

We just completed a sermon series on the subject of Faith and specifically as it relates to the laws of God and the context of the weightier matters of the law as Jesus explained in Matthew 23:23. Jesus Christ condemned the Pharisees and told them that they had omitted the weightier matters of the law of judgement, mercy and faith. And since there are so many new people in the Church and since this can be a difficult subject even for those who have been around for some time, I thought that it would be expedient that we follow up this particular series and cover more about the specific subject of *Faith and Works*, touched upon in the book of Romans and what Paul had to say concerning it. It's good that we go back there now and look at that context and look at some of the things James has to say about this subject because unless you really understand God's plan and purpose, unless you understand the subject really well, it is easy to get tripped up. Hopefully by going through this it will be able to help us to be able to certainly have this more deeply imbedded in our minds; to understand exactly what Paul is saying when Paul is talking about this. Paul is talking to a specific group in a specific context and James is addressing it in a totally different context and there are people who actually think there are contradictions in the Bible because of things that James says and because of what Paul says and there are no contradictions. It fits together hand in glove. It's just they don't understand God's plan. They don't understand faith. They don't understand the process of how we're saved. They don't understand grace and those things can cause a great deal of confusion if one does not understand... and it certainly does cause a great deal of confusion in the Protestant world.

Even though we have touched upon some of these sections of scripture at different times in the past, it's been some time since we brought all of them together like this, and since we have so many new people, and it's also a good review for all of us – thought we'd go through this... what it has to say in Romans and in the book of James.

Let's notice first of all a statement made by James in **James chapter 2 verse 24**: it says, **You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.** The series we just completed in the book of Romans made it very clear we are justified and saved through the process of faith, through faith and making it very clear that it is apart from works. You have to understand the context of what Paul is addressing and who he's talking to and what James is addressing because the context is very specific. And if you were just looking at this by itself you might think there is a contradiction.

Let's notice the other verse that some seem to think that this is contradicting: **Romans chapter 3 and verse 27...** so in one place it says **"you see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only."** And now Paul is saying in **verse 27 of chapter 3 of Romans: Where is boasting then?** As we talked about... things that you are able to do by your own ability to keep the law, through your own standard, through your own righteousness. It says, **It's excluded.** There is no boasting. **By what law? of works?** And he said, **No: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.** Again, just a reminder to everyone what we discussed in the previous series; the word 'without' here does not mean that there are no works, it's a word that means 'apart from' and so what Paul is doing when he's discussing this is he is saying, we're looking at faith and you're justified through faith apart from the works, just as Jesus Christ said, He made the comment to the Pharisees about tithing, because this is the subject matter of Matthew 23:23. It's discussing tithing and how the Pharisees tithed meticulously on everything. You get everything very precise, down to the closest cent, which is fine to do, but he's saying you're measurements, the way you do this, you're

meticulous in it but you've omitted something much more important. He says these you should do but do not leave the other undone when he speaks of the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy and faith and he tells them you don't understand. So it is kind of difficult if you don't understand. Same thing with this subject here. There is a process of being justified by faith, looking at faith, apart from looking at the law. It doesn't mean you don't live the law, it doesn't mean you don't do the law, it doesn't mean you don't love your neighbour, it doesn't mean that you refrain from stealing, committing adultery and breaking the Sabbath and all the other things, those things are a given. Just like the New Testament; when you come into the New Testament there's no issue about the Sabbath day, it's a given. That's why there aren't things written about a need to obey the Sabbath – because by the time you get into the New Testament it's just a given, it's a way of life. All the Jewish people understood that when Christ talked to them. There wasn't an issue about the Sabbath day, there never was: when he talked to the Pharisees, the Sadducees or talking about the Holy Days... those things were never an issue – but it is an issue in the Protestant world because they don't get it. They think... well show me in the Bible... don't... *not the Old Testament!* Basically it's the attitude of show me in the New Testament where you're commanded to keep the Sabbath and all I can say is duh! Because they just don't get it. They flow together and so it's a given.

So when you read everything in the New Testament, there are things that are a given...and so it is when you come to this subject. There are just certain things that were a given when Paul was addressing this. So to those who do not understand God's plan or truth concerning His law and the process of salvation through faith... such people do become easily confused with these verses. So, let's read that verse again. **Romans 3:27: Where is boasting then?** Paul is addressing things about how people on their own ability can keep the law... Pharisees as an example. And different ones of the Jews, the Judaism there at that time would come around some of the Gentiles, and harass Paul and cause problems in the Church. And he's making it very clear here that no one has anything to boast about because we all have sin. If you're looking at the two... the law or faith. If you're looking to save yourself by the law only, by how well you can keep God's law, Paul makes it very clear, 'too bad, so sad' because the penalty is death. No one can keep it. So he makes a distinction then that what God has given to us is a process of being saved, justified through faith and that's why we went through that entire series over and over again talking very explicitly in some cases about the story of Abraham and the process whereby we are able to be justified as Abraham was. A man is justified by faith apart from, or separate from, the deeds of the law – if you're looking at the two of how you're being saved. It doesn't mean you're not to keep the law.

Let's go on over to **Galatians chapter 2** and we'll come back to some of these as we go on. I don't want to spend a lot of time in Romans because we've just gone through all this and made it very clear the process of justification is by what God has given to you, by what you believe is why you do what you do, it's a process of believing God – a process of believing that we are justified specifically, even of sin, through Jesus Christ because he paid the penalty for our sins and then that becomes broader as we go into the book of James. But let's notice **Galatians chapter 2** and how Paul was talking to them – again talking to Gentile people, not to the Jews. Anyone else, but to the Jews. **Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law**, so if you're looking at them separately, you can't be justified by how well you keep God's law. There's no room for boasting – over and over again Paul says the same thing again and again and again – because you sin. **Galatians 2:16 – Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ**, and that entails a lot when you understand the story. It's a process that begins with understanding how we are able to have a relationship with God Almighty through Jesus Christ because of being able to be forgiven of sin, because the problem with sin is that God won't be around sin and He won't be in our presence, but we can come into the presence of

God through Jesus Christ, have the power we need of God's life living and dwelling within us so we can be saved from sin, from self.

And so it says, **by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.** Literally, we're able to have a part of the very being, the mind of Jesus Christ, which is the mind of God the Father – in us... to share of that same mind, through the holy spirit, through the spirit God gives to us and so it says, we're **justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.** Paul again and again says you can not be saved by how well you keep the law and you can not be justified by the sacrificial system as we talked about because it didn't take away sin. The problem is with our own nature, that we sin day after day after day.

Let's go over to the book of James and understand now the context of those things that James is talking about. Again, this is just a quick review of what Paul had to say about the law and about faith and making a contrast between the two because that's how Paul addresses it. Paul is making the contrast of how you're saved. Faith or works, and you can't be saved by works because no one can keep the law perfectly – only one did and his father was God Almighty. No one else can keep the law. So you can't be justified in that manner – that's why Paul has gone through again, all the long stories he has that we've gone through in this past series of making it very clear that if you're looking at the two separately, you're only justified through faith but that doesn't do away with the law or the fact that you should keep it and that's what James addresses. James puts the two together and shows that they really do go together. So one is making a contrast – which one are you saved by because the Jews and even people in the Church in times past... there are people in God's Church who by their actions and by how they live their lives were trying to be saved by how well they could keep God's laws and you can't be saved that way. It's not by how good you are, it's not by your standard of righteousness and yet that doesn't take away from the fact that you should strive for righteousness, that you should strive to obey God. They go hand in hand, but you can't be saved without faith. You can't be saved by how well you can keep God's law and that's why I brought up the example of ministers I've heard give sermons about how long can you go without sinning and keep God's law? Can you do it a day? Can you do it a week? Then if you can do it a week, can you do it a month? And if you can do it a month, why can't you do it for a year! And yet that's not how we're saved because the reality is those people sinned everyday if they could understand sin.

James chapter 1 – So James addresses the rest of the story, or the other side of the coin if you will, the other issue about the law and faith and shows that they're combined. They work together. They're not separate, or separated from each other. It just depends on your attitude and how you're going about the process. Whether you're looking to yourself... because what happens when you look to yourself and your ability to keep God's law within the Church – those people I've known in times past who tried to keep, or obey thinking they could do so day after day, week after week, or month after month... they were filled with pride. They were haughty in spirit. They weren't exercising faith. They weren't living by faith in a relationship with God. They were doing it by how well they felt that God felt toward them because of what they were able to do. In other words, their relationship with God was based upon how good they thought they were and our relationship with God is not based upon how good you are. Now if you sin, you have big problems if you don't repent. But there's a difference in measurement that God uses with each and every one of us – thank God.

Let's notice **chapter 1 and verse 16: Do not err**, word means to become deceived or be deceived **my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the**

Father of lights. I marvel at times when we see things that Christ even said when he told others – he made comment that there is not one good as far as human life is concerned but there is only one who is good and that is God. It's making it very clear where good comes from. True good comes from God the Father, **and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom/in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.** There are things that are just absolute with God. **Of His own will He begat us,** in other words, we're begotten, **with the word of truth.** That's a marvellous thing to understand, how we're begotten. What is that process? God begins to draw you to the truth, He begins to reveal to you things that are wrong. He begins to show you things about Easter and Christmas and Sunday – how they are wrong and yet the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians believe in those things... Easter, Christmas and Sunday worship and we go through a process then of beginning to understand the Sabbath day and we have to make choices... am I going to quit working on the Sabbath? Most people have to address that one way or another – or at least change your lifestyle to where you are no longer going to do certain things on the Sabbath anymore; you're not going to football games, you're not going out to baseball games in the large crowds and so forth and you begin to change your attitude and mind and realize this is the day that God teaches me. This is the day that I am to come before God. This is the day that God will feed me and we begin listening to sermons then on the Sabbath day – we're drawn to that through time and we change our lifestyle about how we work. We don't do painting around the house; we don't clean the windows; we do our normal routines around the house as far as eating, making our bed and cleaning ourselves and bathing and those kinds of things but we don't go through the house doing the vacuuming, we don't go and do our wash on that day; it isn't a day to do the normal routine of chores and work around a house that we can do the other six days of the week. But there are other things that we do as part of life itself – like I said, making your bed, cooking your meals, cleaning up yourself; etcetera, etcetera. So there is work involved but not the same kind of work as you would do the rest of the week and so you start changing your life because God brings you to the truth about the Sabbath and we start making those changes. And then finally we're baptized... we finally come to a point of baptism where all of our sins that we have ever committed are gone. They're put into a watery grave and we come up out of that grave and it says you bury the old self, you put that self to death and when you come up out of that water you're to walk in newness of life. You are the beginning now of a new creation – that's how it's described. It is a creation that's ongoing. Normally if you speak about the creation of God, people think about man being created, animals being created, the earth, different things that are on the earth and so forth and we don't realize: No, the greatest of God's creation is right now – it's been going on for 6000 years now – mankind... and how He's bringing mankind into His family. He's starting out small and through a process that is quite methodical – very organized and very beautiful – he has a plan of 7100 years to bring those who'll receive it into His family. That's the greatest creation of God. I marvel at that whenever I talk about it because there's nothing else in creation that ever resisted God. Nothing! He commanded it and it came into being – the universe, the sun, the earth that's here...and whenever He created and made something that's out here in the spirit realm or in the physical realm it came into being just like that. But He can't create, by fiat, quickly, by command, at a moments notice the God family. It's an ongoing creation that takes a lot of time, mainly because of us and because of our resistance to Him and because of the process we have to go through in choosing Him and all those things that are involved in a lifelong process of going from one thing to another – a metamorphao if you will, a transformation as it talks about in Romans 12 that we have to go through in the mind, of change that must take place. It's a beautiful thing, but the problem is that we resist God so God can't give us holy righteous character just by creating man out of the dust of the earth and then putting in him holy righteous character. It doesn't work that way because we have to have free choice – otherwise we would just be robots. God doesn't want robots. He can create robots if He wants them.

Even the angelic realm has free moral agency and are able to make to make free choices in life. So it's a beautiful thing when we go through this process and we think about baptism and then the great thing that takes place – finally – that truth that you have been learning, that God has been drawing you to, that you've been making choices about, the Sabbath, Tithing – because those are generally the first two areas that we have to address that have to do with our life, of what our commitment is toward God. Are we truly starting out with a commitment toward God? ...or are we waffling around and playing games with God, because as long as we're doing that on the big things, then we can't start the refining process of fine tuning us on the smaller things. So, that's the beginning, baptism and shortly after we come up out of the water a minister will lay hands upon us and ask that we be impregnated with God's holy spirit and a life actually begins within us. And what happens when that life is given to you? ...that spirit? You know what that spirit contains? Truth. You're begotten with the word of truth. It's what this is talking about. That's what makes God's word come alive and now that it's growing within you and living and dwelling within you it is a power and within that power it's the revelatory thought, it's the mind of God that's being given to us – that's what's happening. You're receiving something in your mind that you didn't possess before. God brought you to certain knowledge before, but now it begins to dwell within you with power, with the holy spirit and so things about the Sabbath and other things about the truth – we begin to grow and we begin to build. You can only go so far before you're baptized and have hands laid upon you – you can only go so far in understanding and receiving knowledge I should say, because it's not even really understanding very much at that point in time if you want to talk about the definition of understanding – spiritually especially, but to be able to have spiritual insight, to be able to see and to understand that which is spirit – God's mind... a portion of God's mind has to be in your mind – and that happens at baptism though we are very small, and though we be at the very beginning a little dot, just like in a mother's womb and sperm cell that comes together in the egg – very small. A growth begins to take place. Now that happens in 9 months in humans. We can't change in 9 months spiritually though to the degree we need to. There was a time when we thought we could in God's Church. As an example, someone gets baptized and 2 weeks later they get killed in a car wreck like a young 19 year old did down in Houston, Texas in the past. This is when God showed some things to me to let me realize that a newly baptized person wasn't there yet, he hadn't grown in holy righteous character. It was more of a protestant thing – some thinking he's going to be in the first resurrection... how? What had he changed? What had happened in his life? On the contrary, he has to be resurrected later on so he can continue in that process of something changing in his mind because he didn't have it for a long enough period of time to be tried and tested and refined and grow spiritually; because you can't do it in a few weeks, and you can't do it in 9 months – you cannot do it in 9 months time like a human, when you're born – begotten and born at the time of birth. It takes us years to grow and to change – to be tried, to be refined, to be tested. God is not going to allow anyone into His family who has not grown to a point of being proven...and that takes time. You don't grow in that overnight because you have to go through a lot of trials, tests and refining in life and God is moulding you all along the way. Our lives are God's and He moulds and fashions the clay – it's a marvellous thing.

It is a marvellous thing when you think of **verse 18; of His own will He begot us**, we're begotten by Him with the word of truth. God begat us by the word of truth, **that we should be a kind of first fruits of His**, that word creatures means creation in the Greek, **of His creation**, the first fruits and so what's being addressed here in the beginning in scripture has to do with the first fruits – Pentecost, the 144,000. Now everyone else is going to follow suit.

All those who live into the millennium will have the same opportunities and I'll just tell you right now, it's going to be hard for me in the next few weeks to hold back and not talk about the sermons for the Feast of Tabernacles because they're pretty much done at this point. This week I was able to finish

sermon #6. I have one more to go and that's the Last Great Day. It's exciting and just to let you know we're going... God is giving us better understanding this year, more understanding of things we have not known in times past – greater soundness of mind and greater balance. All for a great purpose – because we're almost there... and so God is giving us more so that we can better understand the millennium and what it's going to be about, what it's like, what the purpose of it is and so forth in a greater way than we have in times past and be able to dispel some things that we've had in our minds that don't apply at all to the millennium. And so God is giving us that because we're almost there. We didn't need it in times past. Now we do because there's a new group of people that God is drawing that's going to live on into that age and there are going to be many more drawn that are going to go into that age and they're going to be able to have that knowledge and that understanding that God wants them to have of what really is ahead of them, and how to prepare for some of those things.

Verse 19: Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath: I've given sermons on this in times past to show a part of a process that's talking about this creation, and it's talking about being begotten with the word of truth and the admonition that James is actually giving here has to do with that which is spiritual in our lives. We should be quick to listen to what God tells us, not quick to speak back, or speak out about something until we understand and we should seek to grow in understanding. So he says, **be swift to hear**. That should be our desire, to hear what God has for us. You know, I'm torn apart right now because I see some new people that are beginning to wane out here. Laodicea is starting to set in, I'm sorry... it's sad, I hate to see it, but this is going to work into the Feast as well so people can learn some lessons from the Feast that God wants us to learn... and about the millennium that God wants us to learn. That this way of life, you've got to fight for it all your life, not just for a few months and things don't work out how you want them to work out – you've got to fight for the truth that you know that God has given to you and you've got to fight with all your being. He's not going to just hand it to you without work on your part, without effort on your part, without fighting on your part. Your attitude and spirit toward God has to be that *you want this! You want this!* See? God does not owe this to us. God does not owe it to us to live through what's going to happen before Jesus Christ returns and if you want to be there you've got to fight for it, you've got to want it with all your being! You truly do! So it pains me when I see some young people go by the wayside. God is calling a large percentage of young people, more than any other group and it hurts me when I see some of that happen – people that we have talked to and gotten to know and spent some time with. So when they make choices that are not healthy for them it's like one of our children, that makes choices, decisions and chooses to go away from the trunk of the tree and that hurts. But you can't give this to people. So God says, **be swift to hear**, desire to hear, fight for it with all your being! And he says, **slow to speak**, because the response of human beings often times is we can be quick to speak if we don't like the correction that God gives. A lot of what God gives to us is correction. He gives us correction and a lot of what He gives to us has to do with helping us to become far more balanced than what we were before and that means sometimes getting rid of some of our previous thoughts, wrong thoughts, unbalanced thoughts that weren't really sound and we have to go through a process then for that to happen. But sometimes human nature will resist that. One example is the notion that Jesus Christ eternally existed. Some people just weren't able to get past that, and not understand – No, he didn't eternally exist – he had a beginning. Only one has eternally existed and some people had a hard time with that so they were quick to wrath because they were so right in their own minds.

Going on to **verse 22, But be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.** So what is the word? Well, we just heard a little bit ago, we read what we're begotten with – the word of truth. What is truth? All of God's law; all of God's way of life is the truth. The 50 truths comes from God. And so much of that especially when you look at the first 18 truths, things to do with the Holy

Days, the Sabbath, government, on and on it goes – all of it having to do with the truth and then building upon that more and more as time has gone on, and so that is the word, the truth and we're to do it. We're to live it. When God gives us the truth, that's our desire isn't it? You're not righteous because of that, you're not righteous by how well you do that, but does that mean you shouldn't strive to do it exceptionally well? Not at all, you should strive to do everything exceptionally well. Just don't be lifted up with pride – don't look to yourself of being able to do those things, in essence, by how you can feel better about yourself. Do you understand the difference in that? ...of trying to feel better about yourself by an attitude of maybe I can please God by how well I'm able to do a certain thing. No, we just strive to do what we can do and what we can't do well and where we stumble in sin we repent and we ask God for mercy and we strive to do it better then. That's what repentance is about – trying, striving to change and do things better. That's how we're saved. Still striving to do God's way, trying to live His word, His way of life, zealously so. **But be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.** So as we're given instruction in sermons, as we hear God's way of life, we want to do it, we should strive to do it – to live it. And the admonition here certainly is being given that we don't want to do like the world does. That's what I grew up with, people who went to church on Sunday. I didn't as a whole. I did on occasion, rare occasion. I didn't believe it all. But I knew of different ones; especially those of my friends, when I was in my early college years, who were catholic. They lived the same kind of life I did but somehow thought that if they went to church on Sunday for ever how many minutes that was, that somehow they're all cleaned up. And then they could go right back out and do it again. There was nothing in their minds to change their life and do something different and I just couldn't understand that ritual. And sometimes we have done things like that – people in God's Church have done things like that. They come to Sabbath services and they go to the Holy Days, but they live one way at home and another way at 'church'. Sometimes families can do that. So we have to learn from those examples and those mistakes we have made in the past if we've made them and seek never to make those again because we want to live this way of life – not just to hear it and to go about our way and live our own way of life that we want to live. That is the admonition that James is giving here.

Verse 23: For if you are hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass: Like a mirror in other words. **He beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was.** You go away and you have certain things you can remember about yourself, but it's not the same as when you see someone else and you have their face and image imprinted in your mind. There's a difference between seeing other people and seeing yourself in a mirror and this is what it's talking about. You can't contain it in your mind in the same way. **But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein...** the perfect law of liberty... there's great freedom in God's law. It's an amazing thing to understand that sometimes as people come into the Church from the world they see things about the Sabbath wrongly because there's certain things they don't like – Holy Days... because they can't keep Easter and Christmas and there are certain things they resist and it's like these do's and don'ts to them. They've got do's and don'ts too but they don't understand because they've grown up with that. But they see the Sabbath and to them it is restrictive and if they are told you cannot work on the Sabbath – that's really restrictive because on their Sabbath they can. There's great liberty in God's law, there truly is. There are many ways of doing things within the law of God and it's all beautiful. It's all good. But sometimes as human beings because we want to do something different, we don't see that, and that's what we have to address and repent of because it's wrong. **But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.** In his doing. He's going to be blessed. The closer we are to God, the more we live this way of life, the more our lives are blessed. It's not just because of the grace we receive and the pardon received, the forgiveness of sin, but because of what we're living. We're blessed by what we live. The more in unity and oneness you

are with God, the more blessings there are in life. Your mind becomes sounder in how you think toward others, your ability when you talk about loving others and how you treat others and so forth and all the things we do in life. The more we are in unity and oneness with God's law, not just on the physical part of it in the sense of the 10 commandments but also the spirit of the 10 commandments, the richer life becomes, it truly does. It becomes better and better and better. So we're blessed in our doing that.

...that man is blessed in his doing. If anyone/ any man among you seem to be religious, and doesn't bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Why does it talk in this vein? Because it's showing that when it comes down to God's law and the work that's involved in living this way of life, this is where we stumble. We may be able to do certain things on a physical realm, keep the Sabbath, to go to the Sabbath, but do we really keep the Sabbath, do we really keep it the way God wants us to. Not stealing, not committing adultery and things that have to do with the mind spiritually if we understand.

It goes beyond just the physical aspect of it and so here, it really is getting into the nitty gritty for those that want to live this way of life. What comes out of our mouth? How do we talk? How do we talk around others? When we're around certain people at work – do we talk in a different way than we would around somebody on the Sabbath? Around me as a pastor, a minister? Would you speak differently around me than you would, say, at work? Is your conduct different there than what it would be around me, because in times past I know it's been that way. I've experienced it where people can come to Sabbath services and live one way at Sabbath services but on the job a different way, or their lifestyle at night-time and where they might go and what they might do is different than what it would be if they were around some of God's people. Double standards, and we can't do that. It even becomes more refined because of what we say, what comes out of our mouth, how we talk, what we talk about, how we talk to people. See? Do we talk about people? Some of those kinds of things that really get in the nitty gritty and if we do talk about people... which you know what? We tend to talk about people! I don't know anyone who doesn't talk about people – but how we talk about them becomes important, doesn't it? What we say about them, especially in the brotherhood, within the family of God. How we talk about someone else, whether we tear them down or whether we exercise in our mind and how our conversation's coming across – that we're exercising patience and love and whatever else it might be toward one another in the hope that others will give me time as I seek to give them time. All of us have weaknesses in different areas of life – none of us are perfect. We all have flaws. I have flaws, you have flaws. It's just the way it is, isn't it? So often we can see the weaknesses of someone else, of an area we might be strong in, or stronger and it's so easy to jump on those weaknesses and on that personality and tear them down when that's not how we're supposed to live.

Verse 27 goes on to say: **Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless,** and that word 'visit' doesn't mean a matter of knocking on a door and visiting. It can involve that, it can be a part of that as far as a life is concerned, but it has to do with giving help and assistance, or aid when it's needed, where it's needed. So it's aiding and assisting when it's needed. Not everyone needs help in those areas but some people do. It is showing that in this case here, **the fatherless, the widow** says, **in their affliction,** so it's when they are in their affliction, whatever that affliction is - sometimes immediately after someone becomes a widow, or a widower and the hardship and difficulty that's involved because of a traumatic change in life that sometimes takes many months, sometimes many years to fully deal with; trauma, difficulties; and sometimes those things, especially in societies past – not as much today especially in this country as blessed as we are, but because people didn't have things like insurance and so forth – they didn't have different kinds of government programs to take care of them as we tend to have today. We have a lot to help us that they didn't have in times past. Things were based more around the community and the family – far more than they are today. We can

go back 40 years and we can see how communities, especially when they were smaller were much different and how people would rally around certain things as compared to how they are today. It goes on to say, **and to keep himself unspotted/unstained from the world.** True religion. Keep yourself unstained from the world. That's a task and that's hard to do; it's a battle. You have to keep at it constantly day by day in things you go through because the world out here wants to press in on you, and especially a spirit world out there that wants you to go in a different direction, or to stumble, or to fall. And so it's a very refined thing in the respect that James is talking about and he's talking about works: works of the law, things that just set Protestants off. And they don't understand. And you tell them you mean you can go out here and you can bad mouth your neighbour and tear people down and their reply is "Oh no, you shouldn't do that." Well, don't you understand that's what James is talking about? That's what the spirit of the law is about? It's about relationships and about how you treat each other and usually it comes out in how we speak and how we talk. That's the great revealer of what's in our heart and our mind – it's what comes out of our mouth. *That shows what we have inside! That shows what's inside this head!*

Going on in **chapter 2**, the context doesn't quit, it continues on saying, **My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.** The whole context is the same here because he's truly talking about faith, how we live our lives, what we believe. Do we believe God's law, do we understand that God's law gets down into the very nitty gritty of how we think and what our behaviour is like, because our behaviour comes from our thoughts – how we act and how we live comes out of our thoughts in our mind and he's bringing out how so often it comes out of our mouth and across the tongue in words and words can *hurt* and words can *cut* and they do and that's our life – struggling with those things because what we're struggling with is the mind and God's changing the mind and moulding and fashioning the mind and helping us to learn to think differently and how we think about other people. So, again here... Paul is very much talking about the works of *the law!* Over and over again and he's talking about faith – how you live your life, what you believe. Why you do the things you do, if you believe God, if you believe Jesus Christ, if you believe God is dwelling in you and you are dwelling in God. He is starting out here now saying don't have it with respect of persons, how we esteem some higher than others and look down upon others and put them down and lift up others and why do we have this respect of persons, how do we think in our minds or can we see people evenly in that respect, in the sense of how we treat them. Do we show a greater respect toward one kind of person as opposed to another? Do we show a greater respect toward some person in the Church than we would another person in the Church as far as respect and a willingness to spend time with them and share with them and converse with them and etcetera, etcetera.

For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come also a poor man of vile raiment; Why is James addressing this? Because they had problems in the Church. We've always had problems in the Church because we are problems. Human beings are problems because we have selfish carnal human nature and we bring our problems with us into the Church but the good news is that we can change and the good news is that over time we do make changes as a whole, if we're responding to God – we make changes – we grow and if we're not willing to do that and we hurt others and that gets out of control and we go in the wrong direction then in time we just kind of go by the wayside and we'll be drawn at some other time, or worked with at another time if we don't go and commit the unpardonable sin. And so it's saying here be careful how you judge. Be careful how you show respect to some over others because he's saying this is not right to do. We should have the same love toward each other, without respect of persons, truly. You are going to get to know some better than others, you're going to draw closer to some because that's just a part of life too. There are going to be certain friendships that happen – that's natural – and that's fine. It's not talking about that.

Because of the way we are and because of how we click with certain personalities and so forth, you draw closer to some than to others and that's good. And then as we grow more and more we learn to click more and more with more and more, we learn to change, we learn to appreciate the differences in others more and we begin to expand our thinking and we're not as narrow in our thinking and we've actually become more Godlike – like God, because none of that is in God. Mr. Armstrong gave a good example of a type of unselfish love that humans can have without God's spirit and that is a mother's or father's love to their own child. He said that it is not God's love though because a mother or a father – doesn't matter who it is, he used a mother because men don't show that kind of love as a whole – we're a lot harder to deal with. A woman is looked upon as being far more tender in love when it comes to care and concern for her own child but she will not have the same love toward other children that are not hers. And we don't as human beings, but God does to all. Amazing!

Verse 3: And you have respect to him that wears the fine clothing, and say unto him, so sometimes people do have respect to someone because they dress better, because how they dress perhaps and you think – how frivolous, how sick is that? That because of how someone looks, how they're dressed, what they wear, how much they own, what their riches are, or lack of it... that we would judge people accordingly? That truly is sick in the mind, but human beings think that way. It's in society all around us. So it says, **if you have respect to him that wears the fine clothing, and say to him, Sit you here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand you there, or sit under my footstool:** because people have treated people like that. They will be friendly to them but not too friendly – too bad though because we should be able to be friendly to all.

Says, **are you not then partial.** It's showing that when it comes to God's law and God's way of life that there are certain things that aren't acceptable and that the law and living God's way of life and the word of truth that dwells within us is much more than just the outside of the 10 commandments, the outer part that we see as far as that which is physical part of life, but it goes much, much deeper because it is very spiritual in nature. And so it makes the comment here, **Are you not then partial in yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts?** Don't we understand our thinking is wrong and our thoughts are wrong in how we judge? We went through some of the things about the weightier matters of the law... judgement and how we judge. This is included in here, how we judge others. **Listen, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith,** I love that! because it shows those with whom God works and those with whom God doesn't work because God cannot work with and will not work with someone who is lifted up in pride because until they're humbled, until they're brought to humility they can't be worked with. So someone who is of a teachable spirit, poor in spirit, is talking about someone who is of a humble spirit and teachable spirit – someone who isn't lifted up with pride and self importance because he's addressing things here about self-importance, someone who will judge something in an improper way, wanting to be around certain kinds of people and not others because they see themselves in a certain light of what they're like – what they think they're like and they lift themselves up. Incredible. And so he's just talking about normal problems of human beings and the world and sometimes then with us because we're human beings and we have problems and we don't change just because we came into the Church. But we start making changes.

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not, listen... has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them who love him? There's a process that begins here that God will work with them and work with each one of us, **But you have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgement seat?** So James is addressing something here, that at times Mr. Armstrong has had to address as well as myself in different areas at different times and different situations because of something that may be happening within a

congregation and today we're so small and so scattered out that we don't have as much mixing to take place. And you know what that does? Because we're not with each other more often in more activities – because larger congregations, when we used to have 400,500, 600 people in an area people were able to get together more in socials and social activities and you know what that did? The more people are with each other, you know what that does? Brings up problems. Because we're human beings and the more you mix together some problems of jealousy, envy, someone said something, someone did something to somebody else because they're meeting more often together. We don't meet together as often so we don't have the same kinds of things that are happening as far as congregations are concerned, but we still have the same nature –human nature that we have to deal with and it's in the world and families, so we still have to fight these things from time to time and sometimes some of these things get out of control in our own lives and we have to bring them back into control.

In essence it is saying, sometimes people have looked down upon the poor and the poor of spirit, those who are of a humble, teachable spirit and so he's reminding them – don't you understand what the world is like and you are not to be like the world. **Do not they blaspheme the worthy name by which you are called, if you fulfil the royal law.** The law – God's law. **If you fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well:** so it's talking about works of the law because this is the law and what you do and how you do it and whether you do it or not and so he's saying here **if you're going to fulfill the royal law according to scripture, you shall love your neighbour as yourself** you do well, and that's something that human beings have to work for, and you have to have God's spirit in you because you can't do this in the world. If anybody thinks they're out here loving others like they love themselves they're nuttier than a fruitcake because we love ourselves so much, we truly do. It's like when you see these things when somebody's in a corner and you see these arms in the back and it looks like somebody's in love with themselves – well that's the way we are as human beings. We love ourselves, and that's the whole problem. And so to be able to love someone like we love ourselves – that's quite a task, it's something that we have to have God's help in – to learn to love others like we love ourselves. **But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin,** so God says if we're not learning how to do that, if we're not learning how to get rid of the wrong ways of how we judge other people and how we treat other people, if we're not growing in love he says, we commit sin, **and are convicted of the law as transgressors.** It gets back to the same thing that John talks about so often, especially in the book of 1 John. A failure to love someone; if we know how to love someone and we fail to love them – you know what God says? There's no middle ground. Either you love or you hate – either you love or you murder! That's the example that's given by John. John makes a distinction in how we treat others in our relationships with others that if we know how to love someone, if there is something we know we can do and say to someone to make something right as an example; to say I'm sorry; because that's love. If you've done something wrong and you have the ability to try to make something right in a relationship and you fail to do it – that's sin, and it's hatred and God calls it murder. A failure to love someone is like murder spiritually, and we hurt ourselves and we don't realize we do that, and so sometimes just the ability to say, "I'm sorry" is a big thing spiritually; and we don't understand that because we justify ourselves through other means.

Going on...**For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.** The point being is it doesn't matter what we do, that's why we have so many sins in our life that we have to be forgiven of day in and day out and we have to go before God and pray for help to change, to think differently, to be different when we've said things or thought things that are wrong and we ask God for help in those things. And so he says, even though, **if you are able to keep the whole law and you offend in one point/you stumble in one point,** you sin in one area, you have sinned and, **you are guilty of all...** you know it's an amazing thing when you start thinking about various laws of God, and if you

think about breaking one and you look at the spirit of it, you begin to see other laws that you've broken as well all the way up the line. Starting with the first one. Now the Sabbath, that's a little bit different, but if you even understand God's plan in 6000 years, 7000 years and so forth – even that. So spiritually we break God's law, period, and it affects all of God's law.

For he that said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not kill. But if you commit no adultery, yet you kill, you become a transgressor of the law. I marvel at scriptures like this. James, as an example, is giving this because there are people out here that look at something like this and say, I never kill anybody and they don't understand the way God uses this in the Bible, throughout the Bible and the way John uses it as well, just like I talked about a moment ago. If you fail to love someone then we have committed murder, we've killed someone, that's the spirit, that's the attitude – because there are only two directions to go: toward God or away from God. There's no middle ground, there's no straddling the fence, and so going on here it says... **So speak you, and so do, as they who shall be judged by the law of liberty.** So, we are judged by what we do. We are judged by God's law, but we are justified by faith. But that faith means that you are living God's way of life – you're striving to live it, but you know you stumble and you know you have the ability and blessing of being able to repent of it when you do stumble and sin, but the attitude of mind is one of striving to keep God's way of life, of keeping God's laws and that's what James addresses here, in the very refined area's of our life – even what comes out of our mouth; and what comes across our tongue about someone else and what we say about someone else. That judges us; truly does, because it can determine whether God's going to continue to dwell in you. And you're only justified if God continues to dwell in you! Do we understand? If you're cut off from the flow of God's spirit because of sin, and we haven't repented of some sin in our life, or sins in our life and we continue to tolerate or allow them without repentance and without striving to fight against them – God will not stay in us; Jesus Christ will not continue in us. We're cut off from the flow of God's spirit and we cannot be justified then, by Christ dwelling in us – it's an awesome thing to understand, the balance there and the soundness of mind of what is being spoken of. We're justified by faith and that faith includes the life of Christ, the fact that we can be forgiven of sin. Why and how? Because he dwells in you, but the moment that stops you're not justified by that means anymore and that always has to do with sin, unrepentant sin, unforgiven sin. See? Awesome thing to understand; the balance in these things and what God's word is all about.

Verse 13: for he shall have judgement without mercy, who has shown no mercy; and mercy rejoices against judgement. So even this factor again about mercy and how we think toward others and how God deals with us. **What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith, and doesn't have works? Can faith save him?** So now he brings up the complete story of something that Paul's addressing differently because he's addressing them by themselves – apart from each other, that you can not be saved by the one by itself. You can't be saved by how well you keep God's law. You are saved by faith, but James brings into it that if you're living by faith you're seeking to keep God's law – because the only way to have God dwell in you and Christ dwell in you is to live in this fashion, live in this manner. So again, **What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and doesn't have works?** If you're not living this way of life, if you're not keeping the Sabbath, if you're not tithing, if you're not doing the most basic of things that we generally look at because we generally look at those kinds of things first in our lives. Say I'm living by faith, I'm justified by faith and you don't have those works... because that's kind of the way of the world, isn't it? The world of traditional Christianity – that's kind of the concept they have, that they're saved by faith without the works. They don't have to keep the Sabbath. They feel the Sabbath has been done away with. They don't have to do other things and they can go and eat this little wafer on Sunday and drink wine. They call it communion, this thing

they mixed up with the Passover. They do that on a Sunday and somehow they can go away from there and that's living by faith... not hardly!

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; If we knew that someone had need, and we don't do anything to reach out to them, to help them, a brother or a sister, and our attitude of mind is just passing them by and we don't do anything or want to do anything for them. We know that they're going through a difficult time of some sort – whatever that might be; **And one of you say, Depart in peace,** so in other words, you're close and you're able to know this – you are their neighbour, you are by them, you are close to them, whatever it might be and yet there's nothing there as far as any kind of responsibility then to talk to them, even if it's a small thing that can be done – an attitude of mind. I want to mention there's a flip side of that as well. There are some times that people get into trouble and you don't help them and that's love. You realize there are times that God doesn't intervene for us and that's His love toward us. Do you realize there are times a parent doesn't answer and give yes to a child, or help them out in a particular matter and that is a matter of love? So you have to weigh those things. It's kind of like this thing we've known in times past in the Church... I'll drive this one home as an example – 2nd Tithe. Let's say it's the Feast of Tabernacles and times past people are going to the Feast and someone doesn't have the means to go, or something happened, their car broke down and that's going to prevent them from going and you seek to help them. That's a good thing, you should strive to help them. But sometimes in the Church you can actually end up hurting someone in that situation – so you have to know them. You don't always know what's going on in somebody's life, see? And the reality is you have to judge some of those matters as to when you give help and when you don't give help. That's why as a whole, within the Church, excess second tithe has always been sent to the Church and then that's administered to people in the Church who need the help. I'll give you an example: if someone's not tithing... you know what happens? They don't get 2nd Tithe help. If someone's having some other kind of difficult problem, and so forth and others don't know about it... because we don't broadcast things, but if something's happening, sometimes it's not good to help someone else and then sometimes it is. So you have to judge matters just like you would a child you love, see? And so there's times that you can help people and it's good and it's healthy and sometimes it's hurtful and harmful and you have to learn how to judge those things. But as a whole, again here, this is talking about a situation where someone has the need and you know it but you're not willing to step in and help out and you should.

What does it profit if you just tell them, hope it all works out for you and have a good day. Says, **Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.** So he says the same sort of thing here. If you say that you have faith and you don't have any works – the one being by itself, he says it's dead. It has no life in it. If you're not living this way of life, faith doesn't mean a thing. **Yes, a man may say, you have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.** Isn't that a marvellous thing? Something the protestant world doesn't understand – do you know what their faith is? ...when it comes to things like what we call the Sabbath? There are those who do and don't do certain things on Sunday because that is their faith and they have works because they will do certain things on that day and not on the 7th day. They will do it on the 1st day of the week and they don't understand the contradiction in terms sometimes there – that the reality is they are living by a faith. They keep Christmas, they observe Christmas – that's their faith and that's their works, but they see you going to the Feast of Tabernacles, taking off that time, and that blows their mind – that you should have those kinds of works. You're trying to save yourself by what you're doing. No, we're just obeying God because faith and works go together. True faith in what you believe in the truth, you're going to live it then. That's what it's all about. Faith is about what you believe. What God gives you to believe – the truth you believe and then you choose to live it then, you want to live it. It's just that you

can't be save by the one – by how well you do it because we all sin... but they go together and that's what James is addressing here. Faith and works go hand in hand and you're justified then by the faith.

You believe that there is one God; you do well: the demons also believe, and tremble. Isn't that amazing? They believe there's one God! They understand that. They know there's one eternal God and there are times they tremble, they tremble before things that God has to say. I'll just tell you right now, this is not a happy time for them. This isn't a time that you can call them happy campers because they can't camp out too much longer – see? They are under 3 years now... their camping out for millions of years is just about to come to a close – whatever how many millions upon millions of years they've had to exist out here and to do the things they have within God's creation. And upon mankind for the last 6000 years – that's about over with...and so they're not to happy about that. Their time is about to come to an end. Satan's not too happy... his hour is about up as well. And so it says, they believe but they don't change their life, do they? See? Just because you believe something and know something is true doesn't mean you're going to live it and do it, you know? There are some people out here who have made choices and they know what the truth is. I've known of people who have left this group knowing full well the truth, but because they want something else – perhaps someone else – they'll leave the truth – knowing full well what they're doing. It's an amazing thing – like how can that be possible? Choices, choices, choices.

But will you, O vain man/will you know, O vain man that faith without works is dead? How can we say we have the faith of the truth that comes through Jesus Christ and how he is able to live and dwell within us if we're not seeking to live it and do it? **Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?** Amazing! That's why I love the book of Hebrews, when it goes through and talks about some of those things – it even talks about things that go with the law but even beyond that. Here's Abraham and what he believed and here he's going to offer up his own son knowing full well that God has the power to resurrect him. This is how Abraham thought. The power of life and death is in God's hands and so if he does this thing, God will take care of it. He was given a promise that's going to come through his son Isaac and he believes it's going to be fulfilled. He still believed God in those things. There are things we live by faith in. There are some big things we live by faith in right now. Because of where we believe that we are and we keep going forward and doing what we're doing because of what we believe. You're not the lone ranger. This has happened generation after generation after generation to God's people who have lived by faith in things they have gone through... at different times and trials in different stages of life. Truly... awesome to understand, especially some of the examples when you go through the book of Hebrews and you read certain things that people were told to do and if they did it. And that's even above and beyond the law, if you will, the 10 commandments. They did it because they believed God and so that reflected their faith, that reflected what they believed.

See then how that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? It's an amazing thing to understand too, how we actually grow stronger in faith. We believe God, and we keep fighting, we keep moving forward and in that process you become a stronger person – you become bolder through time because there are going to be obstacles along the way when you're pushing forward in faith – when you're living this way of life and you seek to do everything that God gives you... yes in the law, in this way of life, in what you do on the job, by every time you take a stand concerning the Holy Days, every time people out here have lost a job because of the Sabbath. Some people have lost more than one job over the Sabbath. There are people out here who've lost jobs over the Holy Days, and you just keep doing what is right and you keep moving forward and every time you've done that you have become stronger. There's more character that God has moulded and fashioned in your

being, in your mind – something that He can't give you except you go through that – and so you walk forward by faith and you keep doing what you know you must because you know it's true and right. Regardless of the obstacles and of people telling you no, you shouldn't do this... whether it be family, or friends, or your boss: when it comes down to the bottom line you obey God first. It doesn't matter what your boss thinks, it doesn't matter what the rest think. You wish they would think differently; you wish your family could think differently and share with you in what you believe, but you can't give this to them so you have to do what is right and you have to put God first and that's walking by faith. But when you stumble, when you give in, you hurt your mind. What an incredible thing to understand. When you come to a certain point and you stumble... I'll give an example. I think of the 50th Truth, because that was a strong one for the Church to learn from. I think of the 50th Truth and then I begin to hear repercussions coming back before I had even given the sermon. God initially showed me that the 50th Truth would be given on Trumpets but it was given a few months later after I received it. It was given in June. But even before June, some of this murmuring started coming out in people's lives. That's why James says to be slow to speak, quick to listen. Wait! Wait and then listen. How can you act upon something you haven't heard yet, and yet people, because of the emotion and then finally even some *wrath*, anger began to come out. What it does to faith is not good. What it does to the mind is not good –when we resist God, when we fight against God and we don't live by what God is giving to us. We're all at different stages. But I think... by this time shouldn't we know deeply how God works and what God is doing? Mr. Armstrong... we had 18 truths we could look at and be deeply moved and inspired by and look at those and all the others that went with it as well and see powerfully where God is working. And yet God has given us even more now, and yet sometimes people have tripped and stumbled along the way and when that happens we have some battles and you have to get back up and you have to keep fighting and moving forward. But faith is strengthened every time you go through one of those battles and you come through it successfully. And when you don't go through it successfully you know what happens? You're going to have to live it again. Somewhere along the line, something is going to happen where you're going to be exposed to it again. It's like tithing. Until you are convicted that every 10th goes to God... and if you fudge on it a bill comes along, some pressure, something unplanned and it *will* come along if that's a battle – it's going to happen. That somehow you have to have that 10th for something else, or you're going to hold on to it for a little longer, or whatever and when you do that, you know what happens in the mind? You hurt your mind because the commitment to obedience isn't there with God. Living by faith isn't fully there because faith and obedience go together. And so until a person comes to a point where that is set and they are not going to be persuaded in any other direction... because you know what? When it's set and when you're deeply convicted of it and nothing on this earth is going to make you change on that... you have some very strong character in that area of your life don't you? You're going to do what you do until the day you die – because you see that's what it is, your life is God's. Your life, you give it to God and whatever trials, whatever hardships, whatever difficulties you have, it's a part of the struggle; it's a part of the battle, it's a part of the moulding and fashioning that's taking place with your mind and that's richer, that's more important... See, that's the important thing that God is dealing with there, because it's the mind that's going to come through all this. Your body and you're physical life isn't and you want to have a life that continues on.

Anyway... sermon after sermon in that. Of how we think and what we do and sometimes we don't realize that if we stumble in a particular trial in life, we are destined to repeat it. You have to go through it until it's set, until that part of your character is set. And we battle with things as human beings. Some things we may have to battle until the day we die, but your character is set because you keep battling it. The problem is when people gone through something in life and they quit the battle – they quit fighting. How many people I know, that have quit fighting – just gave up the battle. That's not an answer. Where is the character in that? What character can God mould and fashion if you give up the fight? But there's

character in continuing in the fight – even if you fall down flat on your face. Isn't that the way it is – in war, in battles? You can look at a physical war and battle and see you've got to keep moving forward, but if you retreat, you give up, you surrender... and that's it, the enemy then wins. But in a war you've got to keep moving forward until you can't move forward anymore. But you don't retreat, you don't go backward. And that's what this way of life is like. You keep fighting, you keep moving forward and you never give up. And there's character that's moulded and fashioned in a person because of that – there truly is – in your mind and how you think, in your being – that's precious to God. It's your mind that's precious and what God is building within you, creating within you in your thinking. It's a beautiful thing. Sometimes we don't realize how important it is and how important it is the stands we take. That's why so many of us have been tested in the stand we've taken. All of you who've been around for some time – all of you who have come from Worldwide, all of you who have a past, all of you who are baptized before the apostasy – up to the time of the apostasy... you've seen battle after battle after battle. You have waged battle, after battle, after battle. There are things that as you continue to go forward that the character in you has become stronger and stronger through time and it's because of those battles and because you kept fighting them that you are where you are today – and that God has prepared something within you that's going to be used in the future in a greater way – truly.

Verse 23: And the scripture was fulfilled which said, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: he believed God, and he was called Friend of God. What a beautiful thing – to be called a friend of God; to have that kind of a relationship with God; that we're able to call Him father... and to have that, I don't know how you describe it... how can you describe something that you live – that relationship with the Great God of the universe that that relationship that you have when you go into your closet alone to pray. I don't mean you have to get into your closet, but I'm using that example. When your prayers are before God and you're alone with God and that which endears you to God – His law, His truth, His blessings that are in your life, all the things that you look at and you realize how richly blessed you are in life and you see that bond that's there – that relationship that's there and you're able to cry out Abba Father... Father... you know, in your life, in the battles you go through and that bond that's been developed through time and the love that you know God has for you, toward you and shares with you and gives to you. That's why I think about David often being a friend of God and how David was a man after God's own heart. A willingness to continue to fight and move forward. To get up every time and continue to fight, repent, keep moving forward. Drawing closer to God – seeking God – wanting God – crying out for God. That's what our life consists of, truly does and character is developed all along that course of life.

Verse 24: you see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. So, again, that verse that with an understanding of what James is talking about is a different context of what Paul is talking about because Paul is making a distinction; apart from works. That if you look at works by itself, you can't be saved by it, you are saved through faith – that's the process; you're justified through faith, by that belief and then James brings it home because they're both dealing with 2 different peoples, 2 different situations and contexts and James makes it very clear – because of what you believe you're going to live a certain way, you're going to do certain things and so he makes it very clear here that; indeed, by works a man is justified and not by faith only. They go hand in hand. But you don't separate them and strive to be saved by the one over the other – speaking of works and try to feel better about yourself, or somehow better about your relationship... or somehow that by praying so much in a day, or fasting so often that somehow God is going to feel better toward you. That is why certain ones fasted twice in a week and they considered themselves... you know what happens? Pride – more righteous than the others who didn't fast twice a week – oh, they're better people, I don't fast twice a week, I have a hard time fasting twice a year! And so the one that fasted twice a week – you've got to be a

righteous person. And sometimes people think that way and wrongly so. People in the Church sometimes have thought that way about someone else – that they are so much closer to God than me and you think... oh if you only knew. It's because they're so lifted up with pride and haughtiness about themselves and their own relationship and their own ability that they're trying to be saved by how well they do things and not by the method God gave – not because of what they believe and see and the justification that God gives to them then through faith.

See, it's a good thing to know what we are. Not to kid ourselves. I know what I am. I know who I am. I know my weaknesses, not as well as God, thank God, because I couldn't keep fighting – but He lets me see enough that I know what I am, I know who I am. That's the whole thing – if we don't understand what we are – like Paul said, “o wretched man that I am,” if we can't see that part about us and we're trying to be saved by or we're trying to have this relationship with God by how well we feel about ourselves and we think, well, if I feel better about fasting more often and praying more often then God must feel better toward me too. It's this protestant thing that people get in their hearts and minds and it's not what it's about. The reality of life is we have battles and we're very carnal and we have a lot of carnal selfish human nature. We have a lot of weaknesses and as long as we continue to repent God forgives us of all those sins and He saves us because of what we believe – because we keep going forward. It is really a beautiful thing.

So, You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? She wasn't even keeping the Sabbath. Isn't that amazing? There were things about God's law that she didn't yet understand, but she believed that God's people were coming, she believed the stories she'd heard about the people out there wandering around and she showed respect to God. And because of an attitude of mind that she had, which I can't fully comprehend being in that kind of environment and what it must have been like; hearing the stories that came out of Egypt of the Pharaoh that was destroyed and the armies that were destroyed and hear these stories that had travelled through that part of the world – because they travelled through that part of the world. And these millions of people out there in the desert and this God that people had heard about and things that had happened – and now they're coming up to their neck of the woods?! This is not good news, seeing millions of people coming up knocking on your door if you happen to be living in Jericho and some other places in that region! But she had an attitude of mind, a willingness to protect them, a willingness to let them down in secret and to let them escape in secret and so forth and because of that... what an awesome thing – the honour that God gave through her. The lineage that came from her and we speak about Jesus Christ. Incredible to understand. And so it's a matter of believing God, to whatever portion you've been given the ability to see and to believe and then you do it because of that – you're actions reflect then what you believe, it reflects what's in your mind. Saved through faith but your actions reflect what your faith is.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. Again, it's the balance in the story. It's not a difficult thing what Paul has to say in Romans and what James has to say here, but I've known many people in the Church who have problems with these things and being able to see the difference and the balance in what's being addressed and it really shouldn't be that way. It should be pretty basic and pretty simple to understand.

You can read on because he gets into the nitty gritty again, about faith and for us what it means in the Church. The ability to bridle the tongue and how we talk about things and this is a finer part of God's

law. So how do we live, how do we strive to live, are we living by faith and learning to control the tongue? If we live by faith indeed we are.

Let's go over to **Ephesians chapter 2** because now we're going back to Paul speaking. When we go back to read something that Paul has said, it should be very clear that what he's talking about is being able to understand the whole story about works and faith and the balance that's between them. I've chosen this set of scriptures here because it's a beautiful area that shows some of this process. **Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 1:** a part of what we've already talked about in James and the process of begetting and the things that take place in our mind and in our being, but in **Ephesians chapter 2** it says, **And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;** so again, how are sins measured? Breaking the law – see? We were dead because of sins, because of transgression of God's law, so His law is there, it exists and we're dead because of that until God brings us to a point of being able to be forgiven of them. **Wherein in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,** selfish, filled with pride; lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes is what we are; and yet we walk solely that way... **the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation.** Conduct is what the word means. It comes out oftentimes in our conversation that's why it's translated this way oftentimes in English from Greek, but it has to do with our conduct, **Among whom also we had our conduct in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.** The children of wrath, and that word is always used as a matter of something of God's punishment to those who won't repent; of those who won't live His way of life. It's the wrath of God because there is judgement. Everyone has to answer for what they've chosen to live by and what they've chosen to do and so again, a picture here that Paul is making as he's talking to the Ephesians... that fits all of us unless we grew up in the Church and even if we grew up in the Church the reality is that people go through stages in their life, in their teen years as a whole... I haven't known a teen candidly that hasn't gone through this! Just because you grow up in the Church doesn't mean you don't have some difficulties and battles in this world. Maybe I know one person that was a teen that didn't go through all that, but anyway, as a whole, there are battles that people have and rubbing shoulders sometimes then with the world and things in the world and we have to make choices. I've known of some people in the Church who have come out of the world and they have such a struggle leaving the world that often times the desire to go back is there and live the lifestyle of the world. Sometimes that involved misuse of alcohol and misuse of music and so forth. A lifestyle and a way of thinking that is not healthy for God's people. And those are powerful things. Music. How you use it. To what degree. How much? Where is the balance? And those are things you have to struggle with in your mind and your life and your relationship with God. Not saying you can't listen to music at all. I listen to music when it's in a restaurant or someplace else – sometimes I wish I could turn it off but... again here, when it starts affecting your lifestyle and how you think, you have to be careful.

I came out of a particular lifestyle where I had to leave it totally for a time. I had to get away from it because I knew it affected my thinking and drew me toward a lifestyle. There are certain things that are mixed in together in a lifestyle of how people live and the misuse of the mind and of life. That's why there are lifestyles – when you look at certain cultures out here... I don't care whether it be those who smoke pot... it's a culture – it's a thinking and if you don't understand that; if you've had anything to do with that, you run away from that as fast as you can because that's a strong pull in this world. Today, drugs out here are so common. It is so common for people to have access to them on the jobsite and people you would never think of – and it's their lifestyle! And it affects conduct then, it usually goes along with a lifestyle that will have misuse of sex with adultery or fornication... and people get caught up in things like that – that's what happens on the job or after work, going out to a place, a certain kind

of environment, a certain kind of dance or whatever and it's a sick, sick world that pulls people away from what is healthy and what is good and what is right. So sometimes it's good for people to measure themselves and see what they're doing and how they're doing it. That is why a few Feasts ago I had to address some things about this – of the use of alcohol. Because sometimes we bring some of these things into the Church, into the environment of the Church. And for anyone to think that they can get into a car if you had too much alcohol?! It shows a total lack of love toward other human beings on the highways. That's one of our greatest problems out here. And people texting as they go down the highways, some of the stupid things human beings do. The car wrecks they're finding out about now, people losing their lives over things like that. What a sick thing. But we all think it would never happen to me. I hope none of us are doing stupid, dumb things like that because you're living in sin if you do it... you truly are, because you don't have concern for other people's lives because you think it won't happen to you – that you can stray across a median, a line, or force someone off of a highway and kill them. Things can happen that fast in this world with the kinds of things we drive out here – they truly do. We live in a sick world. Anyway, sorry I got off on that subject, but I tell you, we have so misused technology. Mankind has, to mans hurt. We live in a sick, sick, filthy world. So glad this is about over because we're going to start learning how to do these things right.

So it talks about those that we rub shoulders with in our conduct, **fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy,** because of His plan, because He's going to call everyone in time. Not everyone's going to respond, not everyone is going to choose God, but everyone is going to have the opportunity at some point. In the last 6000 years it has been a very few throughout history, but now we're getting into a stage where it's going to be that everyone is going to have that same opportunity during the millennium and the Great White Throne. Everyone is going to have the opportunity to choose God's way of life – to have their mind opened up to see the truth. God is rich in mercy, because of His love toward us, He knows what we are as human beings and He's going to offer His plan to save us out of this – and it's an amazing thing that we have to live in this first before we can get to that. Because we have choices to make along the way and it's through those choices that character can be developed and we can become a part of the God family. **But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins,** that is the way all human beings are until they're brought to a point of baptism; you're dead in sins. Now you can be in a special situation as far as the way God sees you, sanctified because of your parents, or because of a mate, so that God will have dealings with you and will work with you and give you opportunity for various things and give you a kind of protection if you will, a type of grace that others in the world don't have around you – opportunity. And blessing in life that you wouldn't otherwise have. I don't want to get into that because that's another sermon... but it just makes it clear here that **even when we were dead in our sins** – because everyone has sin - **has quickened us together with Christ.** What does that mean? **Has made us alive together with Christ?** It's this thing about faith and about Christ living in us and why he died. He died so that he could live in us. He died so the Father could live in us. That's what baptism is all about, because without the ceremony of baptism and going in the water you can't have the laying on of hands. That's why the laying on of hands doesn't come first, because God wouldn't impregnate you, wouldn't dwell in you if you can't be forgiven of your sin first – that's the beauty of the picture there – that the first part of the process is being forgiven of your sin, and so we believe he died as our Passover. He died so that we could be forgiven of sin and that is only the beginning then. He died so that he could dwell in us, because without forgiveness of sin, he won't dwell in us and the Father can't dwell in us and we wouldn't be able to change and become what we need to become, and we couldn't live by this kind of faith and be justified by this kind of faith – without this process of what we're living through.

So again, **Has quickened us together with Christ**, made alive with... that's what it means, made alive with Christ, **(by grace you are saved;) And has raised us up together, and made us to sit...**raised us up – out of that watery grave to walk in newness of life so that we are not dead anymore, spiritually, as far as life is concerned of what God looks at. We buried that in the water and every time we sin we can be forgiven then from that point forward. That is the covenant we have and we walk forward in that and having faith in that, believing that and thankful for that. **And has raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places.** The word places is not in the Greek. It's a word that has been added. Whenever you see something in the bible that is in italics, it is not a translation at all, it is something that they have added. When it says, **in heavenly in Christ Jesus:** it means that which comes from heaven because this is where it resides - our promises, the power that's there, that comes from God Almighty out of heaven to us, to live in us, to dwell in us; the process whereby we're able to be saved. **That in the ages to come he might show us the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are you saved through faith;** that undeserved pardon, that favour, the love that God gives to us. Like we read earlier about how the story of Esau and how it says Jacob have I loved and Esau have I loved less because he was working with Jacob. If it had been Esau, it would have been the other way around. But there was a grace given to and through Jacob because of a promise of a seed that would come and because of what God was going to do with a nation of people and so it was a part of His plan of fulfilling it. There was a grace and a favour that was given and it is still going on. **For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:** We are saved by a gift that God gives to us. We are **never** deserving of what God gives to us. It's not something we've earned. That's why this thing of works is foolishness...for the Pharisees to think that way. It's foolish that the protestant world thinks that it is how we're trying to be saved. We know we're not. We're not trying to be saved by our works.

It goes on to say, **Not of works, lest any man should boast.** Because anyone who thinks that they're able to please God by what they do and they strive to please God by what they do, they're missing the mark! We should strive to please God period. We should strive to honour God period. That should be in our heart. To obey, to want His way of life, to want His way of life and to be ashamed of it when we don't do it, when we don't live up to that, when we sin and to repent of it then. And that's an amazing thing to understand that whenever people are living like that they're always filled with pride. I can spot it many miles away because I so loathe pride, I so loathe our trying to lift ourselves up because I see what it's done in people's lives and in the Church and in the ministry in the Church – over and over again and throughout Church and congregations – wherever I have been in my life. It is a great teaching and lesson God has given to me through this process of understanding what pride does – when people get lifted up with pride and knowing we don't have anything to be lifted up by – and yet that's destroyed so many. So any of you, whenever you think that what you're doing is important, when you think you're important, when you think you're lifted up and you're above other people and you look down on others or whatever it is in life, you're missing the mark spiritually! It's not what it's about. Whenever we start thinking or we're lifting ourselves up to think we're better than someone else, or somehow we're pleasing God by what we're doing – you're not. It's not by how much you pray. You're going to pray more because you sin, you want to be praying. There are times to pray more, don't misunderstand me – there are times to fast – there are times to do things to seek to get our lives more in unity and oneness with God. What are some of the main reasons you should fast? You know what the main thing you're doing? Repenting. So much of fasting is about repenting, about examining self, seeking to draw closer to God. That's what Isaiah talks about when it talks of fasting.

Verse 9. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Because anytime someone is trying to lift themselves up or do or feel better about themselves... oh boy, it's always pride and boasting. **For we**

are his workmanship, God does the moulding. That's why so often as a minister I have learned to back away. I don't go out and try to change everything I see. I don't try to change everyone that's making a mistake or doing something that they could be doing better because we're all in that category, just at different places. And so there are those things that we allow within each other or we give time to and we give space to, with the hope and desire that it can be overcome. Each one of us, in our prayers for each other, in those things when it is brought out – that we be able to see them, that we be able to conquer them and overcome them so that it's not hurting us anymore; because if you see something that's hurting someone you want to pray for them about it. And then sometimes you may have to go to a brother alone. But so often it's just a matter of backing off. You know why? What I've learned? Because God does the moulding and fashioning. We don't. You don't. We are our brothers keeper and yet we're not our brothers keeper if you understand the difference. You know, there are times to get involved in people lives and there's times to back away and still be your brothers keeper – still be caring about and loving your brother. Someone was talking earlier to me about a situation where somebody is not returning phone calls and so forth and wanted to know how to deal with some of that and I said, that hurts, but sometimes you just have to back away and give people space. They may be going through a trial, they may be going through a hardship, they may have some wrong feelings toward you for one reason or another. There may be something they're battling with the Church so sometimes you give them some time and space; because you can't give this to anybody.

We got a letter last week from a young fellow that says he doesn't want to have fellowship with us anymore. It hurt my wife, hurt me... I think it hurt her worse because of her emotions and her feelings and that she spends a lot of time with a lot of the new and young people coming along, and she probably does that far better than what I do and more than what I do, and here this young fellow decides he doesn't want to have fellowship with us. Well, you know what? I could probably call someone like that and talk him into coming back, possibly. But if they don't do it because they want it, they'll do it out of guilt or some other reason because they're not willing to fight for it on their own when they're on their own... because I've done that in times past in people's lives – see? You've got to want this way of life and I've learned you cannot hand it to anybody. So... those things are measured and we learn how to yield ourselves to God, we pray to God to know when we do and when we don't get involved in certain situations in people's lives. You have to pray about them and ask God to give that to you because you don't know what's best. I don't know what's best for you and you don't know what's best for me, you don't know what's best for your neighbour over here unless you pray to God for help to know what you should do and what you shouldn't do, because sometimes we can meddle in things and make it worse. Sometimes we can fail to get involved and make things worse. So how can you do things better? You rely on God to give you what you need when you need it. Isn't that amazing? You have to rely on God to put it in your mind. You pray about it and you ask God for help to know what to do and how to do it.

For we are his workmanship, See, we all belong to God. One thing I marvel at – God is moulding me, He's moulding and fashioning you and I don't want to get in the way, and I want to yield myself to that process and so I have my own hands full in fighting my battles. And you have your hands full in fighting your battles and where we can we ask God for help to know when to be involved in other people's lives and helping them and loving them and caring for them. **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, so works are always involved, isn't it amazing? He's called us to mould and fashion something within us so that we are able to do good works and there's nothing good in any of us. The only good that we have comes from God and when God's dwelling in us and working through us we can have things come out of us – that's when there is good – when it comes from God, because if it

comes out of us, you know what? Not so good. It's always selfish. It's an awesome thing to understand the difference then.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus and so this creation takes place while we're in Christ Jesus, while Christ is in us, while we're in the Father and the Father in us – while we're connected to God through the power of God's holy spirit because we're repenting of our sins and asking God to cleanse us and day by day by day we're living by faith – seeking to change and conquer and overcome – through faith. **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained**, long before... long before human beings were ever put on this earth – this process was ordained – when it was determined man would need to have a Passover. That was ordained before the angelic realm was created. Amazing to understand those things – truly is – because we haven't always understood those things because God didn't go forward with any of His creation and make angels who are to be ministering spirits to His family, to mankind when God begins to work with them to bring them into His family and what they do and the things they do we don't even know about fully. We know some things but we're very limited in what we even understand there. Angelic beings that are around us, in our lives, where we are. **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, that you being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:** It is the way the whole world has been. Without God. The Jews were in the same category there. Paul talked about circumcision and uncircumcision and we learn that it's not talking about physical things. It's about the heart and of the mind and all people have been cut off from God, haven't had Christ. **But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were afar off** so he's speaking about the Gentiles, but the Jews, we understand – he made it very clear, weren't any closer because that was a great stumbling block for them – Jesus Christ; **who were afar off are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made both one**, isn't that amazing? Jew and Gentile – able to make both one; able to work with both because both were lacking, **and has broken down the middle wall of partition; having abolished in his flesh the enmity**, and what is that enmity? That enmity – it says the carnal mind is enmity with God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It's about a relationship toward God. The human mind fights against God. It fights against the laws of God. And the enmity that is there is a result of our being an enemy to God – sin and death. It's about death that's there because of sin... and is again, **abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments**, again, the word contain there, it's just talking about the **law of commandments and ordinances**; the point being is because of sin, the death penalty is required and it's because of that partition and that breaking down of that and that we can have Jesus Christ within us, live within us that we are able to be saved.

...for to make of himself two, one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the stake, I like to use the word stake, I've been talking about that for quite a while because I'm sick and tired of this particular word here – crucifix – no such thing, **and that he might reconcile both until God in one body by the stake, having slain the enmity thereby. Verse 17: I'm going to go through it faster because it all fits together, it's a beautiful picture, it really is and it says, And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near.** So, again, it was preached to those who were nearer – the Jews were nearer because they did have the law; they didn't understand it, they weren't God's people in the sense of a spiritual family, but it says, **they were nearer**, they had been set aside, they had been worked with by God even though they didn't get it. And then the Gentiles who didn't have any of that, who didn't have any of that history of themselves and so he's

saying, he's taking both, bringing both to salvation, that's what it's talking about. **For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.** All are brought into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. **Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;** And the reason I wanted to finish this is these last two verses... **In whom all the building fitly framed together grows into a holy temple in the Lord:** you know it's amazing, we dwell in God, God dwells in us and He's building a temple and I marvel at what is being done right now because now we have entered into a unique stage in the Church and in God's temple because there is that part of the temple which is going to be the 144,000. That is the foundational part of it but the temple continues to be built by those who are being drawn and called right now – the temple is still under construction – it doesn't stop! The Church doesn't stop and that's a beautiful picture if you understand. In times past, in Philadelphia and before that and even in Laodicea, we didn't have the understanding that we do today of God's temple. That it goes past the 144,000 and that new people are being drawn along who are a part of that ongoing construction. It's a beautiful picture. **...being built fitly framed together growing into a holy temple in the Lord: In whom you are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.** It's where God desires to dwell, to live. That's what that verse is about.

I wanted to give this particular sermon especially for those who are newer so that they can understand some of the things that, sometimes in a protestant world, depending upon your background and how you were reared and what you believed, to understand there is no conflict between things that James says and things that are said in Romans by Paul about faith and about works.

~~~end