

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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## *A Faith that Works* *The Epistle of James*

***You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (2:24)***

***“Mercy is the Quality of Every Christian”***

**August 9, 2015**

**Sermon Text:** James 2:13

**Scripture Reading:** Exodus 33:18 – 34: 8

### **Introduction-**

James 2:8-13 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. (9) But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as

transgressors. (10) For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (11) 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 the law. (12) So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. (13) For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

We considered this Scripture last time and saw that James is really speaking of the vital distinction between the Law and the Gospel. The Law is for unrepentant sinners, blasphemers, and hypocrites. It thunders without mercy. If a person is under the Law, if their covenant or relationship with God is defined by the Law, then they stand condemned by the Law. Break one Law and you break the entire Law. Paul says the same:

Galatians 3:10-12 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." (11) Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." (12) But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

James calls the Gospel "the law of liberty." It is the standard by which all who are in Christ will be judged – and really by which all of us *have been* judged. At the cross. In the realm of the gospel, in the community and fellowship of Christ's true people, the Gospel reigns and therefore *so does mercy*. James warns the hypocrite false "Christian" who judges others without mercy, that they are under the Law themselves and will be shown no mercy by Christ on that Day. "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy."

And, as we also mentioned last time, this showing of mercy in the Gospel is no libertine disregard of sin. No, rather it is the practice of love toward a brother or sister in Christ, and even toward the contrite, repentant wicked. But the Gospel, and therefore mercy, is not announced to the hardened heart that continues to defy God. The Law is

the appropriate message to such a person.

I want to emphasize once more, before we move on, how vital it is that we recognize the practice of *Law* and *Gospel*. And one of the best ways to distinguish between the two is this matter of *mercy*.

What is mercy? I think it was R.C. Sproul who put it this way: "*Grace is giving the sinner what he does not deserve. Mercy is not giving the sinner what he does deserve.*" And that is what James is saying here: *Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

***Where Christ is, where His true people are, mercy is the defining quality, not judgment and condemnation.***

Now remember again, this does NOT mean "we must never judge anyone" and turning a blind eye to unrepentant evil. No. Then it is time for the Christian to pronounce the judgment and threatening of the Law. But what mercy does mean is that we demonstrate mercy to in the body of Christ. To one another. We are forgiving of one another. Long-suffering and patient with one another. We are kind and we show empathy to one another.

Let me give you an example, a real one, from the experience of a pastor who went to a new church. Now, I am giving this example because it so clearly illustrates the vital point James is making – that where the Law rules, there is no mercy. And I want each one of us to get this down very clearly in our thinking so that WE will be able to discern Law and Gospel, and be able to identify the wicked who parade as Christians.

This particular example is that of a pastor receiving the merciless evil attacks of the wicked, but I realize that in other cases it is the pastor himself who is the wolf and who shows no mercy to Christ's flock. Counterfeits can be found in the pew and in the pulpit. And as we say, one chief way to identify them is in seeing that they do not practice nor extend *mercy*. They will fake mercy quite often, but you must be wise and see that it is merely an outward show, a whitewashed tomb, a clean outer cup with corruption inside. It is not mercy from the heart.

***One of the chief indicators of a false Christian who is therefore operating under the Law, is a lack of mercy.***

Alright then, here is the true story:

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**Pastor Mike Johnston's Tragic Experience** (From *Pastor Abusers*, by Kent Crockett, 2012)

I was never called to be a politician. I was called to preach the matchless grace of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the Living God placed a burden on me that multitudes of lost and empty people desperately need Jesus. I knew exactly what Paul meant when he wrote, 'woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel.'

I remember being so excited about winning souls and building the church I could think of little else. In fact, I often quoted Hank Aaron who said, 'I still can't believe they pay me to play baseball.' I felt the same way about ministry.

In my naivete, I believed that if I faithfully followed my calling with integrity, the sheep would naturally follow the shepherd. And while most of my flock did joyfully follow my lead, a small group of pastor resisters were also sitting in the pews plotting my demise. Jesus warned us to beware of those who come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matt 7:15). Whenever I read that verse, I always thought it applied to someone else. Little did I realize that they resided inside the church where God had called me, and I was on their menu.

If you have never experienced pastor abuse then you will probably not understand my next statement. *My heart may never be whole again!* Call me a crybaby or whatever you want. But please understand that trying to expunge memories of the misery they caused me and my family has been difficult to say the least. [NOTE: He suffered from PTSD, not “unforgiveness.”] You always loathe what happened to you because it is so personal, unjust and horrifying. Please forgive my candor, but I have only recently found the strength to pray God’s blessing on my persecutors. [NOTE: I would correct him on this. We are not bound to pray for God’s blessing on the wicked as long as they remain unrepentant. We should pray for the sanctions of the Law to come down upon them].

The conflict began a year and a half after I accepted the call to the church and lasted for two grueling years. The church was in a spirit of revival and we were growing dramatically. Yet, as I preached, I noticed that some members’ icy stares penetrated my soul like cold, steel daggers. It became clear to me that these people were angry about the influx of all the new members. God had been blessing our services in every way imaginable and they were losing control. [NOTE: Power and control. Entitlement to power and control. The classic

characteristic mindset of the wicked abuser].

This wasn’t the first time they had intimidated their pastor and it wouldn’t be their last. My predecessor had been fired and the pastor who followed me was also terminated just one year after he was hired. Despite the old guard’s reputation as pastor abusers, I thought they would change if I just kept loving them. They didn’t respond like I had hoped.

**NOTE:** This “loving them” is a fallacy. Such people are not Christians. They are wolves. “Loving” them is seen by them as a weakness. *They are not Christians and the fact that they are devoid of mercy shows that they are not. They are under the Law, apart from Christ, keeping everyone else in bondage. These kind never change. Never.* In our own case here at Christ Reformation Church, over two decades have passed since we had to do battle with these very kinds of people, and some of them even more recently. Where are they today? Repentant? No, they are out in other churches still working their same old ploys of wickedness, all designed to give them power and control. Devoid of mercy.

When they first started taking potshots at me, I wasn’t sure how to react. Their attacks began as minor confrontations. I would humble myself and apologize,

but my efforts to appease them were treated with indifference and contempt. Then I started hearing rumors of secret gatherings, where I was obviously the subject of their conversations.

**NOTE:** I have on more than one occasion, sat in a “church” meeting, along with my wife and *children*, while these merciless kind attacked me and tried to drive me out. *They have no care, no concern, no love, no mercy even for my children and wife who have sit there in a public setting and see their husband and father attacked and be threatened with being put out of their house and left with no income.* Do you see the nature of this evil? James is telling us that these people are not Christians, and the void of mercy in them betrays that fact. And yet most pastors and churches and professing Christians will embrace them, elect them as “Citizens of the Year” in their communities, and pronounced them the finest saints around. *Do not allow yourself to be deceived.*

Business meetings that once were times of thanksgiving and praise suddenly became arenas of conflict. They started opposing ministry suggestions, which they had previously supported. Soon they began making surprise visits to my home with petty lists of ‘concerns.’ One of them kept

showing up unannounced where my wife worked to spy on her.

Their grumblings became more frequent, intense, and widespread. It was as if they were examining me under a microscope, hoping to find something to criticize. Their continual criticisms tied my stomach in knots. I spent many sleepless nights, wondering what I had done to deserve their cruel treatment. Many times I asked myself, *Why hadn't I been warned about this when I was in Bible school?*

**NOTE:** Seminaries and Bible colleges do not teach about *evil*. They do not teach about this wickedness we call *abuse*. Why? For many reasons, one of which is just plain cowardliness. Naiveté is another reason. Unbelief in God’s Word is another. And then there is the fundamental perversion of the gospel that says *people like these abusers are Christians*. They are not. I can prove it:

James 2:13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.
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Do you see it? Do you believe it? These merciless people are going to be judged by Christ, and His standard of judgment of them will be the Law, not the Gospel. They have judged without

mercy and condemned people with the Law...people who are objects of God's mercy in Christ. So by that standard which they have condemned others, *they will be judged and that judgment in that Day will be without mercy*. They will end in hell. And unless we all realize this, we will never understand what is REALLY going on in a case like this pastor faced.

Things were never better for all of us, so you would think everyone would be thrilled, right? Wrong. With so many new people joining, the old guard was losing control of "their" church and was furious at me for being responsible.

**NOTE:** One of Pastor Johnston's problems, which I hope he realizes now, is that he and his church belonged to the Southern Baptist Convention. He speaks of "hundreds of people" coming to Christ and of that church being "among the leaders in baptisms in our state." And that is a formula for the trouble he faced because it puts unsaved, unregenerate people into the visible church. That is where those wicked ones came from.

It culminated unexpectedly during a Wednesday night business meeting. What hurt most was that my children, my wife, and my parents were all there to witness the demolition of someone they loved. I'll never forget the look of

disbelief in the eyes of my family as contrived allegations were fired at me with machine gun rapidity.

I now know what a lynch mob looks like. As I helplessly searched for compassion in the faces of those I had often assisted, I received hate and anger in return. They accused me of lying, but never cited an example. They accused me of stealing, although it was impossible. I never touched an offering and couldn't even sign a check. The viciousness of their allegations impugned my integrity and undermined my effectiveness as a pastor.

**NOTE:** Our elders can identify, as can I and many of you, with all of this. We have searched for compassion (mercy) in the faces of people we have often assisted – and found *none*. And remember, all of this is to drive home James' point: that a chief identifier of the wicked who are only masquerading as a Christian is, *lack of mercy*.

I can't tell you how abandoned I felt as I sat silently with my face buried in my hands and let them attack me – the one whom God called to be their shepherd. They knew that if they could make my life miserable, they could drive me away. They were right. I couldn't put my family through any more of their excruciating torment, so I submitted my resignation.

I had my family to support, yet I had no opportunities for employment, nowhere to go, and no idea what I was going to do the rest of my life. But did any of that bother the ones who forced me out? *No. They were glad I was gone.*”

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To protect our faith and to be able to see these evil things with clarity, *it is vital for us to understand that these kinds of people do not belong to Christ at all.* Did you hear that? Do you believe that? *People who work to divide and destroy and undermine the Lord’s work, people devoid of mercy, are not Christians no matter how convincing of a façade they put on.* And until you realize that, **you will be stuck in neutral in your growth in Christ.** Think of the blow to a person’s faith is done as long as they believe that a *Christian* can behave mercilessly as the very course of their thinking and life? See it?

Here is an example of the very thing we MUST get over in regard to false doctrine we have been so often taught. This came from our blog in a comment yesterday:

*“After reading an evil email from my abuser, a couple who is helping me talked to me about it. The husband asked me, ‘Is he a believer?’ I started to say, “no,” but then I decided to*

*qualify it. I restated it like this, ‘Well, he’s a professing Christian,’ thinking that would ring a bell with them. The husband replied, ‘Oh, that’s good then.’ I said, ‘Well...that doesn’t mean he’s actually a Christian,’ to which the husband then said, ‘If he makes a confession with his mouth...’. I countered this with, ‘Jesus tells us that there will be people who will say to Him at the judgment “Lord, Lord,” and Jesus will say He never knew them.’ The husband and wife looked at me quizzically and stammered with a ‘Yeah, well...’ kind of response. The subject dropped. Sadly I think I can count on one hand how many ‘Christians’ I know who are receptive to the idea that evil masquerades in the church.”*

Let’s consider some final points about these things:

### **1. Mercy Will Keep You from Sinning**

Listen to Joseph:

Genesis 39:7-9 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." (8) But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. (9) He is not greater in

this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

See it? When we sin, we always sin *against*. Against the Law, but also against the Lord and against *people*. Mercy is like love. It enables us to see that our sin hurts and grieves others, and a merciful heart will then turn from that sin. Joseph showed *mercy* because he had been shown mercy.

## 2. The Lord's Character is One of Mercy, and So it Is With His Children

Exodus 34:5-7 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. (6) The LORD passed before him and proclaimed,

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, (7) keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Here we see it again. Law and Gospel. It is the Gospel that is our covenant with Him in Christ and therefore we know Him as a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness....". Therefore as His children, as partakers of His nature, the Christian WILL evidence the same traits of his Father. Not so the children of the devil.

They know God by the Law, as the One who will by no means clear the guilty, who visits iniquity upon them.

We must discern between the two. And one of the surest ways to do so is to look closely at this matter of *mercy*. Those who are merciless, are condemned by the Law. Those who show mercy, demonstrate that they have been shown mercy.

Finally, let's just walk through these verses in James once more quickly so that you see these things yourself in Scripture, not just from me:

James 2:8-13 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. (9) But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. (10) For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for



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all of it. (11) 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 the law. (12) So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. (13) For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

What is James' argument here? --

1. Christians will fulfill the royal law of God, the gospel, by loving one another.

2. It is a sin to show partiality to a rich man over a poor man. It is a failure to show mercy.

3. If this partiality is a person's pattern, then that person is not under the Law of Liberty, but under the Law of Moses and stands condemned by it.

4. Mercilessness means that a person is not in Christ, but under the Law and will be condemned by that Law without mercy one day by Christ.

In other words, the merciless person is not a Christian. He knows nothing of the mercy of Jesus Christ. He despises the Cross, exalts himself, and mercilessly condemns others.