

Stumbling in Only One Point of Law

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: James 2:8-13

- A. "You have broken the law" vs. "You have broken a law"
 - 1. One asserts breaking a law means that all of the law has been broken
 - 2. The other insists that only one law has been broken, and the rest of the law has been kept.
 - 3. While this appears to make sense to both sides of the discussion, the fact is it is a sophistry, an argument that seems right but has no basis in truth or substance in logic
- B. Answering both sides
 - 1. It must be conceded that a single law has been broken and the rest of the law has been kept. One cannot be charged with more than what he has done
 - 2. It must be understood that he is a lawbreaker and that keeping the rest of the law does not void the guilt of breaking a single law.
- C. What has the lawbreaker done?
 - 1. He has judged the law he broke as unworthy of his compliance
 - 2. To bring one law under his judgment implies his view that any or all of the laws are subject to his judgment
 - 3. To judge the law as subject to his approval implies that the lawgiver is subject to his judgment and approval
 - 4. Thus breaking a law indicates his conscious or unconscious belief that he is greater than the one who gave the law. In breaking the law, he declares he is above the law, including the Lawgiver
 - 5. Like James 4:11, one is complaining that the law has not properly judged and punished this brother. Consider how the elder brother begrudged his father's forgiveness of the prodigal when he returned. "Judging the law" is putting one's self above the law, or 'taking the law into our own hands.'
- D. At the same time, to repent of this sin, he need only repent of the sin he committed and to humbly seek forgiveness for the pride that enabled him to break it in the first place - 1John 1:8-10
 - 1. "I repent of showing partiality to my brother, and I confess the sin of pride that enabled me to commit this sin."
 - 2. If he lied, he doesn't need to repent of murder, adultery, stealing, etc.
- E. It must be remembered:
 - 1. That the law of Christ, just like the Law of Moses, was given by God, Who developed those laws before the world began. When one chooses to break any part of it, he declares that he knows more than eternal, all-wise God
 - 2. The law of God whether through Moses or Christ is an intricately woven, seamless tapestry; pull one thread and many others will come out with it. You cannot break one law without impacting others

3. In the law of Christ, we are judged not only for the violation of law, but also by the spirit with which we broke it. Obedience from the heart and not by the hand only - Matt. 12:35, 15:18-19; Rom. 6:17

I. TO TRANSGRESS ONE LAW IS TRANSGRESSION OF THE WHOLE LAW

- A. This principle was established by God in Moses' day - Deut. 27:26; Lev. 11:44
 1. Have you ever told a lie? Yes? What does that make you? A liar.
 2. Have you ever stolen anything? Yes? What does that make you? A thief
 3. Following God's law is not based on a scale system. It's not about having more obedience than disobedience. It's not about having more credits than debits.
 4. Our fate does not hang in the balances of the scale, because only one sin tips the scale in the direction of judgment and condemnation.
- B. There is only one - James 2:10, 4:11-12
 1. The Lawgiver is one - Ex. 20:1-2; Deut. 6:4-6
 - a. To violate one law is to question the authority of the One who gave the law
 2. The Law itself is one.
 - a. To keep the law of love in essence is keeping all of the law - Rom. 13:10
 - b. "The law is one seamless garment, which is rent if you but rend a part; or a musical harmony, spoiled if there be one discordant note. (Tirinus.)
 3. The spirit of obedience is one. True reverence for the law is inspired by love for the Lawgiver; and therefore obedience shows no partiality to any of the laws given by Him - Psalm 119:127-128, 151, 172
 4. Illustration: A party of workmen were employed in building a very tall tower. In laying a corner, one brick, either by accident or carelessness, was set a little out of line. The work went on without its being noticed, but as each course of bricks was kept in line with those already laid, the tower was not put up exactly straight, and the higher they built the more insecure it became. One day, when the tower had been carried up about fifty feet, there was a tremendous crash. The building had fallen, burying the men in its ruins. All the previous work was lost, the materials wasted, and, worse still, valuable lives were sacrificed, and all this from one brick laid wrong at the start. How little the workman who laid that one brick wrong thought of the mischief he was making for the future! That one faulty brick, which the workman did not see, caused all this trouble and death.

II. LESSONS

- A. Partial obedience is an expression of insincerity.
- B. It is self-deceit to excuse failure to keep one duty by claiming care of another
- C. The smallness of sin is a poor excuse. Does the judge acquit a criminal because he has only defrauded \$50, while another has \$5,000? Are not both guilty in the eyes of the law?

1. A little poison in a cup or one leak in a ship may ruin all. A man may travel well for a long time, but one wrong turn near the end of the journey may bring him quite a distance out of the way.

2. A grieving family employed a stone mason to create a beautiful marker in memory of the departed. They asked that a subscript be added to the stone that was to read "He was a friend of God." After the stone had been erected and the finishing touches put on the carving, the proud workman sent for the family to come and inspect the work. With a smile of satisfaction the artist pointed toward the monument. The family glanced at it a moment, and turned away, saying, "You have left out one letter, which renders all the labor you have spent on it worthless, and we cannot accept your work." He had left out only the letter R in friend, and it ruined the whole monument. It now read "He was a fiend of God." And so it is in carving the monument of our Christian characters: one pet sin may render the whole structure worthless.

D. It is not merely the violation of God's law we are to regard, but the spirit behind it. Sinfulness is to the sinner a greater evil than the sin. The sin is committed outside of his body; the sinfulness from inside his heart.

Conclusion:

A. James finishes his point by saying - James 2:12

B. We will be complete and blessed if we remember that keeping the law of Christ shows our love and reverence toward God Who will bless us in return.

1. James 1:25; John 13:17