how to please the Lord in some situation in life, how to express his love for Christ, what he owes to God and to his fellow man, what is right, what is wrong, oh, then the law is the perfect tool, just the thing needed.

And that's what James is saying to us in this letter. It's the perfect law that gives freedom. There's nothing wrong with it. It's perfect. It's complete.

[9:05] It spells out the path of freedom and blessing for all who walk in it. It stakes out the righteous life that God desires.

The religion that God our Father accepts is pure and spotless. No, the law is not the power of practical holiness. But for that reason, we do not discard it.

Faith is the power. Faith is the powerful engine that drives a holy life. But God's laws are the tracks down which the holy life will go.

God's law is the moral compass to give us direction in our life. Which is the right way? Here is the way. Walk in it. And so, in the pursuit of practical holiness, we need God's law as much as we need faith.

The two are complementary. They are not antagonists. They work together. So as we work our way through this text, let's not miss the important use of the law in the life of the believer.

[10:16] And be clear that he's talking about the use of the law in the life of believers. He starts this chapter, my brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. And again in verse 5, listen, my dear brothers, he's talking about the use of the law for the believer.

Are there wrong uses of the law? Absolutely. Make it a ladder to earn your way into heaven and into God's favor and you've become a legalist.

But make the law a measure of your practical holiness and that's not legalism. That's biblical Christianity. It's the only kind of Christianity James knows anything of.

the law is not the way to be saved. It is the transcript of how safe people live. And in that, it does us a great service.

So James would correct any wrong attitudes, any negativity that we may have toward the law.

James can lead us in the song of David. Oh, how love I thy law.

[11:23] Psalm 119, 97. James has no hangups about God's law. Neither did Paul who says, in my inner being, I delight in God's law.

Neither did John who says in 1 John 5, 3, this is love for God to obey his commands and his commands are not burdensome. And neither did Jesus who upheld, obeyed, and applied God's law as the standard of righteousness in his kingdom.

So believers, the law of God is your friend, not your enemy. Embrace it as such and use it in your working out of practical holiness.

Three witnesses called in this trial against favoritism. Witness number one, the royal law. If you keep, if you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, verse 8, love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right.

But, if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. Why does James call this the royal law, the kingly law, the regal law?

[12:41] Perhaps for several reasons. Because of the royal person who makes this law. God the king. So, this law carries the authority of the great king of heaven.

We must hear it as such. It's God's royal law. But perhaps also because it's the king of laws. Of all the laws, this is the king, kingly law that governs all other laws.

Remember when Jesus was asked one day, what is the greatest commandment in the law? He answered. To love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself.

These are the two greatest commandments. And, all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

The command of love, you see, is a regal, a kingly law. It's the golden rule to do to others as you would have them do to yourself. It's the golden rule, you see, the royal law.

[13:52] Gold being often attributed with the crown that a king would wear. Paul says in Romans 13, 8-10, He who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law.

You see how this commandment of loving your neighbor is so elevated. to a high position. Whoever loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law.

The commandments, do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, and whatever other commandments there may be, they're all summed up in this one rule, love your neighbor as yourself.

Love does no harm to its neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. So Paul tells us, this law is a summary of all the other laws.

You put them on the stove and boil them all down and you can get them right down to just these two commands, Jesus says, and as for God, it means loving God, but all the commands that have to do with your fellow man can be boiled down to this, love your neighbor as yourself.

[14:57] And therefore, if you really love your neighbor, you won't commit adultery against him, you will not murder him, you will not take his things, you will not lie about him, you will not covet what he has.

Love is the fulfillment of the law. Love is not the replacement of the law, it's the summary of all the laws. And so James, rather than quoting specific commandments that forbid favoritism, he could have quoted many commandments in the Old Testament that forbade partiality and favoritism. We referred to some of them last week ourselves, but instead he bypasses them and he goes to the great summary, the royal law. Love your neighbor as yourself.

So the royal law takes the witness stand and the first thing out of its mouth, indeed the only thing out of its mouth, is love your neighbor as yourself.

When that poor man visits at your church, visited you at your church, did you love him as yourself? Did you show as much concern for his needs as you did your own?

[16 : 11] Did you treat him as you like to be treated? If so, you are doing right. You're doing well, you're doing excellent. Doing right means keeping God's law, his royal law of love.

And there's no favoritism where there is love. It can't exist any more than snow can exist on the surface of the sun. No, love will rule out favoritism.

So if you loved your neighbor as yourself, you did well. Oh, but if you show favoritism, you sinned. And you're convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

If you showed favoritism to the rich guy over the poor guy, well, you have sinned. It's more than a case of bad manners.

It's a sin against God. It's missing the mark. God says, this is what's required of you, and you have come short of it. You have missed the mark. Furthermore, it's a violation of his royal law of love.

[17 : 19] Would you like to be treated like that poor man was treated? God, you stand over there. Sit here on the floor right here. I'll make room with my feet as I sit here in my chair and I'll move it over a bit.

Would you like to be treated that way? Do you like to be discriminated? Have you ever been discriminated against? Have you ever been insulted? No, you don't like it. Well, then you failed to love him as you love yourself.

Your behavior was not loving. It was hateful. And so from the witness stand, the royal law cries, guilty, guilty, because partiality to the rich shows a lack of love to the poor.

Guilty. Lawbreaker. That's what it cries. You're convicted by the law as a lawbreaker. You see, the law of God is still authority for the Christian.

It's authoritative in the life of the Christian. It's meant to search us. But see, was I loving toward her? Did I love him like I love myself?

[18 : 35] It's meant to search us as new covenant Christians. We are under obligation to keep the law. And it's sin when we don't. We become lawbreakers. Indeed, that is the definition John uses for sin in 1 John 3, 4.

Now somebody says that's going too far to call me a lawbreaker just because of some partiality. Some bit of favoritism that I showed to one visitor over the other.

When there's a whole lot of God's commandments that I do keep, so how can you call me a lawbreaker? And James says you don't have to break all the laws to be a lawbreaker.

Just one will suffice. Verse 10. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

You see, in the eyes of God, his law is a unit. It's one, kids. It's one great big law. It's got many parts to it, but it's all one.

[19 : 43] Think of it as a 10-link chain. And there's all the links of the chain. You make some, don't you, to put on your Christmas tree? We used to. There they are.

Maybe they're made out of paper and it gets a little heavy and it starts to pull and suddenly one of those links breaks. How many links have to break to break the chain?

Just one. Just one. You can have all the chain in perfect order, but if just one breaks, the whole chain breaks.

Or there's the glass window, the neighbor's window. How many baseballs, kids, do you have to put through that window in order for it all to break? Just one. How many leaks in the ship to sink it?

Just one. Or take the mathematical problem. There may be ten steps to that math problem. And making an error at any one step will ruin the whole solution, won't it?

[20 : 46] You just miss the decimal place in that second step and your answer's wrong. The whole thing's wrong because of one slip-up. Even so, it only takes one broken commandment to make you a lawbreaker in God's eyes.

I think that is something of what God was illustrating when Moses had been on the mountain with God for 40 days. And he's coming down from the mountain. He's got the Ten Commandments engraved on two stone tablets both sides written by the very finger, the power of God.

And as he's coming down the mountain in Exodus 32, he sees a party going on. And the center of this party is a golden calf. And he comes to realize that Israel has sinned against God.

What does he do? He takes the two tablets and he throws them out of his hands and they break into pieces on the mountain. What law had they broken?

Well, specifically, it was the second commandment, wasn't it? It said, you shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything. No idols in the worship of Jehovah. They had made a

golden calf and were worshiping Jehovah God, their God, in the form of an idol.

[22:15] The second commandment was broken. Moses didn't get his chisel and just chink out the second commandment. He took them all and threw them down. Broke to pieces because when you break one, they're all broken.

They're a unit. And you end up being a law breaker in the eyes of God. Surely, this is telling us among other things that you don't wheel and deal with God.

As if keeping these commandments should make up for my breaking of those. things that keep all nine except for the second. I keep most of them, just a few areas where I consistently refuse to obey.

Child of God, you're called to universal obedience to all of God's commandments. You can't pick and choose which commandments you will obey and still think of yourself as a law breaker.

Wrong. The law convicts you as a law keeper. You can't think of yourself as a law keeper. If you say, I can obey all these, but this one. No, you're a lawbreaker, the law says.

[23:28] Guilty of breaking it all. Notice how he comes to this conclusion in verse 11. For he who said, do not commit adultery, also said, do not murder.

If you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you've become a lawbreaker. You see how he's reasoning?

What gives unity to all the commandments is that they're all given by the same lawgiver. Since God is one, his law is one. And so you either bow to this one lawgiver at each point, or you are rebelling.

You can't pick and choose his commands. Because he who said this also is the one who said that. So when you willingly break that, you rebel against the same authority that requires this.

They both come from the same God. And if you're willing to defy his authority in just one commandment, this undoes any supposed obedience you have to any other commandments.

[24:36] It shows you haven't obeyed because he said so. Why did you keep those other ten? I don't know, maybe you didn't want to get caught and get in trouble and be embarrassed in society or whatever.

You didn't keep these laws because God says so. How do I know that? Because God also said this. And you did not regard his authority as such to command your obedience here.

So it draws into question all other obedience. If you defiantly say, I will obey this, but not that. God is not our God.

We are our God. So let's know it reveals a heart. It says, I'm making the decisions here, God, not you. And it shows that we've not obeyed from the heart, but only because we find it convenient or agreeable with us.

And if we're doing what we want and obeying when we want, but not this, but here, God is not our God. We are our God. selective obedience is no obedience at all.

[25:46] Either obey it all or you're counted as a breaker of it all. There are no little sins. All law breaking is serious because it makes us law breakers and law breakers are liable to judgment.

Every sin must be cleansed by the blood of Christ. That little piece of favoritism that you thought was nothing. It makes you a lawbreaker in need of mercy, in need of the blood of Christ.

The royal law has weighed in and we who show favoritism have been found wanting guilty lawbreakers.

Now, did you notice the second witness? We didn't stop at the point. Did you notice the second witness that James called to testify against favoritism is the Ten Commandments? He quotes two of them, the seventh and the sixth in that order.

And so I say it's significant that when James tells the New Covenant believer how to live the Christian life, he takes them to Exodus chapter 20 and quotes two of the Ten Commandments.

[26:55] They are authoritative. They are what practical holiness always looks like in the people of God. And that's because his commandments reflect a part of his nature.

There is something in every commandment that is a reflection of some aspect of God's holiness. And that holiness about God is put in commandment form.

And that's why it is good for all ages, all times, because God himself does not change. And James is not alone in the use of the Ten Commandments for the believer's life.

Paul does the same. We just read it in Romans 13. He quotes from the Ten Commandments as we saw in verses 8-10 of Romans 13.

Our Lord Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount does the same thing. When he sets forth what is the righteousness that governs the kingdom of Christ? He starts to quote the Ten Commandments. [27:54] And it's interesting, he quotes the same two that James quotes here, the sixth and the seventh. And he shows that the moral standard of God's people in the New Testament is not changed from the Old Testament.

It's the same moral law given through Moses summarized in the Ten Commandments. And they all show us how to love God commandments one to four and how to love man commandments five through ten.

So the moral law of Moses has not been replaced by a different law of Christ or a different law of the Spirit. No, it's the same law now in the hands of Christ now in the power of the Spirit.

But James points out later in chapter 4 and verse 12, there is only one lawgiver and judge only one who is able to save and to destroy. We must not think of two lawgivers.

There's Moses and then there's Jesus. No, James is going to enforce it very strongly and quoting from Isaiah 33, there is one lawgiver, one judge and one king.

[29:03] Who is the one who will save us? And so in chapter 4, there's just one lawgiver. Jehovah Jesus is the lawgiver. And he spoke his laws through Moses.

And when he was on the earth, he himself expounded and kept that very same law in spirit and in truth. The glory of the new covenant, the thing that makes the new covenant so superior than the old covenant, it's not that the old moral standard is replaced by a new one, but rather that the same old law that was written on tablets of stone is now written by the power of the living spirit of God upon tablets of fleshy hearts.

Second Corinthians 3, 3. That's the glory of it, that God takes those commands and he puts them in our hearts. He writes them on our minds so that from within we have a desire, we have a will to obey his commands.

That's what the blood of Jesus has purchased for us in the new covenant. Forgiveness for all of our law breaking and the Holy Spirit's work of putting the law inside our hearts.

Now, let's look at these two commands that James quotes. He doesn't quote all 10, he quotes two of them and they're not randomly selected. It's not that he could have chosen two others and it wouldn't have made any difference.

[30:33] No, they're the same two as I said that Jesus expounded on in the Sermon on the Mount or the seventh and the sixth. And James says, if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

This is breathtaking, folks. James is accusing those who showed favoritism of breaking the sixth commandment. Okay, so you didn't commit adultery.

But if you did show favoritism, you have committed murder and you are a lawbreaker. He's just showed that favoritism is not loving your neighbor as yourself, but rather hating him.

favoritism is breaking the sixth commandment. You shall not murder. You say, wait a minute. Favoritism is murder?

Well, remember what Jesus said about the sixth commandment on the Sermon on the Mount. He said in Matthew 5, 21 and 22, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.

[31:44] But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. You see, this command not only forbids taking your neighbor's life, it includes the anger that leads you to the taking of his life.

It includes the hatred in your heart that would move your hand to put the knife in his back. It's not just a command that controls your outward behavior.

Every command of God searches our hearts. And so the sixth commandment, you shall not murder, says you shall not have that hatred and anger in your heart that in some boils out all the way into first degree murder.

John got it, the apostle got it, didn't he? In 1 John 3, 15, anyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

Did you follow James then? To not love your neighbor is to hate him. And to hate him is murder in your heart. So in your favoritism to the rich, you've not loved the poor but hated him.

[33:03] And this leaves the sixth commandment broken and therefore makes you a law breaker. You've withheld good from your neighbor that you should have shown. It's more than a slap on the

hand for a bit of bad manners.

Bad etiquette, favoritism to the rich guy, and discrimination against the poor. It's a radical call for repentance and cleansing from soul-destroying sin.

to continue in your favoritism is to be in the danger of the final judgment. And that will be his final point.

So we've learned from James how a Christian is to make use of the law of God. This is the law of God, by the way, that we are to be looking intently into.

Right? It's the law of God that chapter 125 says, look intently into it. Not just a glance that way. Oh, the sixth commandment. Yes, I know what that means.

[34 : 04] It means keep your knife out of your neighbor's back. Done that. Good to go with the sixth commandment. No, look again, John. Look again. Look deeper into the perfect law that gives freedom.

Look into John the apostle's epistle. Look into Jesus' words. Examine it. Hold that mirror up in front of you. Oh, do I have that hatred? And that anger in my heart, then the sixth commandment has not been kept by me.

I am not only to not take his life, I am to positively preserve his life and to labor for the good of his life. And I've shown favoritism and neglected him.

Look again. Look intently. That's the way of Christians to make use of the law of God. God so that when he comes visiting our church next time, he finds a warm welcome no matter what his outward station in life is.

Well, the royal law has weighed in. Ten commandments have weighed in. If any are still belittling their sin of favoritism, James has a final witness to call. Third witness is the final judgment.

[35 : 27] Verse 12. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom. James is telling us that this law that he's been talking about, whether you want to talk about the summary of it in the ten words or the even further summary of it in the two words, the law of love.

However you want to speak of it, this law is the law that will be the standard for the day of judgment. We're going to be judged by the law that gives freedom. Judge Roy Moore was the chief justice on the Alabama Supreme Court and he used to like to take a wooden copy of the Ten Commandments into his courtroom and have them there on the wall behind him.

And then when he became the Supreme Court, the chief justice on the Alabama Supreme Court, he had this mammoth granite monument to the Ten Commandments and he had it made and brought into his courthouse demonstrating its foundational place in our legal system in this nation.

And godless men have labored to no end to remove any vestige of the Ten Commandments from our public buildings and so Judge Moore was ordered by the court to remove the granite monument of the Ten Commandments.

He refused to do so. And so five years ago last month, he lost his job as the chief justice of Alabama Supreme Court.

[37 : 03] And we see this kind of thing going on all over our nation where etched into some of our old, old buildings and courthouses are the Ten Commandments because they did form a basis and a foundation of what law is.

sinned. But they've been successful. The ACLU lawyers and others have removed the Ten Commandments from our courtrooms. Sinners will not, Romans 8 says.

They cannot submit to God's law. That's where they show their enmity. They will not submit to God's law. But they would cast them away like restrictive chains, like a ball and chain around their leg.

But what a surprise it will be to these same lawyers when they come to the day of judgment to find these same ten laws in the courtroom of Jesus Christ.

Not just hanging there as something to look at, but as the very thing that is the rule, the standard by which they will be judged, that will determine their eternal destiny.

[38 : 20] There it is. According to what you knew of the law, you will be judged by that law, Romans 2 says, and much of it has been written upon your very conscience.

So you can ignore God's law in this life, but they're going to catch up with you in the end. We're going to be judged by the law that gives freedom. some of you are preparing to take final examinations.

And when you have a final exam, especially if it's a comprehensive exam, it can be on anything that you've studied over the last four months. Isn't it kind for teachers to take a class time and sit down with a class and say, let me tell you what's going to be on the final exam.

Get your pencils out. this and this and this and not that, but this. And there you have it. You go home and you don't have to study the whole bulk of material, but you study what you know is on the final exam.

Isn't God so nice? Isn't God so kind to tell us, John, you're going to have a final exam one day and I'm going to tell you up front before you get there. While you're still in the land of the living, while you can still do something about it to prepare for that day, what's on the test.

[39:41] It's the perfect law that gives freedom. It's the summary of the ten laws. It's the summary of the two great commandments.

You're going to be judged by that law. So how did you do with this one? You will have no other gods besides me. How did you do with that one? Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

How did you do with this one? Honor your father and your mother. And for all of these commands, it will not be man's shallow superficial interpretation of them, but it will be Christ's spiritual searching application.

Do you know that he could have written on all ten of the commandments, searching applications just as he did for murder and adultery? That adultery can be the lust of the eye. He could have said the same for stealing and giving false testimony and so on.

That law will judge us. Where lusting is adultery of the heart and where hatred is murder of the heart, the mirror of God's law will be opened to show us what we were.

[41:01] So if we're going to be judged by the law of God, James says, speak and act like those who are going to be judged by the law.

You see how practical he is to us? You know what's on the test? Get ready. Start speaking and continue speaking. These are present tense. Always speak and always act as those who know that they're going to be judged by this law.

So get your nose in the book and intently look at it to see how you are supposed to be living because that's going to meet you in the end. That day is to be transported into this day.

Always live as you'll wish you had when you stand before your maker. Jonathan Edwards had resolutions and number 19 was something to that effect. Always to live as I'll wish I had if I had not more than one hour before I heard the trumpet blast and was summoned away to judgment.

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law. And that should change the way that we speak, James says. He's got a whole lot to say about our tongues. He's already said a lot.

[42:18] He's got a lot more to say. Speak as those who are on their way to judgment. As Jesus says, because I tell you that men will have to give an account in that day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned. Matthew 12.

We're going to be judged by our words. Were they according to the law of God? Secondly, it ought to affect all of our actions.

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law. Because we're going to be judged by our deeds, our actions. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is doing for the things done, the acts done while in the body, whether good or bad.

So if we're going to be judged by God's law, we ought to repent of all law-breaking. We ought to trust in Christ's blood to atone for all of our sins. And then we ought to seek every day to order our tongues and our life and our ways according to that law that will one day judge us.

Somebody says it sounds a little bit like legalism, John. Judgment according to our words and acts will show who had real faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[43:43] Because saving faith in Christ always, always, always, in every, every case produces practical holiness. Wherever there is saving faith, there will be acts according to God's laws.

That's where James is going next. The whole last half of the chapter, he's going to pound that one home. Saving faith always produces holiness of life.

The inseparable relationship between faith in our word Jesus Christ and holy deeds. And final judgment will just show that saving faith life has produced a holy life.

So we'll be judged according to our words and actions. It's appointed unto men once to die and then the judgment. You know what's going to be on the final exam, so you ought to be looking intently into God's law, continuing to do so, not forgetting what you heard, but doing what it says.

Judgment means everything you do every day has vast importance. It's going to be rehearsed again. Now there's a very important reason why we should speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law.

[45 : 06] Verse 13, because, here's the cause, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who is not merciful, and mercy triumphs over judgment.

Folks, you don't want judgment without mercy in that day. If you haven't studied the Bible and what's coming down on the final day of judgment, let me just tell you right now, you don't want judgment without mercy.

But some are going to receive judgment without mercy. No mercy from the judge at all. Who are they? James tells us, judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who is not merciful, who in their favoritism to the rich, insulted and failed to meet the needs of the poor, who've turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to their cry.

It's no different. James is not saying anything that Jesus didn't say when in his sermon on the mount, he said, blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

And the implication is only they will be shown mercy. And he says in the next chapter, six, for if you forgive men when they sin against you, that's mercy forgiving others when they sin against you.

[46 : 34] Your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, if you're not merciful to them when they sin against you, your father will not forgive your sins.

Judgment without mercy is coming for the one who has not been merciful. Are you merciful? Full of mercy. Full of kindness.

Full of pitying mercy. Forgiving mercy. Relieving mercy. Does your kindness take action toward the undeserving, the needy?

Do you cut people slack? Or do you press the letter of the law every time with them? Are you gracious in your dealings with family, neighbors, workmates, enemies who've done something wrong to you, who have misspoken about you, who owe you, who've messed up big time at your expense?

Are you showing mercy? Are you ready to grab them by the throat? Only those who show mercy will receive mercy. Be sure of this. He who shows no mercy now will find no mercy then.

[47 : 56] Only mercy triumphs over judgment. judgment. Now again, it is not that our showing mercy to other people, our fellow, our neighbors, earns for us mercy from God.

That wouldn't be mercy at all. Mercy is undeserved. Rather, our showing mercy to others proves that we have received mercy from Jesus and we will receive mercy in the day of judgment.

Because all who know the Savior's mercies to them are given new instincts, new hearts to show mercy to others. We're all in great need of mercy.

That's what James is saying, folks. Has anyone walking out of here today said, I've never been partial? I've never showed sinful favoritism?

Folks, then we're lawbreakers. We need mercy. And blessed be God, there's a fountain opened up for sinners to come and wash. There's a throne of grace to which we may appeal and find mercy.

[49 : 03] And as we continually bask in the mercies of God to us sinners, we will have the wherewithal to then show mercy to others. Those are the ones who are showing forth a true saving faith in Jesus that really comes to Jesus to be cleansed from real sins and to receive real mercy.

And we show real mercy to our neighbors. notice judgment without mercy. That's quite a statement, isn't it?

Judgment without mercy. You think of that just for a moment. Judgment without mercy. You know there's no sinner breathing that knows what judgment without mercy is. He's right now receiving mercies. Loads of mercies.

He's breathing God's air. He's walking on God's earth. He's feeling God's sunshine. He enjoys the love of the family. All these mercies are still flowing but there's coming a day when it will be judgment without mercy.

But hear me, if any of us in the day of judgment receives mercy from the Lord, it will be because Jesus, our substitute, received judgment without mercy.

[50:15] The father didn't go easy on his son. Oh, it's Jesus. Let's spare him a bit. There was no mercy for him when he took upon him the sins of all his believing people from all times and went to the cross, the place of punishment.

He received the wrath that should have been mine. There was no mercy from the father to his own son. He crushed him. It is pleased the Lord to crush him that he might make him a sin offering for me.

Judgment without mercy, was swallowed up at the cross. Judgment without mercy for him that mercy might triumph over judgment for me.

Glory in that, saints. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. By being cursed for us. No mercy for him.

So, believers, in the light of God's judgment that is coming, in which the law will be the standard, and in light of Christ's mercy to us on the cross, let us repent of our favoritism, lack of love, lack of mercy.

[51:33] Both Calvary and the final judgment show that there's no little law-breaking, and only the blood and righteousness of Jesus can fix the problem of our broken law before God.

And only the power of Christ given in the new covenant can put that law in our inward parts so that we will walk in his ways and keep his commands.

You see, the law sends us running to Christ for justification. I see I'm a sinner. I need a savior, and we run to Christ for forgiveness, for mercy.

And then Jesus puts his arm around us and says, John, if you want to show you love me, keep my commandments. He sends us back to the law.

Here's where I find how to please my Lord. And I hold up the mirror, and I look intently, and I say, oh, I need to run back to Jesus for pardon, for mercy.

[52:42] I'm a lawbreaker. And for power, sanctifying power, to work in my heart, both to will and to do, of his good will, his commandments.

And so, James says, the law of God has a rightful place in the Christian life. Anybody need an attitude adjustment toward the law, the removal of some negativity?

Come to James and read chapter 2. see how he says, this is a friend to you who are in Christ. Use it as such.

An unbeliever, what will you do about your lawbreaking? Well, confess it to God. You need to do what we did, and what we're still doing. You go run into Jesus, and trust in his law keeping, and it will be put to your account.

Repent of your sins, cast yourself upon his mercy, and you will receive it. And in the day of judgment, you'll not be judged without mercy, because Jesus was judged for your sins without mercy, and he put his spirit in you to cause you to walk in his ways and to keep his commands.

[53:59] Let's pray. Lord, there is more in your law than what our eyes have ever seen, because there's more about your holiness than we've ever seen.

Open our eyes increasingly as we would stare intently into the perfect law that gives liberty, and continue in it, and then lead us to our Savior's blood, wash us and cleanse us, and then fill us with your holy spirit, that we might go and sin no more, and save us from any thinking of sin as being small, and deliver us from them all, and bring some sinner to flee for refuge to Christ, that he might not be judged without mercy in the last day.

We ask in Jesus' name, amen.