

18Of his own will begat he us with the **word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**19**Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be **swift to hear**, slow to speak, slow to wrath: **20**For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. **21**Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the **engrafted word**, which is *able to save your souls*. **22**But be ye doers of the **word**, and not **hearers** only, deceiving your own selves. **23**For if any be a **hearer** of the **word**, and not a doer, he is like unto a man **beholding** his natural face in a glass: **24**For he **beholdeth** himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. **25**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.

These are not merely random and loose thoughts James is putting down on paper; they follow right through. It’s easy to see that they’re tied together with an unbroken chain of key words that he uses:—“the word,” “the word of truth,” “the engrafted word,” “swift to hear,” “hearers,” “beholding,” “looking”—and all this is defined as that which “*is able to save your souls*” (*v21*). The gospel of Christ is here, open your eyes! Like stepping stones, James’ “perfect law of liberty” (*v25*) steps right back to “**the word of truth**” (*v18*), the instrumental cause that God used in their new birth—**the gospel**. Paul put it like this—“in Christ Jesus I have begotten you *through the gospel*” (*1 Cor 4:15*). James is as free to use the phrase “law of liberty” when referring to the gospel as Paul was free to use the phrase “law of faith” (*Rom 3:27*) when he was referring to the gospel! **The Ten Commandments!**—how did they get in here? a biased **SDA** notion. Without giving it a thought, they take the word “**law**” in verse 25 and *inexplicably* transform it into **Mt. Sinai’s tablets of stone**, a classic example of interpreting Scripture without even looking at the context!

What we have here is a clear definition of James’ “law of liberty”—**the gospel of Christ**. He uses this phrase *two* times. Turn back to our opening quote and see it there in verse 12, “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by *the law of liberty*.” The **SDA** said this one too is the Decalogue. But *the law of liberty is the law of liberty*, and Scripture itself has told us what this is. So another argument would be pointless. However, I did come across some sound words on this text that I’d like to share. And something that’s worth noting here—the **SDA** leaders have great respect for this Bible commentator, **Matthew Henry**. An example of their high esteem for him can be found in *Questions on Doctrine* as they use him to support their teaching on who Christ is; in three short pages they quote him *seven times!* (*pp73-75*) Here he is on **James 2:12**,

James directs Christians to govern and conduct themselves more especially *by the law of Christ*. **So speak and so do as those that shall be judged by the law of liberty**...Observe,

(1) *The gospel is called a law*. It has all the requisites of a law: precepts with rewards and punishments annexed; it prescribes duty, as well as administers comfort; and Christ is a king to rule us as well as a prophet to teach us, and a priest to sacrifice and intercede for us. *We are under the law to Christ*.

(2) *It is a law of liberty...for the service of God, according to the gospel, is perfect freedom*; it sets us at *liberty* from all slavish regards, either to the persons or the things of this world.

(3) *We must all be judged by this law of liberty*. Men’s eternal condition will be determined *according to the gospel*; this is the book that will be opened, when we shall stand before the judgment-seat; there will be no relief to those whom *the gospel* condemns, nor will any accusation lie against those whom *the gospel* justifies.

These two things James associates with “the law of liberty”: “whoso *looketh into*” (*v25*), and “they shall be *judged by*” (*v12*). This Matthew Henry firmly nails down: Christians are **under law to Christ**. Our eyes are to be fastened upon *him*; our ears are to be open to *his voice*; our lives are to be ordered as they that shall be judged *by the gospel*. The Old Covenant is gone; the New Covenant is now to govern everything God’s people do. To look to Sinai’s Law is to look in the wrong direction. “Looking unto Jesus” is to be the watchword of every believer (*Heb 12:2*). Paul taught clearly that those “tablets of stone” are “done away” and “abolished” in Christ (*2 Cor 3:7-13*). The gospel is a “law of **liberty**,” not because it gives a license to sin, but because of the grace and freedom it gives us *not to sin*! “Sin *shall not have dominion over you*: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (*Rom 6:14*); “for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath *made me free* from the law of sin and death” (*Rom 8:2*); “and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there is liberty*” (*2 Cor 3:17*); “and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall *make you free*” (*John 8:32*). Let’s move on now to **James 2:8**,

“THE ROYAL LAW”

Here again the **SDA** claims the Decalogue is referred to: “If you really keep **the royal law** found in Scripture, ‘**Love your neighbor as yourself**,’ you are doing right” (*NIV*). In the previous two verses we’ve looked at, where the **SDA**’s claim to “the Decalogue” has been overthrown, James took us *to the context*. Here, though, as you can plainly see, we don’t have to set foot *out of the verse itself* to see they’ve clearly missed it. It’s right there, “**Love your neighbor as yourself**.” This is “**the royal law found in Scripture**”—it’s found in Leviticus 19:18, and taught by Christ himself, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (*Matth 22:39*), and by the apostles (*Rom 13:8-9; Gal 5:14*). The **SDA**’s obsession with the Ten Commandments often makes them stumble like this over the plainest of texts. They believe they are *God’s special people* in these latter days who have been given a special commission to “uphold God’s Law” and thus “defend God’s honor” This is a driving passion with them; they’re consumed with it, and it causes them to go overboard as they impose the Law of Sinai, not only upon others, but upon many texts of Scripture where it doesn’t belong! We’ll hear again from **Matthew Henry**, this time on **the royal law**,

We have the law that is to guide us in all our regards to men set down in general. “If you fulfil **the royal law**, according to the scripture, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, you do well (*James 2:8*)...**This law is a royal law**, it comes from *the King of kings*. Its own worth and dignity deserve it should be thus

honoured; and the state in which all Christians now are, as it is a state of liberty, and not of bondage or oppression, makes this law, by which they are to regulate all their actions to one another, **a royal law**.

So this is the *royal* law, or *kingly* law, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” styled *royal* after the King himself, and on account of its excellence, because it carries such prominence among all other laws. All “the law and the prophets” are summed up in the Golden Rule, and Jesus said, they hang on this royal law of love (*Matth 7:12; 22:40*). “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil *the law of Christ*” (*Gal 6:2*). “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (*John 15:12*). To violate the King’s law of love is to become a “transgressor” of the law of the King! You become a “lawbreaker” when you “break” this royal law! This is the sum and substance of what James is dealing with in this context: 2:1-12, and also 4:11,12. They were condoning the sin of partiality, guilty of showing favoritism: honoring the rich in their assembly while the poor were despised. Let’s look at it honestly: **James 2:8,9**

8If ye fulfil **the royal law** according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: **9**but if ye have *respect to persons*, ye commit *sin*, and are convinced of **the law** as *transgressors*.

These Christians were in violation of the royal law, the King’s law of love. And James is coming at them with this, and this alone! Notice that these two verses are *one sentence*. James is only presenting *one thought* here with *one law* being violated: one sentence, one thought, one law: **the royal law**. *One* sin is being exposed, and he’s coming against it with *one* remedy: *the law of Christ*, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” His aim is that they recognize their *guilt in breaking* this law, and see themselves as “*lawbreakers*,” being convicted by and convinced of “**the law**” (*v9*)—**the law of Christ**—that they are “transgressors” of this law, the royal law, the King’s law! To agree that “the law” in verse 8 is *the law of love*, but “the law” in verse 9 is *the Ten Commandments*, is to deliberately “break up” and divide what James is presenting as a complete whole. Let’s turn to **James 4:11,12** now, *the royal law* is there also:

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil *of the law*, and judgeth *the law*: but if thou judge *the law*, thou art not a doer *of the law*, but a judge. There is *one lawgiver*, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Stay with James’ manner of dealing with sin in this assembly. Speaking evil of a brother and judging him is a clear violation of *the law of Christ*, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (*Matth 7:1*) and *the royal law*, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” They were guilty on both counts! So James is not only dealing with their sin of showing favoritism, he now is confronting their speaking evil one of another—both being *transgressions of the royal law* of the King—the “**one Lawgiver!**” (*v12*). There is no reason to suppose that “*the law*” spoken of here is any different from “*the law*” we just viewed in chapter 2, verses 8 & 9. Both instances are alike practical sins in this church and both are in defiance of the King’s law! To handle one, James

uses the royal law; to handle the other one, James takes that *same royal law* and lays it out before them. When he speaks of “a doer *of the law*” (*v11*), he’s merely saying, “a doer of ‘*Love your neighbor as yourself*!’” This is the King’s law! And this is precisely what it is to be a “**doer of the law**”—to love your neighbor as yourself! Allowing the Decalogue to slip into this text is completely without warrant, and reveals an *indifference* toward seriously thinking this passage through!

“THE WHOLE LAW”

In order for us to see these “**3 laws**” of James more clearly, I have here the same six verses we began with on column one, but arranged slightly different. Verse 12 is joined to verse 25, these being *the law of liberty*/the gospel. The remaining four verses are exactly as James has them, I’ve only separated them two by two. Verses 8 & 9 are *the royal law*! “Love your neighbor as yourself”; verses 10 & 11 are *the whole law*.

25But 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. **12**So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by **the law of liberty**.

8If ye fulfil **the royal law** according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. **9**But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of **the law** as transgressors.

10For whosoever shall keep **the whole law**, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. **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**.

Because *two* of the Ten Commandments are cited (*v11*), it’s easy to think that “the *whole* law” is the Decalogue, the *whole* list of all ten. That’s a *natural* way to see this—two of ten, thus *the ten* must be *the whole*. That’s *normal* thinking—the only thing is, it’s not scriptural. “**The whole law**” in Scripture is **the whole law of Moses**. God said, “...so that they will take heed to do *all* that I have commanded them, according to *the whole law*...of Moses” (*2 Chron 33:8*). The Decalogue was not *the whole law*; it was *within* the whole law, a *part* of it. Recognize that the two commandments quoted in verse 11 *are taken out of “the whole law.”* Don’t read this: “Whosoever shall keep *the Decalogue*,”—but “*the whole law*,” and follow it with *the same law!* (*v11*) *Readjust* how you see this passage. James is writing to *Jewish* believers who’ll see this perfectly: “Whosoever shall keep **the whole law**, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.” *The Decalogue* never enters the picture! *The whole law* to them was *the whole Mosaic law*: circumcision, sacrifices, feast days, etc., as well as the Decalogue. Hear the Lord say it again: “*all* that I have commanded them, *the whole law of Moses*.”

Paul settles this whole thing: “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do *the whole law*” (*Gal 5:3*). Circumcision wasn’t part of the Decalogue; yet if *the whole law* here is the Decalogue, then Paul’s argument makes no sense at all! The whole law was *all the law* given to the Jews, consisting of more than 600 commands, not just 10; yet 10 is all the **SDA** will accept in James 2:10, —**SDABelieve** (*p267*)

The 3 “Laws” of James

One of the primary errors of the Seventh-day Adventists (**SDA**) is when they see the word *law* or *commandment* anywhere in the Bible, they instinctively believe it refers to the “**Ten Commandments**.” This is something that just comes natural with them; it’s a spontaneous reaction. They’ve been programmed to think this way from the very first day they set foot in an **SDA** Church. It’s one of their principal errors, deeply rooted in their mindset, and it causes them to misinterpret vital passages of Scripture often. Let’s take as an example the following verses in **James**, **1:25** & **2:8-12**, and watch as the **SDA** directors apply “the Decalogue” anywhere they so desire.

25But 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. (*James 1:25*)

8If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: **9**But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. **10**For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. **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. **12**So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (*James 2:8-12*)

James uses the word “law” in all six verses above. Now, let’s see what the **SDA** leaders have to say about this. The following paragraph is their official teaching on three of these verses on “*law*” taken from their two prominent Statements of Faith:

In **SDABelieve** (*2006 ed., p269*), they say, “James refers to the Decalogue as ‘the royal law,’ ‘the perfect law of liberty’ (**2:8; 1:25**)”; and in *Questions on Doctrine* (*2003 ed., pp114 & 161*), speaking of “the Decalogue,” they call it “the perfect law of liberty” (**1:25; 2:12**), and say that “we shall be judged by this law” (**2:12**).

“THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY”

It’s a shame that ranking **SDA** leaders flippantly throw out inaccuracies like this, when they know their faithful followers who respect them are going to swallow it right down. It takes no special Bible training to see that these guys are completely wrong. Time after time as I study these **SDA** big wigs to see how they handle various texts of Scripture, I am amazed at their consistency to *ignore* the “key” to understanding Bible verses—**the context!** What they say in the above paragraph is *exactly* what they said, *and nothing more!* They just toss it out there for their people to gobble up, just like you’d throw a dog a bone, with no meat on it. Well I’m here to tell you, James has put some good meat on this bone! Let’s look first at **verse 12** above—**“the law of liberty.”** They say it’s “the Ten Commandments.” James says it’s “the gospel of Christ!” And he directs us to **chapter one, verses 18-25:**

As the expression of God’s character and love, *the Ten Commandments* reveal his will and purpose for humanity. They demand perfect obedience, “for whoever shall keep *the whole law*, and yet stumble in *one point*, he is guilty of all” (*James 2:10*)

By bringing *the whole law* down into *the Ten Commandments*, the **SDA** is able then to abuse James 2:10 and use it exclusively for their own advantage, virtually turning it into a “**tablet of stone**” to raise up over peoples’ heads and frighten them with warnings of judgment that if the “**fourth**” commandment is neglected, that will be the “**one point**” that will make them “**guilty of all!**” It’s always the Sabbath! And they have one purpose—to arouse a guilt complex in anyone who doesn’t do it just like they do it! And their question is always the same: “Don’t you believe in *the Sabbath!*” And the way they say it is actually an exclamation! What they’re really saying is, “Don’t you believe in *God’s Law!*” And even further, “Don’t you believe in *obeying God’s Law!*” This is really what’s behind their question of “Don’t you believe in the Sabbath?” It’s not as innocent as it sounds.

In verses 10 & 11, James’ purpose is not to bind believers under a law. If it is, then clearly, it’s the “**whole**” Mosaic law: sacrifices, circumcision, etc. We need to follow James in this context: verses 1-12. He’s dealing with their sin of partiality in verses 1-7; he brings them to “the royal law” (*v8*), for the purpose of making them to see, that regardless of all the good they may be doing, they are not “*fulfilling the royal law*” (*v8*), but instead, because of this one sin, they are “*transgressors of the law*” (*v9*). They’re trampling upon the King’s law!—“*Love your neighbor as yourself*.” They’re denying his right to rule, by turning a blind eye to his authority in this one thing. And James wants to stress his point further, so he does it with an *illustration*. This is the key to this passage, understanding that verses 10 & 11 are an *illustration*. James uses “*the law of Moses*” because this will be readily grasped and understood by his Jewish audience. He’s dealing with one sin of theirs: showing favoritism, and he illustrates this out of the Jewish law—“yet offend in one point” (*v10*). Notice how verses 10 & 11 that begin with “For” are merely a *picture* of verses 8 & 9! Look at what James does: he sets forth New Covenant law in verses 8 & 9, and illustrates this with Old Covenant law in verses 10 & 11, then brings them back to “the gospel” in verse 12!—“So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”

We’re gonna give our brains a rest now, get out of the book of James for the remainder of the tract, and **read a story**. You can draw any inferences you want to from the narrative; it’s just a piece of light-hearted humor, that hopefully will shed some good light in the right direction. God bless you all!

FREEWAYS & FEEDER ROADS

As a young fellow growing up in and around Houston, Texas in the 60’s, I knew nothing at all about “toll roads,” we had “**freeways**.” We never had to slow down and pay for anything back then, just drive—70 miles an hour! That was the speed limit. And running alongside these freeways were

“**feeder**” roads; these had posted signs of 35mph. Both the feeder roads and the freeways had their own speed limits. I believe we can take these freeways and feeder roads and their speed limits and illustrate a few spiritual and practical truths.

If you’re driving on the feeder road, you’ll see the sign posted 35mph; that’s *the law of the feeder road*. Thus, whoever drives on that feeder road will be judged by that law; they’re under that law; and if they break that law, 35mph, they’ll be judged by that law. But once you’re nearing the “on ramp” to the freeway, and you pick up speed, and leave the feeder road entering the freeway, *the law changes*, and now, no longer are you under the law of the feeder road, 35mph, because you’re no longer *on* the feeder road; you’re now *on the freeway* and are under a *new* law, *the law of the freeway*, with the speed limit sign posted, 70mph. You’re on a different road, not a road running contrary to the feeder road or conflicting with it in any way; *both* roads are headed in the *exact same direction*, you’re just on a totally different road; and now, no longer does the law of the feeder road apply to you, you’re under the law of the freeway, and the old sign of 35mph that “held you back” at one time (so to speak), is gone; and as far as you’re concerned, now that you’re on the freeway, it’s obsolete; you’re on a new road, with a new law, the law of the freeway; and this is the law that you now will be judged by.

Now because the feeder road is *so close* to the freeway, the speed limit sign on the side of the feeder road *can still be seen* once you’re on the freeway. This is not a problem for those who understand what signs to observe when driving on the freeway and what signs to pay no attention to. But for an inexperienced person to drive on the freeway without an understanding of these things, and for him to see a sign on the side of the road over there marked 35mph, believing that applies to him on the freeway, and dutifully seeing himself as *under that law*, he would abide by it to the letter. Not knowing the “**freedom**” that is his on **the freeway**, he ignorantly allows himself to be **bound** by a law that doesn’t apply to him at all.

And what comes out of this simple-minded scenario is that while he sees himself as a perfect “law-abiding” example to others, one who respectfully obeys “*all*” authority, the real truth is that he is a complete *hindrance* to everyone around him. Everybody who approaches him is held up from making progress; he’s an obstacle in the way of these people reaching their destination. His *keeping* of that law is *keeping* everybody back! And the sad truth is, he’s oblivious to it all. The cartoon character **Mr. Magoo** comes to mind. He’s just driving along with no idea of what a nuisance he really is—*35mph* on the expressway! This misguided “keeping of the law” that he has *imposed* upon himself is doing nothing but obstructing traffic and creating confusion! While he’s pleased with himself and thinks that he’s a model citizen, the very opposite is true: he’s a menace to everyone around him!

Now, as our story goes, Mr. Magoo isn’t too happy with the other travelers on the freeway passing him and moving right along, enjoying their freedom. He believes they should

be driving at the same pace he is. He’s not pleased at all; he sees himself to be in the right, and he wants everyone else to do it just like he’s doing it. So, he decides to take measures. First, he starts waving his arms around pointing to the speed limit sign over there on the feeder road. Then he gets him a loud speaker to warn all of those “*lawless*” persons, the ones that are going *right on by him*, that they’re “guilty” and will surely face the consequences of a “broken law.” Then he slaps on a huge bumper sticker that reads with oversized letters: “**Can’t you read? you lawbreakers! 35mph!**” He just goes on and on in his bold effort to prove to people that he’s right and they’re wrong. You can imagine the spectacle Mr. Magoo made of himself out there on the freeway, and what pity must have been felt for him by all those passing by.

Well, as history has it, when a person hollers loud enough and long enough, eventually a few gullible and trusting souls are persuaded by it, and that being the case, low and behold, a *following* forms behind Mr. Magoo! These loyal supporters believe his message of “**35mph**,” and join in to promote it just as enthusiastically as he. They’re all puttering along together in one sluggish procession with banners held high: “**35mph!**” They wave their arms at those passing by, and point to a sign off in the distance, shouting, “**Don’t you believe in 35mph!**” And so on and on it goes, like a broken record, they doggedly hound those passing by quizzing them with this same old question, “**Don’t you believe in 35mph!**” A question it is, but the emphasis they use makes it *an exclamation!*—as though anyone who doesn’t believe this is either stupid, doesn’t know how to read road signs, or is not interested in complying with State Laws! This is exactly how they see people who don’t believe their message! It’s like they have a banjo with only one string, and they only know this one tune, and they wear it out, “**Don’t you believe in 35mph!**” again, and again, and again! But what they’re really saying with their “holier-than-thou” attitude is: “Don’t you believe in **State Laws!**” “Don’t you believe in *obeying State Laws!*” That’s what they’re really saying! And so the whole thing becomes just a self-righteous exhibition of a small band of conceited “law-keepers” looking down their noses at everybody going by them!

Now you must understand that as all this is going on, there is *another* sign that they’re passing, the speed limit sign of the freeway, **70mph**. It’s right there, easy to see, and even closer than the feeder road sign. But for some strange reason, because the feeder road was there *first*, the old original road, and the freeway was built *later*, the sign on the feeder road, because it’s older, carries more weight; it has more authority, they say, because it’s been there longer! This belief is firmly fixed in their mind: older is better. So when they see 70mph in plain view, they just dismiss it, because their focus is on 35; this is the oldest law, the highest ranking law, thus it *cannot* be improved upon, or in any way done away with!□

—Dan Shanks