

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith  
Audio Script – July 31, 2009

A person once asked, “If God expressed to you the same measure of grace that you express to others, where would you be in life?” If we are honest, many of us would admit that we wouldn’t be as blessed as we are. James deals with the issue of grace and mercy in today’s Templates of Truth.

James makes a bold statement in the second chapter of his epistle: *mercy triumphs over judgment* (2:13). Imagine an athletic event where two teams are contending on the playing field. In the end, one wins over the other. On the hill called Golgotha, good was contending with evil. Death was contesting life. Jesus and the cross hung in the balance, and the righteousness of God triumphed over the wickedness of Satan. As a result of this great victory for redemption, the judgment our life would otherwise face because of sin is now defeated in favor of mercy that covers our guilt. Confession, repentance, faith and commitment to Christ and what He has accomplished are what gain our access to that provision. Once we have gained the benefit of mercy, James helps us to see how our lives must express mercy.

First, mercy sees potential – *do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism* (2:1). In fact, James goes so far as to say that when we *(make) distinctions among (ourselves)*, we *become judges with evil motives* (2:4), and *if you show partiality, you are committing sin* (2:9). We are far too prone to evaluate another person’s worth based on his education, social class, financial portfolio, business success or any number of other criteria based on human achievement & value. We tend to disregard and avoid those who didn’t finish high school or college, who earn minimum wage, who rent instead of own, drive clunkers instead of classics, wear cut-offs instead of collars, and are gamers instead of golfers. Our problem is that we have never learned to see others the way God sees them. Dottie Rambo wrote a lyrical line that says, “He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.” Jesus looked beyond the things in people that caused society to shun them and saw potential in what they could and would become in God’s Kingdom. One needs only to look at such men as Peter and Paul to understand that truth. We tend to see and judge people for what they are, and not what they can become. Aren’t you grateful God didn’t do that toward you?

Second, mercy shows passion – *If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well* (2:8). Mercy is best expressed through love. God holds a passion in His heart of mercy for people. He sees the best in people because He loves them. You will never see the best in anyone you do not love. You will never affirm them, commend them or befriend them if you don’t love them. The expectation of God is that we love others as He loves us. That kind of love is unconditional and consistent. It is never shallow or superficial. It will always be proven in actions rather than words. People who strive to maintain a spiritual reputation before others can always say they love, but it is actually in the sincere and tangible ways they express that love that proves their genuineness.

Finally, mercy seeks pardon – *For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy* (2:13). How is it possible for a man who has received and experienced the grace and mercy of

God to not, in turn, show that mercy to every other man he encounters? As puzzling as that is, it happens every day with countless believers in churches all across our land. We forget from where we have come. We forget how little we deserve. We fail to remember how prone we are to the worst kinds of evil – the very things we see and condemn in others! The very things we reject and avoid others for. The opening question was: “If God expressed to you the same measure of grace that you express to others, where would you be in life?” The reality James seeks for us to understand is that the measure of mercy you extend to others is the exact measure of mercy God extends to you. That is why some of us are so broken rather than blessed.

This passage brings to mind the lyrics to a popular Phillips, Craig & Dean song: “Mercy came arunnin’ like a prisoner set free. Passed all my failures to the point of my need. When the sin that I carried was all I could see; and when I could not reach mercy, mercy came arunnin’ to me.”

That’s today’s Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

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