

# Keeping the “Whole Law”

*The following material was presented by Nathan Battey at the Rockville Rd. Church of Christ on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020. All quotations of Scripture are from the New King James Version of the Bible.*

Our study this evening will center around a discussion of James 2:8-13, but in order to appreciate what James teaches we must first lay a foundation from the teaching of Christ.

## Luke 10:25-29

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”

So he answered and said, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”

And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

## Points:

1. Here you have a Bible discussion between God and man. God directs the conversation to what He has previously written and asks man to interpret it.
  - a. **Point:** You do not need fresh revelation when God has already written on the matter.
    - i. **You need to meditate on what God has written.**
    - ii. **Point:** Jesus asks the man a question so that the man will reflect on Scripture.
2. Here we have God and man understanding the Bible alike.
  - a. Contrary to popular opinion, it is possible to understand the Bible – and when it is understood it has a single, non-subjective meaning.
3. The application of Scripture often influences our interpretation.
  - a. The passage was not difficult to understand; it was difficult to practice and apply.

4. The Old Law could be summed up in two commands:
  - a. Love God with every fiber of your being –
    - i. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – the introduction to the Shema
  - b. Love your neighbor as yourself.
    - i. Leviticus 19:18
  
5. Lastly, here is a man who can inherit eternal life if he will live humbly and obediently under the Old Law.
  - a. **Point:** The Law was given as a blessing to those who would keep it, but it promised death to those who did not want to keep it and would seek to justify themselves.

**Major Point:** Salvation has never been possible through Self-merit or Self-justification.

**Major Point:** Salvation is a matter of *inheritance* – *not merit*.

**Point:** Inheritance is always a matter of grace, yet grace has never negated the necessity of obedience.

With this in mind, let's turn to Matthew.

### **Matthew 22:36-40**

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

### **Point:**

1. Here we have God giving a divine summary of The Law.
  - a. These were the basis of THE TEN, and the 613.
    - i. Every one of the 613 laws had some connection with Loving God or Loving Neighbor.

1. **Point:** If you will keep this principle in mind, it will help make sense of some of the seemingly random and obscure laws of the Old Testament.
- b. They were also the basis of the Prophets
  - i. **Point:** To understand the Prophets, you must study the Law.
    1. The message of the Prophets was built primarily on the basis of Covenantal Curses for violating these two laws.
      - a. Greatest sins of Israel: Idolatry and Oppression of the Poor.

### **Luke 18:18-23**

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ”

And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

### **Points:**

1. Jesus sums up the commands regarding murder, adultery, stealing, and honoring Father and Mother as – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
  - a. This is the same conclusion that we just read about and reached in Luke 10.
2. When Jesus commanded the young man to sell all he had and give it to the poor, to place his treasure in heaven, and to follow Jesus, He did something quite unique:
  - a. First, Jesus highlighted the need to look after the poor – that is to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself.
  - b. Second, He shifted the focus from earth to heaven.
  - c. Third, having shifted the focus from earth to heaven, Jesus centered the attention on God – that is on Himself.
  - d. Fourth, Jesus issued Kingdom Law.
    - i. His Law is similar to the Old Law, yet more stringent.
  - e. Lastly, Jesus taught the same principle found later in the same Gospel (Luke 24:44) that the purpose of the Law and the Prophets was to lead to Him.

**Major Point:** Loving God with every fiber of your being – with heart, soul, strength, and mind – means following Jesus faithfully wherever He leads and understanding that He is the fulfillment of the Old Law.

**Result:** “But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

**Fundamental Issue:** The young man’s treasures were on earth and through rejecting Jesus’ command to sell all and follow Him, he had rejected the entire Law of God.

With this background in mind, let’s consider the message of James:

### **James 2:8-13**

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

#### 1. The **“Royal Law”**

- a. Literally: Belonging to the King.
  - i. i.e. The Law of the King or Kingdom Law
- b. Kingdom Law or the Royal law is the same as the “Law of Liberty” in James 1:25 & 2:12.
- c. **Point:** At the heart of Kingdom Law stands this principle: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
  - i. **Major Point:** There are similarities between the Old Law and the New Law because they are both founded on the same principle – principles that reflect the nature of God.

**James’ Point: To show partiality is a violation of the core tenant of Kingdom Law – it is an attack on your neighbor.**

**Question:** When King Jesus issued His command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” where was He quoting from?

**Answer:** Leviticus 19:18.

**Point:** When Jesus quoted Leviticus 19:18 He had the larger context of the passage in mind and James recognized this fact.

**Side Point:** When a New Testament writer or speaker gives an Old Testament quotation, they never strip the passage from its context.

Notice what comes a couple verses before Leviticus 19:18:

### **Leviticus 19:15**

“You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

#### **Points:**

- 1- Showing partiality was a major violation of the fundamental rule of Loving One’s Neighbor, and that violation still rings true under Kingdom Law (Royal Law).

#### **James 2:9**

“But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”

- 2- Partiality is defined contextually in Leviticus 19:15 as a perversion of justice.
  - a. The poor does not receive justice because he is poor.
  - b. The rich are not brought to justice because they are rich.

With Leviticus 19:15 and its definition of partiality in mind James continues his thought:

### **James 2:10**

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”

**Point:** This is the central point of the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Though the Rich Young Ruler had kept all the commands of the Law, yet failed to sell all he had and give it to the poor, he demonstrated his unwillingness to keep any of the Law that did not suit his fancy.

**Warning:** When you choose to disregard **ANY** of the King’s Laws, you have cast off the entirety of the Law. You cannot pick and choose which laws you want to keep and which laws you do not want to keep.

**Key Point:** We live within a spiritual Kingdom – not a Democracy.

James 2:11 forms a parallel statement with vs 10:

### **James 2:11**

“For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

### **Points:**

- 1- ***“For He who said,”*** is a quotation of Jesus – the King - as He spoke to the Rich Young Ruler.
- 2- James placed the sin of partiality on the same level as adultery and murder.
  - a. This is neither new nor novel; all three sins are a violation of the command to “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
    - i. To put it another way: All three sins are intentional attacks on one’s neighbor, are covenant violations, and are worthy of judgment.

### **James 2:12-13**

“So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

### **Points:**

1. Realize that you will be judged by the law of liberty for how you treat your neighbor.
  - a. **Major Point:** The “Law of Liberty” does not free one from judgment – contrary to popular opinion. Everyone must one day stand before the King and answer to His Law. Yet his yoke is not burdensome to those who pursue the liberty which He offers from sin and bondage.
2. If you pervert justice and do not defend the innocent by showing him mercy, you will be found guilty on judgment day.
  - a. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” – Matthew 6:12
3. ***“Mercy triumphs over judgment.”***
  - a. *Think of your own standing before God*
    - i. *We desire mercy and mercy is granted through the gracious Law of liberty.*
      1. *We must therefore uphold the law by loving our neighbor so that we may obtain mercy.*