

Mercy Ministry

James 2.1-13

Main Idea

The Law of Liberty frees us to be merciful does not allow us to treat people partially. Instead it frees us to act mercifully towards those in need since that is how Christ treated us.

Overview

Setup to James:

- A. The book of James is one of the earliest NT books written after the Ascension (40-50 ad)
 - 1. It is believe to have been written by the Lord's brother James
 - 2. There has been some controversy that James is advocating a different Gospel than Paul includes a Faith plus works equals salvation as opposed to Paul's Grace alone through Faith alone in Christ alone
 - a. This is not the case, but instead the purpose of James is not to show us how to be saved but instead what being saved looks like

The Gospel Frees us

- A. In vss. 12 says that the church is to so speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty:
 - 1. This means that our judgment as Christians is one of liberty...we have been free from the the guilt of the Law and free to then obey the Law, which is for our good
 - 2. This came to us because Jesus obeyed the "Royal Law" (vs. 8) of loving His neighbor by laying His life down for us
 - a. Christ showed us mercy and therefore removed the condemnation of the Law that comes at the Judgment (vs. 13)
- B. This is the compelling portion of our community towards the marginalized:
 - 1. Many people serve the poor, but we do so because we were first shown mercy by Christ

So Speak

- A. In Chapter 2.1-7 we see that there were some that were treated rich people and poor people partially
 - 1. James is encouraging the believers to remember that poor people make up the Kingdom of God (vs. 5) and therefore they should not be treating them partially
 - a. Our Faith is a faith that works (2.17, 18, 20, 26) therefore it should work in a manner that is in keeping with the law of liberty that mercifully reached us
 - 2. Consequently, we as believers changed by the mercy of Christ should speak up for those that are being poorly treated

So Act

- A. We should not only speak, but we should so act towards those that are unfairly treated
 - 1. To not show mercy in this way is to leave yourself under the condemnation of the Law (vs. 13)
 - a. Faith by itself is dead if it is unaccompanied by acts of mercy towards those in need (vs. 14-16)

What does this look like at Restoration Church?

- A. The church exists to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4.11-12), therefore it should not be understood that each church is suppose to have an organized ministry program that fulfills all of her responsibilities towards the hurting, but it is helpful to identify some things so that we can

collectively pool our resources:

1. For us that is the following:

- a. DC 127, Friendship Terrace, The Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive for the Central Union Mission, The NW Pregnancy Center, The Porch, The Hispanic Church Plant, our Monthly Offering, Haiti Love, Northern Iraq, and Corporate Prayer

Questions

Discussion Starter: What have we been finding that makes the church uniquely compelling to the world?

1. Read James 2. Identify the problem(s) that James is addressing. What is wrong with how they are acting?

(Showing partiality towards the rich mocks the Gospel in that many poor are in the Kingdom, but also Christ Himself became poor for our sake (2 Cor. 8.9). You may want to cross reference the argument in Galatians 2.11-14 as well as Acts 6 and Acts 15. All these instances are early signs of disunity in the church because of partial treatment towards one group over another)

2. What is the “Royal Law” (vs. 8) and how does it fit with the “Law of Liberty” (1.25, and 2.12)? How are we judged under this law of liberty?

(Christ loved His neighbor (us) by mercifully laying His life down for us who was in need. We were ‘poor in spirit’ and therefore He was merciful to become poor so that we might become rich. By doing so He liberated us from the guilt of the Law and made it possible to then so act in keeping with the law to love all our neighbors, not just those that might serve to benefit us)

3. In what ways could they have “so spoken” to this situation and how can we then do the same?

(They could have spoken up for the poor and against those partially treating the rich. In either case they would have been merciful and therefore exuded their faith that they had received the mercy of Christ.

We could speak up against any host of things that are wrong in the world. Be it racial injustices, abortion, unfair treatment of women, etc. That speaking can come via voting, speaking to public officials, teachers, but more often the people that are involved themselves. Either the ones administering the injustices or those that are victims. By doing so we do not earn our salvation, but it reveals that we have received mercy)

4. In what ways could they have “so acted” in this situation and how can we do the same?

(They could have giving up their seats to the poor or they could have rebuked those doing this in public and call them to repentance, etc.

We can get involved in various organizations or get to know those in communities that are marginalized and serve them with the merciful love of Christ. This could be very big and sacrificial things or it could be in very small ways)

5. If these things are non-existent in the life of a confessor of Christ, what does James say of them?

(He tells us that they will not receive mercy in Judgment since they did not exude the fruit of mercy themselves, vs. 13)

6. What makes our Mercy Ministry uniquely compelling as a community of Faith?

(We do not give mercy to earn mercy or to benefit in any other way, including our personal emotional benefits. We simply give mercy because we have received the mercy of Christ. Sharing this message with those we serve is critical when possible. We are infinitely thankful for those that aren't in the church that serve the marginalized and count that part of Gods common grace, however there is special grace that attends the service of the church due to its supernatural fuel)

7. Spend some time sharing stories of encouragement as to how you've seen the church serve the marginalized and how it revealed the mercy of Christ in a special way.

(These stories do not have to be from Restoration Church. They can come from anywhere at any time. Make sure and quiet any comparisons between churches as this does not serve to build the "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4.3. Spend some time in prayer for the various ways the church gathered and scattered are participating in this and thank God)

Accountability question: In what ways are you encouraged or exhorted to show mercy towards those in need?