

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)**

**James 2: 8-13**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We will continue to read James chapter 2, and today we will read from verses 8 to 13.

In the first chapter, James reminds the saints to receive the implanted word with meekness, which is able to save our souls. When we believe in Jesus and accept Jesus as the Savior of our lives, we receive a new life from the true word, and our spirit is regenerated. This true word has already been implanted in our spirits, and the way for our souls to be saved is to let this true word grow from our spirits into our souls, and to rule in our souls, so that we no longer follow the desires of the flesh. If our souls can be meek and humble, we can receive the true word from the spirit, and our souls will follow the spirit, naturally living out a good testimony in our bodies.

In James 2:1-13, James emphasizes not showing partiality. He gives a practical example to tell the saints not to favor the rich in fine clothes because God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith. Since James is an elder of the church in Jerusalem and serves the Jews who have been saved, the Jews are familiar with the Old Testament law. James emphasizes not showing partiality from the perspective of the law.

**Verse 8: “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well;”**

On the surface, it seems that James is quoting the Old Testament law. If we look deeper, we find that James is cleverly using the words of Jesus to replace the Old Testament law. The Old Testament law was given by God through Moses, first recorded in Exodus 20:3-7, where God gave the Ten Commandments through

Moses, which are the principles of all the laws. From these Ten Commandments, many other laws and regulations were extended, including the entire book of Leviticus. Among these many laws, the phrase "love your neighbor as yourself" appears in Leviticus 19:18. If you read that passage, it seems to mention loving your neighbor as yourself while explaining not to harbor hatred against your brother. Therefore, this phrase is not particularly emphasized in the Old Testament law.

However, in the New Testament, Jesus says that He came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Therefore, Jesus first issued the constitution of the kingdom of heaven to His disciples, which is recorded in Matthew chapters 5 to 7. Then, in Matthew 22:34-40, a lawyer came to test Jesus and asked which is the greatest commandment among all the laws. Jesus took this opportunity to summarize all the Old Testament laws into two commandments: The first is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." The second is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said that loving God and loving your neighbor is the essence of all the laws and the prophets, and the laws and the prophets represent the entire Old Testament Bible.

Therefore, we see that in the New Testament, Jesus Himself places "love your neighbor as yourself" in a particularly honorable position. James here says, "according to the Scripture," which on the surface seems to refer to the Old Testament Bible, which the Jews were very familiar with. James, however, specifically mentions "love your neighbor as yourself." Although this concept is mentioned in the Old Testament, it does not occupy a particularly important position. James, however, calls it "the royal law." It is evident that James is quoting Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament, which is to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. James is using Jesus' words to replace the Old Testament law and reminds the saints that it is good to obey wholeheartedly.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must grasp this principle so that we do not misunderstand the book of James. James is guiding the Jewish saints, who are familiar with the Old Testament, to view the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament and to exalt Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament. If you do not grasp this principle, you might misunderstand and think that James is exalting the

Old Testament law. In fact, many interpreters have made this mistake and misunderstood James.

**Verse 9: "but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors."**

Because loving your neighbor as yourself is the royal law, if you show partiality based on appearances, you will despise the poor and those of low status. This violates the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, making you guilty of sin, and you will be judged as a transgressor by this commandment.

Jesus summed up the essence of the entire Old Testament as loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. This interpretation transforms the letter of the Old Testament law into the spiritual law of the New Testament, which is not written on tablets of stone but on the tablets of human hearts. This allows people to apply it flexibly and dynamically in every situation of life. It is more practical than the letter of the Old Testament law and requires people not to adhere strictly to the literal text, but to always look within their hearts to see how the Holy Spirit is guiding them. If you violate the law written in your heart, you have also committed sin and will be judged as a transgressor by the law in your heart.

**Verse 10-11: "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law."**

James here again quotes the Old Testament law to illustrate that it is impossible to be justified by God through keeping the law, because if you break just one commandment, you are guilty of breaking all of them. If you stumble at one point, you become a lawbreaker. Here, James specifically mentions the seventh commandment, "Do not commit adultery," and the sixth commandment, "Do not

murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have still violated the law and committed sin. Similarly, in the New Testament, we are to uphold the essence of the law that Jesus presented, which is to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. If you show partiality based on appearances, even if you keep other laws, you are still guilty of sin because you have not kept the entire law.

If anyone criticizes James for exalting the Old Testament law, this argument provides the best evidence. James does not intend for people to keep the Old Testament law because it is impossible to keep it entirely; breaking even one commandment makes you guilty of breaking them all, and you have sinned. James frequently quotes the law because he is ministering to Jewish saints who have received grace and are familiar with the Old Testament law. James uses the Old Testament law as a starting point to capture their attention and then leads them into the light of the New Testament to examine whether they are showing partiality based on appearances. If they stumble in this one area, they have broken all the commandments and committed sin.

**Verse 12: "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty."**

James once again tries to bring the saints to the New Testament by saying, "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." What is the law of liberty? The law of the Old Testament was given to regulate and condemn people. The law of the Old Testament could not bring freedom. Therefore, the law of liberty mentioned here does not refer to the Old Testament law. In Galatians 3:13, it says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." Christ brought the New Covenant and took the curse for us. People were originally under the law and committed sins, suffering the curse of the law. Christ took on our curse and redeemed us from the law. Therefore, the law can no longer condemn us, and we have obtained freedom from the law.

Rom. 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." This law of liberty is the law of life that sets us free from the law of sin and death, giving us freedom. The law of life is also the summary of the

entire Old Testament that Christ made, which is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and to "love your neighbor as yourself." Therefore, the law of life can also be called the law of love, which grants us freedom and is written on the tablets of our hearts to lead us from within, guiding us to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves.

James says that we will be judged by this law, referring to the judgment that will occur when Christ returns. We will all be taken up and judged, as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." The judgment seat of Christ is established for all the saved saints, and this is the first judgment that occurs when Christ returns, as mentioned in 1 Peter 4:17: "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God."

After this judgment, Jesus will descend to judge the world and bind Satan for 1,000 years, bringing about the Millennial Kingdom where Christ will reign. After the Millennial Kingdom, Christ will set up the great white throne to judge the unbelieving dead. James is reminding the saints that in the future, at the judgment seat of Christ, we will all be judged by the law of liberty, or the law of life, or the law of love. Therefore, we must speak and act according to this law of life today. The law of life is written in our hearts to regulate us from within.

In fact, this is also what Paul said in Galatians 5:16: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Here we see that the teachings of James and Paul are entirely consistent. Especially in Galatians 5:13-14, Paul says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Paul, like James, reminds us that we are called to liberty but should not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, we should serve one another in love, for the whole law is fulfilled in this one command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Here we see that Paul and James are in complete agreement. However, Paul emphasizes the positive aspect, encouraging people to serve one another in

love, while James reminds us of the negative aspect: if we do not follow the law of life, the law of love, or the law of liberty, we will be judged.

**Verse 13: "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."**

This is a warning from James. If we do not show mercy to others today, we will face a judgment without mercy when Christ returns. In church life, we must extend a helping hand to those who are in need; we must support those who are weak; and we must forgive those who have offended us. If we can have a merciful heart today, Christ will also judge us with mercy on that day at the judgment seat. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Dear brothers and sisters, the church is the household of God, a place where the saints gather together, and we must love one another, especially those who are not yet mature in their spiritual lives. We should help and support them with a heart of mercy. The more mercy we show today, the more mercy will triumph over judgment at the judgment seat of Christ in that day. What a wonderful promise this is! May the Lord help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. After we have received grace and salvation, You have prepared the church for us, so that we can learn how to love one another and serve each other in God's household. Bless us and help us to have merciful hearts, to be more tolerant and patient in the church, and to learn to support the saints around us with mercy. For mercy triumphs over judgment. The way we show mercy to others today is the way You will show mercy to us on that day. Bless my church and our church life, so that it is filled with brothers and sisters loving one other. May seekers who come among us say, "Truly, God is among you!" Bless my church. I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen.