



1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. 10 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. 12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. (James 2:1-13)

How we love to sit in the highest seat of honor, and how we are disposed to deny that seat to the poor and powerless who enter our doors! This attitude is gross sin in the eyes of the Lord. While it is necessary to judge open sin in the sinner, it is never acceptable to God for us to judge by appearance. The Lord judges by the hidden heart and not the outward appearance. Should we believe that we can judge righteously in areas that the Lord does not by judging the outward appearance? I can assure you that the equal welcome of a pauper and a banker in our churches is the great rarity and not the common fare. Modern churches, focused on filthy lucre rather than faithful service, aggressively seek out those who have deep pockets. They subscribe to referral services whereby the names of doctor, lawyers, and financiers who are locating into the local

community are provided them. They then follow up by elaborate invitations and even visits. Will they do the same for the itinerant laborer or factory worker? I think not. James gives us a wonderful example: 2 "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" I can assure the Reader that this happens every Sunday at churches around the world. In the eyes of God, there is neither rich nor poor. We set ourselves up as judges of the heart when we judge by the outward appearance.

James now issues a resounding admonition for those who harbor these hypocritical inclinations: 5 "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" One Church of the Seven that with which Jesus found no fault was the poor and penurious Church of Smyrna. *"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."* (Rev 2:9) Wouldn't you, friend, rather belong to a loving and even persecuted and poor church than to the pharisaical synagogue of Satan? Wake up! Have you been oppressed by the poor and humble, or has it been men who hunger after wealth and power?

Have you known the Royal Law of Scripture which is that of the Great King? It is the Law of Love on which all other laws hang. 8 "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." How is that law stated? *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* (Matt 22:37-40) That Royal Law begins where every Royal Edict begins – with the Great King. We must love the lord our God first and foremost. The unqualified love we have for God is a mere reciprocation of that love He has for us. And then, we must love everything associated with our God including our neighbors whom He has Made. 9 "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." Do not judge people by the accident of their births or the size of their treasures – it is sin. This sin is not really a single sin in isolation to all else. Murder, theft, adultery, and lying are all outgrowths of this failure to esteem and honor the lives of all people fairly and without distinction as to station in life. A poor Russian peasant mother loves her child with perhaps a greater love than the New York elitist mother who is very concerned about her career.

10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." There is no living person who has only breeched one law of God, for we all have broken as many commandments as can be imagined. But, even if we had only broken one commandment, we would need the justice of God for the breach which is death. God can brood no sin at all in His Heaven. We must be made clean and Holy ere we enter into His Presence. So we all stand under the conviction of sin even if only one. Guilt of one sin is the same as guilt for all. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Romans 6:23) 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."

12 "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."

There are but two approaches to addressing the disposition of a criminal (which we all are): Either Justice, or Grace. With God, Justice will always be done for the penalty MUST be paid. But the penalty HAS been paid freely for us by the Lord Jesus Christ if we will accept Him as our Advocate at the Bar. This is free Grace to us, but it cost our Lord His shame and humiliation at Calvary. Our Liberty is in Christ. We enjoy the status of being considered righteous in the eyes of God for we have the imputed righteousness of Jesus to be our own. We may always enjoy the Mercy and Grace made available to us through His suffering and death. Judged by THAT Law of Liberty, we stand as free citizens of a free Kingdom. We have been pardoned and restored. That is Liberty to the prisoner who Christ has set free.

What are the consequences of a judgmental and condemning disposition? It is the same which shall be delivered to him at the White Throne Judgment. ***13 "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."*** There is an excellent parable in Matthew that describes this principle to the letter. It is that of the servant who owed the king ten thousand talents (a debt approaching the national debt of the United States). He was forgiven the debt after much pleading; yet, he went out and saw a fellow servant who owed him only a hundred pence. He grabbed the man by the neck and demanded his pay, or he would sell the poor man's family into slavery. The king's guards witnessed this and reported to the king. The wretched ingrate was, himself, cast into prison. (Matthew 18:22-35) If we would find mercy with God, we must exercise the same to others. This is particularly important for us who come to the Lord's Table. Forgiveness must be granted to all those who have offended us and seek that forgiveness before we approach the Table of the Lord.