

“Judgement and Mercy”

James 1-13

I will ask the adults to remain standing while the children go that away to their worship service. For children while they are getting settled. Let me say that tonight we're continuing series in First Corinthians today, which is, first Corinthians chapter two, and one of our gifted pastors, Jim Alexanders, can be bringing the message this week. Glad to say that that's the case.

Let me say again. you know, I don't say much about politics, and I'll never take an explicit stand about vote. This where that. But please, please study the whole matter. Don't just think about the president. Think about senators and governors and the issues, judges and all the rest. The Lord wants us to submit to governing authorities. The governing authorities tell us we should vote. So, we should vote. We should and vote in an informed way. Well, that said, let me, read God's Word to you about the call to global obedience through all of life. James chapter two, verses 1 to 13. This is God's word.

My brothers show no partiality or favoritism. It could be translated as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, reproof. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, you sit in a good place, what do you say to the poor man? You stand over there or sit down at my feet? Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has God not chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich ones oppressing you? Are they not the ones who drag you in the court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You are doing well, but if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said do not commit adultery also said, do not murder. If you do not commit adultery, but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Yet mercy triumphs over judgment.

Let's pray for a moment. Lord, I do pray that we would have ears to hear all that you're saying to us today, and not only to hear it, but to take it to heart, and to live by it, and live by the grace that's reflected in it. We pray in Jesus name, Amen. Please be seated.

The big idea in this rich, complex text is that our faith shows itself in simple things, including small judgments about matters that seem tiny. How do you greet a visitor, a new person who

seems to be poor? Do you greet them in the same way you greet someone who's well-dressed and rich? Now, James works this out in three big ideas. First of all, favoritism is one of the tests of true faith. True religion is the word that James uses. And then obedience, secondly, has an all or nothing aspect to it. We don't think of it that way. We think obedience is partial. We do our best. But there's a sense in which obedience is all or nothing, and God judges that, and yet he is also merciful.

Those are the main ideas in our passage. Lord says, don't play favorites. Don't be partial. But humans do that. About 40 years ago, some people ran an experiment about this New York City. They put a man on a street corner in Manhattan with a story. And the story was, I've lost my wallet. I need to borrow some money to get home. Give me your phone number. Your name? I'll give you the money. Can you. Can you loan me some money? So that's a total strangers on a street corner in Manhattan. Needed to get enough fare to get to the airport. And one day they put him on the street corner wearing a beige overcoat, which was the correct color at that moment in history. The next day, they put him with a black overcoat, which is the incorrect color. At that moment in history, and he got twice as much money. Same man, same place, same lines, twice as much money when he wore a gray, sorry beige overcoat and when he used a black when they ran it again. Same thing. Beige overcoat. Lots of money. Black overcoat. Far less. Why? Because they were judging on the basis of appearances what they saw. This man is properly dressed. In our opinion, this man is not properly dressed. Although they both had a suit and tie on. And that's the way humans are. We constantly look at people and make assessments or judgments. Now of course God does not.

The Bible says men looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. James illustrates it his way. He says, two people come into a gathering of the church. It may be a worship service that was occurring in a house because the church met in house churches. Most of the time in the beginning, or could be a gathering of perhaps prayer, some other reason, and there's very little space left, and two men come in simultaneously, and one is wearing a gold ring, which in those days did not symbolize marriage but symbolized wealth and fine clothes, resplendent clothes. And the second man came in without gold and in shabby clothing. And the person at the back said to the rich man, have the last good seat, one good seat left. You can have it. And to the poor man, he said, sit on the floor. James says that's the way even believers do things.

Now, of course, today a gold ring doesn't say as much. We don't even use gold rings when we get married all the time anymore. And if everybody wears blue jeans, you know, it's hard to tell. Yes, some blue jeans cost \$50 and some cost \$250. But it's hard to tell at first glance what kind of blue jeans you're wearing. But we all have our ways of discerning who's who and what their status is. We ask where people went to school or how much school they completed. We watch their bearing, their conversation topics. We ask, where did you spend your summer vacation? If they spent their summer vacation in Trenton, new Jersey? We know. And if they spent their

summer vacation in Tuscany, we know even more. We have our ways of evaluating who is prosperous, who's important, and then we unfortunately, James says, treat them differently. Now somebody may say, well, of course, you know, you kind of have to make quick judgments based on appearances, and it's such a trivial issue anyway. I mean, who can help but pay a little more attention to someone who looks prosperous or gifted in some way? I mean, come on. But if you look at James carefully, you might remember that the immediately preceding verses 126 and 127 said there are three tests of true religion. We would say genuine faith. True religion controls the tongue. Helps orphans and widows in their distress and is unstained by the world. Those three control the tongue, unstained by the world. Help the poor. And if you think about it, if you disfavor a person who comes in because their clothes aren't as good, you've just broken all three of the signs of true religion. Just use the tongue to put them down one more time. Sit on the floor and you didn't take care of this poor person. You disparaged him. And it's so worldly to treat people based on superficial matters. So this trivial matter actually reveals the truth, because our small deeds reveal the most about who we are. True religion, if I can say it positively, has three marks.

True religion helps the poor, and the church is and should be a place that helps the poor, those who are poor in spirit, of course, but also those who are poor in this world. Because in the church, if there's one place where everybody is equal, it should be the church, right? Because everybody comes in with the same spiritual status.

We're all sinners, and everybody has the same way to be right with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And so the church is a place. It always exalts those who are poor and gives them dignity. We say you're made in God's image and don't let the world beat you down. The church. Real churches help the poor. Our church is helping people, by the way, who are suffering from the hurricane because we've been set up for mercy ministry for years. That's what a good church does. And a true church, true religion. Real faith is unstained by the world. We test all things. We hold fast to what is good. We have our eye. We're not just swept along by whatever's happening in the world. And so we offer equal honor to the rich and to the poor, those with status and those without status, because the world may honor the rich and the powerful.

But we don't. And true faith controls the tongue. We tell the poor person, you have dignity of worth. You've the same worth as anybody else in the world, created in God's image, redeemed by Christ, and favoritism that that tiny little snob, that tiny little snob, sit at my feet, stand in the corner just one more time, acting the way the world does, dishonoring those who are poor. And so this the small act actually reveals everything, and it reveals it in part because if we can just go to the next passage, verses four and five, verse five says specifically, we shouldn't make distinctions on superficial matters. We should remember. He says, listen, my beloved brothers, don't you know? Don't you remember that God chose those who are poor in the world?

Don't you know that God is? Listen, in the Roman Empire depends who you talk to. 95, 97, 98% of the people were considered poor. About 25% were slaves. And the Lord called many slaves to

himself, called many poor people to himself. He was delighted. Did that make them heirs of the kingdom to be promised to those who love him?

In the ancient world the poor despised. They were the plebs, the nobodies. Now, in our culture, especially in the church culture, we know this passage. We know that we shouldn't favor the rich. And so we would never tell a poor person who comes in, sit on the floor here. But we have to watch our ways of showing bias. I as an educator, I will say that if I meet a student who is poor in finances but rich in mind, I will be very. I'll be tempted to be extremely kind to the person who has talent. And I think that's true in America, where we live in a meritocracy, we say we love people who are talented. Somebody is very poor financially, and they have talent or passion or musical gifts, athletic gifts, intellectual gifts, verbal gifts. We're probably going to be very nice to them. We're going to be glad to help them rise. But what about the person who's poor? Meaning few skills. Meaning there's a really good chance that they will never have a noble job in this world. As we counted. Are you kind? Are we kind? Do we receive those who are poor in personality, poor of speech, poor of skill set?

Let us not despise the poor. Let's not play favorites. The church is a family, right? The church is a family. And we all know that the family, mom and dad should love the kids equally. Even when I say that, some of you think, well, that wasn't the way it was in my family. Everybody knew who the golden child was.

Can I tell you something? When I was still, still childless, when our first child was on the way, I began praying something fervently and I prayed it for many years. Lord, give me children with equal gifting. Not the same, but equal, because I will be tempted if one child is smarter, more athletic, more humorous, more whatever, I'll be tempted to play favorites. Lord, give me children with equal gifts, which I believe he did so that I won't play favorites because favoritism is so deadly in the family. It's deadly in the family of God. Just as well.

James also goes to point out, goes on to point out something that's kind of hard to hear, and that is that it's so foolish to favor the rich says, when you dishonor the poor, are you forgetting that the rich do three things? They oppress you? That's just a statement of the fact. In the Roman Empire and the Roman Empire, a poor person could not take a rich oppressor to court. It was impossible. It couldn't be done. It was illegal. And if a rich person took a poor person to court, they were almost always going to win. Almost every time. And so they oppress and they drag in the court. Verse seven. If you put it up there for us as well, they blaspheme the honorable name by which you are called.

And it's the truth in the Empire. They didn't honor Christ. They blasphemed him. They cursed Christians. So why, James says, why would you follow these people? Why would you honor people who do these three things that are so exploitative and negative? People would seize land in those days because there were legal mechanisms to rob the poor. This is what's happening.

Why do you favor people who are doing this to you now? So far, so good. You may say, okay, okay, got it. but really, why are we really why are we working so hard in this question of favoritism? Because, I mean, isn't it true that everybody does that kind of can't help but small sin. Let me just pull back a minute and ask you if you're the kind of person that likes to divide into two categories, are you?

Do you like to say people fall into two categories? Home bodies and travelers. There's introverts and extroverts. There's liberals and there's conservatives, and there's mountain people and beach people who likes to do that. It's kind of fun. Divide the world into two parts, and then you can divide the world into two kinds of activity. So there's some things you can do partially and some things you can't do partially 100%.

For example, how many of you perhaps ate a little bit of breakfast if the question comes to you, did you eat breakfast today? The answer is sort of because I drank some coffee, like a half a cup of coffee and I need half a bagel. I'm not sure if that's breakfast or not. Right. And then if you have children, you tell your children to clean up their room. It's a mess. It's a disaster. And they say, okay, mom, dad, an inspection in 15 minutes and you come for inspection in 15 minutes. And sure enough, the bedspread is pulled over the covers, but the bed still looks like a relief map of Tibet. And it's true that you told them get all the clothes off the floor. But, I mean, there's socks dangling out of this drawer, and there's a heap of sweatshirts over there. Nothing's on the floor. So I guess you cleaned up sort of a little bit. And there are other things that are all or nothing. For example, if someone politically wins by if somebody wins presidency by an electoral count of 271, the 269, the loser does not say it was so close. It was just about a tie. Really. It's awesome. The loser loses 271 is victory. 269 is crushing defeat right now I don't know. I've heard there's football around here and in a football game, you know there could be a really a game that's not close. And then it gets closer and then the score scores 34 to 33. And then the people hypothetically, hypothetically from Alabama say it was a great game. We only lost by one point. No. No one no one would say that they would be devastated. And then if you happen to score a touchdown with 65 seconds left and the scores 41 to 34, it magnifies victory no matter how close, you know, 65 seconds or so. Oh, no matter how close you are to defeat. **Roll Tide.** I've been waiting to say that you may never hear it again.

All right, so there's all or nothing. Which way does it go with obedience? Our tendency is to think obedience. We do our best. Of course, it's not all or nothing. We all fall short. We all fail. We all know Romans six. We're raised with Christ. We all know Romans seven. Who will rescue me from this body of death? We know it's got to be partial. We know. We know our theology. We call it progressive sanctification. We progress slowly in fits and starts forward, backward toward being more godly and more holy. Of course, obedience is partial. Of course it is. But the truth of the matter is that there's a sense in which obedience is all or nothing, not in every way, but in one very important way.

In an important way. There's no such thing as a petty sin, because even the smallest sin is a failure to love our neighbor, which is the most basic command of all. And it's also a violation,

James says of the royal law. If you really fulfill verse eight, the royal law according to Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You're doing well now. What does it mean when James says the royal law? It means a couple things. It means it's the law of the kingdom, and it means it's the law of the king. So the royal law is what God the King told his people Israel long ago, it among God's laws. Leviticus 19. One of those laws says, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, and another law just very nearby.

I'm going to quote it exactly. One of the laws very nearby says, do not show partiality to the poor, don't favor the poor, or show favoritism to the rich. But you shall judge fairly. So one way we love our neighbor as yourself is by giving everyone justice. Don't favor the rich, don't favor the poor. Perfect justice. That's the law of the King, God the King.

And so love his kingdom and God's laws teach us how to love other people. And Jesus reiterates it now he's King Jesus, and he says, love your neighbor as yourself. And that's the Basic law. And then the King tells us how to do that. The king tells us, for example, that, if you want to love your parents, you want to know how to love your parents, honor them, honor your father and your mother.

And if you want to love your neighbor, don't covet their goods, but take care of their goods. Old Testament law says, if you come across a donkey wandering and recognize maybe by, you know, a mark on their side, a scar, perhaps you reckon? Oh, that's my neighbor's donkey. You're supposed to take it back. If you see an ox falling under load, help it up.

Whether it's an ox of your friend or your neighbor, a total stranger. Take care of each other. That's how you do it. And if you want to love your spouse, be faithful. If you want to love your neighbor again, tell the truth to them. Tell the truth about them. Don't gossip. Don't make them look bad. Don't deceive them. Don't lead them astray. You want to love your neighbor. Don't seek their good, seek their good. Don't covet what they have. If you want to love a stranger, treat them with dignity. They become your neighbor. Jesus became our neighbor when he entered this world, right? So people enter our world now. Jesus entered differently. He came to teach, to live, to perform miracles, to suffer, to die, to rise.

But there's still a similarity. Jesus became our neighbor and people become our neighbor, and so treat them well. James says, you are doing well if you obey the royal law and love your neighbor as yourself, and if not, if not, verse nine, if you show partiality, that is to say, viewing people based on their appearances, their social status, you're committing sinner, convicted by the law as a transgressor, as a lawbreaker that is, if you break one little part of the law, there's a sense in which you've broken the whole thing.

Now, I know that it doesn't seem that way. And the truth is, an enormous number of Christians and ordinary people don't go to church. And specifically Muslims teach that if you want to be right with God, if you want God to be pleased with you when you meet him on the last day, what you need to have is a bigger pile of good deeds than bad deeds in Islam.

At least some versions of Islam teach you to do three good things for every bad thing. So you want to get that pile of good deeds up. You want to make sure that Allah's pleased with you and a lot of ordinary people in America think about just do more good than bad. You know, if I'm just a good mom, a really good mom that covers a lot of things. And and so we think of obedience, a stack of deeds, like a stack of bricks. And every time you do something good, you get another brick. And every time you do something wrong, you lose a brick, right? But, one theologian said it this way. Commenting on James, he said, it's really more like obedience as a sheet of glass, and disobedience is taking one of those bricks and just firing it through and breaking the whole sheet of glass. You become a transgressor. You are a transgressor. You're convicted as a transgressor when you even break one law. Why is that? Because every sin is an insult to God and every sin is disobedience to God. Let me take those two part every sin is an insult to God's character because God's character is the basis of his law. The reason why we tell the truth is not because God gave us just gave an arbitrary law to us.

The reason why we tell the truth is because God tells the truth and His word is truth. And the reason why we don't covet and we're generous is because God is generous and delights to give gifts to his people. Even the reason why the Bible says make no graven images is clear. God gave us an image that is to say, people, we're made in the image of God.

You want to know what God is like? Look at a godlike, godly person. And the reason why we don't commit adultery is because God is faithful to his promises and vows. So all the commands that God gives reflect who he is. Furthermore. Furthermore, if you do something as simple as tell somebody who looks poor, sit on the floor, sit down and shut up.

If you say that to a poor person, you've actually violated many laws, not just one. You've borne false witness. You've told him you're not worth this much because you don't have as much. And that's not true. And you have robbed the poor of the dignity they deserve, the dignity all people deserve. And you've killed their spirit. You borne false witness about God who doesn't favor people based on their experiences.

He's created a church in which everybody is welcome. The ground is leveled. The foot of the cross. Everybody comes in the same way a sinner. Everybody is right with God the same way. By the grace of Christ. And so there is there is a transgression of who God is. And to make it clear, he says in verse ten, whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

That's how we're guilty of all of it. And then in the next verse, we have something that really tells drives home the point that James is making. And it's simply in those words, he who said he who said do not commit adultery also said do not murder. And if you pick and choose among the commandments and say, you know, I'm not going to commit.

I'm not going to commit adultery, but I'm going to murder, or vice versa. I would never murder anybody. But, you know, adultery. Why not? If you're picking and choosing among the

commandments, you are violating the will of he who said, don't look at the command. Look at the words. He who said God said, God said, don't kill or and don't commit adultery.

So if you say, you know, I like this command and this one, and this one I like of the Ten Commandments, I like eight. But those other two I'm just going to disregard. You're saying they're arbitrary and they're not. Sidebar. We're tempted to think that God's commandments are arbitrary, because we see a lot of arbitrary commandments that, you know, how many of you know that there's a speed limit sign here at this church that says 17 miles an hour? How much do you know about that? How many even know about that one? Friends, that's arbitrary. They could have said 18. They could have said 16, but they they're just trying to say slow down or put a weird number up there and that's the speed limit. So it'll register in your mind. Don't be cruising around at 27 miles an hour. 17. That's arbitrary.

God's commandments are not arbitrary. He said, and if you start picking and choosing between which obedience, which commands you'll obey and which you won't obey, what are you doing? You're saying God's commandments are advice. Their counsel, and I'll decide which ones to obey and which ones not to obey. And when you say that you're saying I'm Lord, I'm king. I am not under a king. I'm under my own authority. And if I decide to obey a commandment, it's because I like it. Which means I'm the final judge. I'm the final arbiter. But James says, he who said God gives these commandments, you violate not just the commandments, but you rebel against God. So he says, so act and speak like those who are be judged under the law of liberty.

And then he gets kind of soft again. It's kind of hard and it's soft. He says something very generous. He says God's laws give freedom. God's laws give freedom. How's that? So? Well, it's so because, among other things sin enslaves. You're free to take drugs. You're free to get drunk. You're free to play video games for five hours. You're free to go gambling. You're free. I was going to stop you. You're free in that sense. But those kinds of behaviors enslave. Obviously, drunkenness and alcohol abuse and drug abuse causes all kinds of problems. But it's also true that things like playing video games for five hours seem to be liberating. Some people, I understand I don't play video games, so I don't know, but people say, you know, I feel so tense and it just helps me blow off some of my tension. I'm depressed, I'm anxious, so I so I play video games or I go on, I go on social media and I think, okay, I like to do things when I feel tense, you know, go to the gym, burn off some energy. Good, I get it. But playing five hours is probably enslaving. Probably find yourself not getting your jobs done. Not getting your studies done may maybe make you feel good for a little bit, but it's going to make you feel bad in the long run. Almost certainly. And since sins are like that. But the law of God gives us freedom.

So I don't know how many of you are double income families. Husband and wife both work. Let's imagine that you are for a minute. husband and wife both work. Both work full time. And so you you do what people often do. And that's the case. You divide up the domestic responsibilities. And let's say the husband likes to cook and the wife likes to clean.

So that's the deal. I'll cook and you're clean. That's the that's the rule. You have to follow the rules. And it can be very, peace breaking to demand that your spouse do exactly this and your spouse do exactly that. You're not following the rules, but there's a better rule. And the rule is for husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. That's God's rule. And so a husband may come back from work and say, I'm tired and I'm supposed to cook but not wash the dishes. But I love my wife, and I can tell that she's tired and you know, I kind of like cooking. And so I feel like cleaning up the dishes just as an act of kindness.

That's liberating, isn't it? When you choose to do what belongs to your spouse is an act of love. The law gives freedom. That's what James says to us. On the other hand, when you start breaking parts of the law, you reap consequences all over the place.

Let me illustrate a different way. one year I had a, I had a physical and it was a little bit different from most physicals. I had the usual things like a blood test, but I had a doctor who decided to palpate my abdomen. He was very insistent on that. And as he did, he palpated my internal organs and decided that my spleen was enlarged. And he said, I'm worried about that. Let's get some more tests. And so I was sent in for tests and, and, you know, through the process, I heard all kinds of wonderful things. I still remember what one doctor said. He said, your heart valves are just wonderful. They go clickety clack, they open, they shut. No water or blood in this case leaks out. You got great valves where they go and then they gave me an X-ray of my chest. And the X-ray technician told me, you have beauty of lungs. I thought you mean to say big lungs or something like that. It's. No, no, your beautiful lungs. And they've paid me various compliments, and I thought, I know what's going on here. They think I'm dying. And they're trying to be nice to me. They're. They're going to tell me that I have cancer all over my internal organs. And, you know, you got a great heart, which we're going to harvest before too long. And you got lovely lungs. And, just want you to know that most of your systems are working really well, but all it takes is one system failure. Can die when you're in great shape, except for one area. So turn to the law and believe that it's God's law gives you liberty. It makes life easier, not worse.

A part of that law is that we should show mercy to other people. Judgment without mercy shown to those who are showing no mercy. And that's a Bible principle. Jesus says in one place in Luke chapter 638, if you want to look it up, Jesus says, give, and it will be given to you. For with the measure use, it'll be measured back to you.

So the measure you use God will use with you. So if you show mercy to other people, God will show mercy to you. Now that's not salvation by works. It's just saying, as the whole Bible teaches, if you have sensed, if you know that you've received the mercy of Christ, his death, his resurrection for you, and he's your Redeemer, is your Lord, your Savior, your friend.

If you know that, if you know above all that God is merciful to you, you'll be merciful to other people. And if you show no mercy to other people, there's a good chances, because you've never tasted God's mercy. So show mercy to others. Show mercy to others. It's a warning. If you show no mercy, it's because most likely you rejected God's mercy.

And if you want judgment on others, then God will judge you. But then there's the last line, lest we think, okay, where's God's grace? It's there. Mercy triumphs over judgment. It's almost as if James says, I got to say this about the price of disobedience, about rebelling against God, about transgressing God's law and disregarding the fact that he speaks to us now had to say all this about judgment, but I also have to say, mercy triumphs over judgment.

Now, if you're new to the faith, I want to make sure you understand what that phrase means. Or if you are seeking God's way, you're not even quite sure where you stand. I want to explain this to you. The first of all, the Bible says that all humans have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We've all broken his law.

We've all lost the glory that he wants us to have, and we're responsible for that. There's a man named Jean-Jacques Rousseau who was a leader of the French Enlightenment, a long time ago, and he said, man is born free. He would say, today humankind. But he said, man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains. What is what he meant was people are basically good, but society somehow corrupts people.

Bad education, bad legal systems, bad work experiences, corrupt people are all basically good. And then society is somehow oppressed us. And the Bible says, Jean-Jacques, we're sorry. That's a great line. Man is born free, but everywhere he's in chains. But you've explained it very poorly, because the reason why society oppresses is not because it's some disembodied entity. Society oppresses

The reason why the reason why society makes life hard for us is because society is made up of sinners. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And then the next word is, if you understand that you're part of the story, as Jean-Jacques did not understand. If you understand, I'm part of this story. I'm part of the human family.

And I, Lord, would ask you for your mercy. Then God will give you mercy. You repent of your sins. Trust in Jesus. You have a very small stack of good deeds. It's not big enough. Jesus takes away the stack of your misdeeds on the cross, offering himself for your sins, and then his good deeds are forgiven to you as if you did them.

Those are now reckoned to your account. As James says a little bit later, humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up, meaning he will hear your statement of your humility I have sinned, I've fallen short. And Lord, lift me up and the Lord will answer that prayer every time he lifts us up by making his sons and daughters and giving us everlasting life, putting us in his church and his family.

So let's review for a second. James stings us a little bit, maybe even a lot. He stings complacent believers with sharp warnings. Even a small sin is dangerous, and he every deliberate violation of God's laws is a violation of God's character. God's good desires for you and his law gives you freedom. And if you reject the commandment because it's unpalatable, you've rejected the one who spoke to you in His word.

But grace is greater than sin. Mercy triumphs over judgment. If you realize, if you say, if you're working on things this week and say, you know what? I do have a sin and I have fallen into a sin over and over again. I need to do battle against that. Forgive me Lord. The Lord will forgive. He'll give you all of his mercy, and you will triumph with him through that mercy that God gives us in Christ.

Let's pray together.

Father, I do pray that we would. Rest in you, that we would hear you would be confident in all that you are and all you've done for us. Sending Jesus, our teacher and our Redeemer. I pray, Lord, that we would desire to hear from you, to follow you and Lord again when we fall short.

Be merciful to us. We plead for your mercy. We ask for it in Jesus' name.

Amen.