

James 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

Analysis

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: James commends fulfilling the royal law (nomon basilikon, νόμον βασιλικόν) according to Scripture: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18). Love is royal because it comes from the King and governs His kingdom. Partiality violates this law by withholding love from certain neighbors.

Reformed ethics center on love as the summary of the moral law. Faith expresses itself through love (Galatians 5:6). James anchors his argument in Scripture, showing that the moral demands of Torah continue for Christians.

Historical Context

James, presiding over the Jerusalem council, affirmed that Gentile converts need not bear ceremonial burdens but must keep moral essentials—especially love. Diaspora believers needed clarity that loving neighbor fulfills the law, echoing Jesus' teaching and Paul's summary in Romans 13.

Calling it a royal law reminded them that their allegiance was to King Jesus, not to local patrons.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What would it look like to consciously fulfill the royal law in your context?
2. How does love expose favoritism in your relationships?
3. Where is God inviting you to costly neighbor-love this week?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	μέντοι	νόμον	τελεῖτε	βασιλικόν	κατὰ	τὴν
If	G3305	law	ye fulfil	the royal	according to	G3588
G1487		G3551	G5055	G937	G2596	
γραφὴν	Ἀγαπήσεις	τὸν	πλησίον	σου	ὡς	σεαυτόν
the scripture	Thou shalt love	G3588	neighbour	thy	as	thyself
G1124	G25		G4139	G4675	G5613	G4572
καλῶς	ποιεῖτε·					
well	ye do					
G2573	G4160					

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 19:18 (Love): 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.

Galatians 5:14 (Love): For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

James 2:12 (Word): So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

Matthew 22:39 (Love): And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Galatians 6:2 (Word): Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Leviticus 19:34 (Love): But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Jonah 4:4 (Parallel theme): Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

James 1:25 (Word): But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

2 Kings 7:9 (Parallel theme): Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

1 Peter 2:9 (Parallel theme): But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: