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IF YOU SIN ONCE, YOU ARE GUILTY OF ALL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
JAMES 2:8-11
NUMBER 16

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JAMES 2:8-11 "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

We have just studied the three viewpoints of the shortsighted usher. We saw the doctrinal viewpoint, the common sense viewpoint, and the logical viewpoint. We now move to something that is a very practical study for every one of us, and if we learn this lesson, it can go a long way in removing legalism and self-righteousness from our lives.

JAMES 2:8 "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:" "If" is a first class condition and it means the statement is true. This is the first class condition of the protasis. (The protasis is the clause which expresses the condition of a conditional sentence.) The protasis is followed by the apodosis. (The apodosis is the result reached in a conditional sentence.) So here we have a condition stated in the terms of doing something. "Fulfil the royal law" is a present, active, indicative of "teleo" and it means to finish an operation, complete a task. So it really reads like this--"If you carry out operation royal law."

Now what does "royal law" mean? The greek words are "nomon basilikon."
LEVITICUS 19:18 "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord." This is the first time this royal law is stated in the Bible. It has often been called the 11th commandment, but this is incorrect, and it should be called the royal law. You find it in Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39-40, 1 John 3:23, 1 Thess. 4:9, 1 Peter 1:22 1 Peter 2:17, 1 John 3:11, 1 John 4:7, and the principle of this law is found in many other places.

But it is not the 11th commandment. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE FOR THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE, WHILE THE ROYAL LAW IS FOR BELIEVERS ONLY. The whole concept of this royal law is given in Romans 8:2-4 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This is where we find that we are able to live by this law when we have the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Now what is the Royal Law? Please notice that it is positive, not negative. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It is a part of the Christian way of life, made possible by the filling of the Holy Spirit. The word for love in that law is a future, active, indicative of "agapao." This is a thinking word, not an action word. This is not a word where you touch anyone. It is not an expressive word. It is a relaxed mental

attitude word which shows your attitude toward others. It means freedom from mental attitude sins. But "agapao" is not the love word which expresses overt activity and overt expressions of love. It is not a touching, personal, action word.

Then the verse says "love thy neighbor" and the word for neighbor is "plesion." The word refers to those in your vicinity, those you touch, those that you have some contact with. In fact, it means all the people you will ever touch in your daily living. It really means that you will be able to live with yourself and able to live with others also. The principle we are talking about here is "live and let live." So if you carry out operation "Royal Law," then you will "do well." The word for "well" is "kalaus." The order the greek presents is "honorably you keep on doing."

So a correct translation of this--"If, on the one hand, you carry out operation Royal Law, according to the norm and standard of Scripture "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," honorably you keep on doing."

A summary of the words "honorably you keep on doing."

1. ACCUMULATED DOCTRINE IN THE HUMAN SPIRIT PROVIDES CAPACITY FOR LOVE.

Also if you accumulate doctrine, you avoid reverse process reversionism in your life. "Ptochos," the poor man in the study of the "Shortsighted Usher," should have received the affection from the usher, but because of reversionism in the usher, "Mr. Gold Fingers" got all the attention. Now "the Royal Law" is brought in here to keep you from making a mistake like this. Accumulated doctrine gives one a relaxed mental attitude. It gives him this relaxed mental attitude toward himself, and also toward others. If you are a growing believer in Jesus Christ, then this relaxed growing, happy, mental attitude will overflow on others around you. If you are oriented to grace, you will be bound to have a relaxed mental attitude. Loving thy neighbor means to be relaxed, to employ mental attitude love, and to allow this mental attitude love to overflow and touch all those you meet and associate with. Neighbor means other members of the human race with whom you have contact.

2. THE ROYAL LAW DESCRIBES THE PERSON WHO HAS CAPACITY FOR LOVE.

3. THEREFORE THE ROYAL LAW IS YOUR PROTECTION AGAINST REVERSE PROCESS REVERSIONISM.

JAMES 2:9 "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." Here we have a second "if" and this too is a first class condition. So it should read, "If, on the other hand, you have respect to persons." The word for "respect to persons" is "prosopolepteo" and it really means to show partiality, to show discrimination. It is a technical word for reverse process reversionism. This causes us to move away from truth and accept some pseudo concept in the place of truth. It then says that if you do practice discrimination, you are occupied with sin. The greek word is "ergazoma" and it means to do business with, to be occupied with, to be saturated with sin. The word for sin here is "hamartia" and it refers to the nature of sin. Discrimination means we are functioning under the nature of sin. It means we are out of the bottom circle and we are living under the control of the old sin nature.

He then says "and are convicted" and this is the passive form of "elegcho" and it means you receive in your soul this conviction from your action of discrimination. In other words, this Royal Law has brought conviction to you that you are under reversionism.

Now a correct translation of these two verses---

"If, on the one hand, you carry out operation Royal Law, according to the norm and standard of scripture, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' honorably you keep on doing. But if, on the other hand, you keep on showing partiality and keep on discriminating, you are occupied with the old sin nature, being convicted under the authority of the Royal Law and you have violated that law."

JAMES 2:10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Now we switch from the Royal Law over to the whole law, which includes the Ten Commandments. Remember, the Royal Law is for believers only, but the Ten Commandments are for the whole human race.

It begins by saying, "For whosoever" and the word for whosoever is "hostis" and it means anyone. It is an indefinite relative pronoun and refers to any member of the human race. So here we are going to get a principle. Here is a person who tries to keep the whole Mosaic Law but violates it in at least one point. The word for "keep" here is an aorist, active, subjunctive of "tereo" and it means to guard, to consider this as something of major importance. If he offends in one point he "becomes" guilty of all. The word is not "eimi" but "ginomai" and it means he becomes something that he was not before. Please notice here that the Bible considers one innocent until he has been proven guilty. He becomes guilty, and the broken law proves that he has become guilty. He started out innocent, then he transgressed at this one point, and he became something that he was not before he became guilty. So this verse actually says, "For whosoever would guard the entire law, and yet stumble in one point, he has become guilty of all." This word "guilty" is an interesting word. It comes from "enochos" and it means liable, answerable. He was innocent up to that point, then he disobeyed, and he became something that he was not before, namely, guilty. The Rich Young Ruler is a perfect illustration of this point. He was guilty in one point, therefore, his salvation, by keeping the law, faded into nothingness. Suppose you go for twenty-five years as a law abiding citizen and then you fall apart and start breaking the law. You are said to be a criminal and also considered guilty of all. For twenty-five years you were on the right side, but by one act you now put yourself on the other side. Having become guilty at one point, you are guilty of all. Reversionism causes you to become guilty in one point. Reverse process reversionism makes you guilty in all points. You violate in only one area, but you slip back in all points.

Now we have an illustration of this principle.

JAMES 2:11 "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." The "For he that said" is Moses. He said it in Exodus 20:14, Deut. 5:18, and the principle is stated in many places. The same one that said, "Do not commit adultery" also said, "Do no murder." The word translated kill here is "Phoneuo" and it means

to do no murder. So in both of these commands we have a mental attitude sin and then an overt sin. Adultery can be a mental sin and an overt sin. Murder can be a mental attitude sin and an overt sin. Mental murder is hatred. Mental adultery is mental attitude fornication. These two were used because both of them have both a mental side and an overt side.

Suppose you take a person who has never murdered anyone, but he has hated people with a passion. Here is one who has never committed adultery, but he has committed fornication in his mind again and again. There are three ways to murder. Mental murder, overt murder, and premeditated murder. Then there are three ways to commit adultery; mental, overt or a combination of both.

He says in this verse that even if you don't commit adultery, but you commit murder, you have become something that you were not before, you have become a "parabotes" and this means a violator, a transgressor. So this verse really says, "Now if you do not commit adultery, either mental or overt or a combination of the two, but you do murder, either mental, overt, or a combination of the two, you have become a violator of the law."

This verse implies eleven things:

1. There are some parts of the law you would never violate, for this is your area of strength.
2. No two people have exactly the same area of strength or the same area of weakness in the old sin nature.
3. Legalism and self-righteousness is prone to forget that the source of all sin is the old sin nature.
4. Violation at one point of the law makes a person a sinner just as much as any other violation at any other point.
5. Everyone has an old sin nature. Therefore everyone at some point violates God's law.
6. The legalist emphasizes the laws he keeps. The honest person is willing to recognize the laws he breaks.
7. Doctrine removes legalism and self-righteousness on the basis of the principle of this verse.
8. Legalism minimizes the weakness or besetting sin of the old sin nature while at the same time magnifying the weakness or besetting sin of the old sin nature of someone else.
9. Legalism condemns those who fail in their own area of strength, but is unwilling to recognize that all have sinned.
10. Sometimes legalists are so strong they fulfill 1 John 1:8 and 1 John 1:10 and they actually affirm that they have never sinned at all. (Some misinformed saints actually contend sinless perfection.)
11. To be guilty, one has to only sin once, not a thousand times as we all really do. Just to think sin once makes a person a sinner. One sin makes us a criminal in God's sight.

YOU SIN IN ONE POINT AND YOU ARE GUILTY IN ALL POINTS AND CHRIST IS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO YOUR SIN PROBLEM.