

The Perfect Law of Liberty

First occurrence

'But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does'
(James 1:22-25)

- ✓ **James and Paul were on the same page regarding the gospel. Council of Jerusalem**
- ✓ **James is concerned about works. Not dead works, but good works**
- ✓ **Paul also, see Eph.2:8-10; Titus 2:10-14**

- ✓ **The key to good works for James is the Word of God**
- ✓ **But not reading it as a book of commandments**
- ✓ **Rather, looking into it as in a mirror, beholding our true identity in Christ. Then aligning our lives with our new creation identity**
- ✓ **Paul too. *'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord'* (2 Cor.3:18)**

- ✓ **James refers to this as 'the perfect law of liberty'**
- ✓ **How can law and liberty co-exist? What is the perfect law of liberty?**
- ✓ **First, it is not the law of Moses or a set of commands to be obeyed. When we were born again we were freed from the law. We are dead to it, delivered from it, etc. Gal.5:1. We are no longer married to law, but married to Christ that we may bring forth fruit**
- ✓ **James has just spoken of the new birth '*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*' (James 1:18)**

- ✓ **And then he talks about the believer who looks into the Word of God and forgets who he is (vs 23-24). The Bible is a mirror, reflecting who we are, our new creation identity**
- ✓ **We observe our true selves in the Word. But this can easily be forgotten**
- ✓ **1:25. To 'look into' is a serious investigation. It means to stoop down or bend beside, as in, *'To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into'* (1 Pet.1:12)**

- ✓ **So, we are free from the law of observing rules, and are now under the perfect law of liberty, observing our new creation identity**
- ✓ **Paul refers to this as being under the law to Christ, '*... to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law...*' (1 Cor.9:21)**
- ✓ **This law is liberating. It is variously described as the law of the new covenant written on our hearts; '*The law of faith*' (Rom.3:27); '*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...*' (Rom.8:2); '*The law of Christ...*' (Gal.6:2)**

- ✓ **True freedom is not doing our own thing. That's bondage. Real freedom is not independence but Christ-dependence**
- ✓ **We will either serve sin or righteousness**

'And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God ... Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ... For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness'

(Rom.6:13,16,19)

Second occurrence

'My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?'

(James 2:1-7)

'If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well'

(Jas.2:8)

The law of liberty is characterized by love to all without partiality

This is the *royal law*

We are forever indebted to love one another, without partiality, as Christ has loved us

'...but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 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'

(Jas.2:9-11)

Under the law the Pharisees showed partiality. They strongly condemned some sins, but overlooked other sins which were just as serious

***An example - slander**

***It is one of the 10 commandments:** *"You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother'" (Mk 10:19)*

***It is demonic (Greek *diabolos* often translated as devil and meaning 'accuser')**

***It is listed with other serious sinful behaviour:**
'What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person' (Mark 7:2-23)

***It is committed by those who hate God:** *'...They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters...'*
(Rom.1:29-30)

***Those who practice it are fools:** *'...whoever spreads slander is a fool'* **(Prov.10:18)**

***God takes it very seriously:** *'Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy'*
(Psa.101:5)

Under the law the Jews showed partiality concerning which *commandments* were to be taken seriously...

...and under the royal law of love believers were showing partiality concerning which *people* to love

- ✓ **God does not show partiality**
- ✓ **When we show partiality we project a sense of worth or worthlessness on a person**
- ✓ **Any form of discrimination is contrary to the gospel – race, colour, age, doctrine, morality, cliques, etc.**

'So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment'
(Jas.2:12-13)

We have been saved by mercy to show mercy

Under the perfect law of liberty there is only one law – to love one another as Christ has loved us

***The judgment seat of Christ is for believer's works, not sins.** *'Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 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'* **(2 Cor.5:9-10)**

***The judgment seat of Christ is largely about our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ**

'But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way' **(Rom.14:10-13)**