

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Publication No. 211780

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, AR

Volume 26

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

August, 1992

No. 8

RAW LAW versus ROYAL LAW

The Book of James: Part Three

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Previous articles have demonstrated that there are works that we must do in order to become a Christian, and works that we must continue in order to maintain our salvation (Matthew 7:21-23; Philippians 2:12; James 2:24). James 2:14-26 contains teaching that plainly says that "by works a man is justified and not by faith only." The only faith which is valid is a working faith. Many who teach that there is nothing that we can do to be saved, also teach that we are not under any law in this Christian age. They contend that we cannot be saved by keeping "any kind of law." James mentions "the perfect law of liberty" and "the royal law" in his letter (James 1:25; 2:8, 12). How does this law apply to Christians, if at all? Does James contradict Paul's writings which say we are not saved by law?

Different Kinds of Law

Just as we cannot be saved by some kinds of works (works of boasting or works of Moses' law - Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:28-30), neither can we be saved by some kinds of law. Those who say that we cannot be saved by "any kind of law" have misused Paul's statements on "law" just as they abuse his teaching on "works." Paul did not rule out all works pertaining to salvation or he could not have written Philippians 2:12 and Galatians 5:6. Paul agrees with James that works are somehow essential to our salvation/justification (James 2:24).

The Law of Moses

Paul did speak out against being saved by law (meaning law-keeping), just as he has spoken out against our being saved by certain kinds of works. He is quite clear in his letters to Rome and Galatia that no one can be saved by keeping the law of Moses. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under

a curse: for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in **all things** which are written in the book of the law to do them.' But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, 'The just shall live by faith' " (Galatians 3:10-11). No one could keep "all things" written in the law perfectly or continually. When one broke the law, it condemned him, placing him under the curse mentioned. That curse doomed man to eternal separation from God. The only provision which the law of Moses made for such sins was the sacrifice of animals. But the blood of these offerings could not atone fully for sin (Hebrews 10:3-4). God was "forbearing" in "passing over of the sins done aforetime," but forgiveness was not absolute (Romans 3:25). The law of Moses could not save.

"Raw" Law

"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21). Some have concluded, because of this verse, that no law has anything to do with our salvation and that Christians are not under any kind of law. Such teaching perverts Paul's intentions and ignores other Scriptures. Paul is simply saying that no system of "raw" law could save or give eternal life. "Raw" law is a code on conduct set forth for men to follow completely, with punishment for violators. Otherwise, it would have no force or meaning. When one violates raw law, he will suffer the punishment due to him. Human law codes attempt to measure out punishment to fit the law that is broken. One who speeds ten miles over the limit is not hanged, but usually given a fine. The greater the crime the more serious the punishment.

Almighty God is so holy and righteous and His laws are so just and good, that

there is but one penalty set forth in the Bible (from Genesis to Revelation) for breaking His law - that is, death, separation from God eternally (Genesis 3:16-17; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:11-15). Raw law, or just plain law, does not provide for someone other than the guilty party accepting the penalty prescribed by that law. The one who is guilty suffers the consequences. Law by itself cannot save anyone because no one can keep it perfectly, and broken law demands punishment of the guilty.

Christ's Royal Law

God's plan for redeeming man in Christ provided for a new kind of law. Christ's law has a blend of law and forgiveness that no other code could have. Under the law of Christ, we can receive absolute forgiveness when we break God's laws because Jesus Christ went to the cross and paid the penalty of death which the law demands, taking our place (Romans 5:8-9). He took both our sins and the punishment demanded, so that we could be saved in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Thus, Paul could say, "There is therefore **now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). What one law could not do **the law of Christ does!**

Note that Paul says that Christ's law sets us free from sin. Raw law could never free us from sin, but Christ's royal law does. James 2:8 refers to "royal" law, that is, law which belongs to a king or issues from him. Christ became "the prince of the kings of the earth" and made us to be His kingdom by the blood of the cross (Revelation 1:5-6). When we obey the gospel, God adds us to the church, which is the same as being translated into Christ's kingdom (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13). See also Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23, 25.

Law can be defined as a rule of action laid down by a superior for obedience by an inferior. Christ's law lays down rules

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
P. O. Box 251
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554
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Publication No. 211780

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of action for us to obey. The Lord asked some, And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" (Luke 6:46). Jesus expects us to obey His law (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21). James calls Christ's law "the perfect law of liberty" (1:25). It is perfect because it makes provision for absolute forgiveness when we violate it. It is also perfect because it is right in what it says to do and not to do, and it is complete, providing everything we need (2 Timothy 3:16-17). What great love is shown in Christ's law. How tragic that some teach we have no law to honor and keep, dishonoring the Lord.

A Law of Forgiveness

One cannot become a Christian without obeying Christ's law. No one is saved without obedience (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus said we must have faith in Him (John 3:16; 8:24), repent of our sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31), confess Him as Lord and Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized (immersed) in water for the forgiveness of our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21) and He will pardon us completely. These are laws of Christ that we can and must obey.

As Christians we still sin, but we have the promise of Jesus that even though we transgress His law, if we confess our sins and repent of them, praying for pardon, He will continue to forgive (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-10). There has never been so great a law as Christ's. Submitting yourself to Christ's law is the only way you can be saved

and remain saved! It is truly a "perfect, royal law of liberty."

Those who belittle James' epistle because of his emphasis upon being justified by works and "not by faith only," and his teaching of Christ's kingly law, simply do not understand the overall teaching of the New Testament. To be under Christ's law is to be blessed with commandments and rules which combine with God's love and grace to make certain our eternal salvation. James is in perfect harmony with the New Testament theme of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Those who violate Christ's law without seeking forgiveness in His appointed way, will suffer the punishment prescribed by that law (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Judgment day will determine your eternal destiny. Let Christ's law guide you to heaven's home (John 12:48-50).

"I Love Thy Kingdom Lord" — Enough To Defend It!

by Allen Webster

When Timothy Dwight penned the lyrics to "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord," he expressed the unfeigned feelings of thousands of Christians. Nothing in this world has a greater place of esteem for those who would literally die for Christ and His church.

The church was the object of God's eternal planning (Eph. 3:11), the Holy Spirit's revealing (Acts 3:24; Isa. 2:2-4), and Christ's suffering (Acts 20:28). It was the subject of angels' intrigue (1 Peter 1:12), prophets' interest (1 Peter 1:10-11), apostles' teaching (Acts 20:26-32), writers' treatises (Eph., Col.) and martyrs' deaths (Rev. 6:9). Paul cried for it (Phil. 3:18; 2 Cor. 11:28); Peter died for it (John 21:18-19).

Satan fought it (Mt. 16:18), Jews persecuted it (Acts 17:13; 1 Cor. 1:23), philosophers ridiculed it (Acts 17:32; 1 Cor. 1:23), kings scorned it (Acts 26:28), deserters forsook it (2 Tim. 4:10), but it survived and flourished (Acts 2:41; 5:14; 8:12; 9:31; 13:19-28).

The "love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14) to build up the church (Eph. 2:21). We are concerned about its purity (Eph. 5:27). But, as Nehemiah of old, we sometimes have to build with one hand and defend with the other (4:17). Since the beginning, Christians have fought error in and out of the body (1 Tim.

1:19-20; Acts 13:10-11).

The very nature of fellowship in the church is love, sharing and trust. It seems unthinkable that a dear brother would teach something that would deceive minds, destroy faith and damn souls. We do not want to believe he is a false teacher because he is a brother. The fellowship tie makes us want to excuse or justify such a brother. (Jimmy Jividen, *Gospel Advocate*, Feb. 1992, 17). But we love truth and souls enough not to bury our heads in the sand and ignore the danger of false doctrine. False teachers are to be treated as Paul instructed the church in Rome to deal with such men (Rom. 16:17-18; Tit. 3:9-11).

Uncertain sounds are being heard from pulpits and strange words are appearing in religious papers. Though many false teachers are certain about their thoughts, they nonetheless speak uncertain sounds. The New Testament word (*adelos*) means "not apparent or obvious; uncertain; not distinct" (Moulton); to "give an indistinct sound, so that the signal cannot be recognized" (Arndt and Gingrich).

Paul wrote: "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye speak into the air" (1 Cor. 14:7-9).

As the church is the Lord's army, how disastrous, at the critical moment, to doubt whether the trumpet sounds Advance or Retreat (cf. Num. 10:1-10)! False trumpeters are costing soldiers' souls.

Though an unpleasant task, faithful elders, courageous preachers and concerned members feel compelled to sound the warning about current false doctrines (Ezek. 3:17). The "care of the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28) is a weight upon their shoulders. Jesus warned of false prophets (Mt. 7:15); John commanded saints to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Paul said wolves would "enter in among you, not sparing the flock... of your own selves shall men arise, speak-

ing perverse things" (Acts 20:29-30). A scientist illustrated a beaker's strength by using it to drive a nail into a plank. He then dropped a small marble into the same bottle, whereupon the container shattered. Resistant to blows from the outside, it fell victim to destruction from within. Just so, what atheists and sectarians have been unable to do from outside the church, false teachers are now accomplishing from inside.

As teachings and teachers are exposed, it must be with the attitude of "weeping" for those who have gone astray. Paul wrote, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19). We seek to restore them in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). **Nonetheless, for the good of the church, false teaching must be exposed!**

The Bible says, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:9). Love the church enough to defend it from false teaching.

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*This is the wish I always wish,
The prayer I always pray:
Lord, may my life help other lives
It touches on life's way.*

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WHY RETURN, PAUL?

by Terry Wayne Frizzell

Editor's Note: Terry W. Frizzell is one of two young men that the church in Mammoth Spring helps to support in the Memphis School of Preaching. We thank him for his soul-stirring article.

Paul had a great desire to get back to the church at Thessalonica. Once and again he tried but Satan hindered him (1 Thess. 2:18). He wanted with all his heart to return to his brethren in Thessalonica. Why did Paul want to go back?

When Paul first came to Thessalonica he reasoned with them three Sabbaths (Acts 17:1-3). He knew that the Jewish synagogue was the best place to teach the truth. He went into the synagogue and preached unto them the gospel of God (1 Thess. 2:2). He "preached unto them Jesus" (Acts 17:3). What does it mean to preach Jesus? Philip "preached Jesus" to the Eunuch. Somewhere in this teaching had to be instructions concerning the essentiality of baptism because of the response of the eunuch (Acts 8:35, 36). The eunuch said, "Here is water; what hinders me from being baptized?" He believed that Jesus had suffered, died and rose again to give us salvation, through our faith and obedience. This is preaching Jesus.

The lesson that Paul taught was the same lesson that caused him to be persecuted. Paul and Barnabas had to flee from Iconium to Lystra to keep from being stoned. They had preached Jesus in Iconium. When they went from Iconium to Lystra they continued to preach the Gospel (Acts 14:5-7). Paul was stoned in Lystra and left for dead, because he preached Jesus. He went on to Derbe and continued to preach (Acts 14:19-21). Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, because they were preaching Jesus. They were driven out of Philippi, so they went to Thessalonica, where they continued to preach Jesus (Acts 16:23). The Jews stirred up a riot against Paul and he had to flee from Thessalonica to Berea, because he was preaching Jesus. He continued to preach the word (Acts 17:5-9).

With all the persecution in Thessalonica why did Paul want to go back? They were his brethren in Christ. He was affectionately desirous of them (1 Thess. 2:8). They were his joy (1 Thess. 2:20). He loved them so much and was worried about the persecutions they were

experiencing (1 Thess. 3:3). He was willing to go through those persecutions himself just to give them help. Why should this be an example to us? God has entrusted us with his Word (1 Thess. 2:4). It is our job to teach it (2 Tim. 4:2). If we don't do it, who will? If "I" don't do it, who will?

Paul not only loved his brethren enough to be persecuted for them, he loved all men enough to be persecuted, so he could teach them. The people at Thessalonica were not Christians when Paul first came to them. Yet, he was willing to be persecuted so that they could be saved.

Suppose with me for a moment that you have a brother, sister, mother, father, son, or maybe a daughter who is not a Christian. Also suppose you are in an isolated room with them. Outside the door is a man waiting to kill your family member. Inside you have the knowledge of the scriptures. If your family member leaves the room in an unsaved condition they will be killed and lost eternally! **PREACH TO THEM!**

Statistics tell us that 14,400,000 people die yearly without God; 1,200,000 die monthly without Christ; 280,000 will pass into eternity this week in a lost state; 40,000 will die without Christ in the next 24 hours. 1,289 will die in their sins this very hour. Twenty-one people died in a lost state while you read this conclusion. Don't you think it's time we get busy and do something about this?

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SELF-ESTEEM AND CHRISTIANITY

by Ted J. Clarke

"America is besieged by a low sense of self-esteem." So says researcher George Barna in his book, *The Frog in the Kettle* (p. 229). Another quote from the same book claims, "[W]e have nagging doubts about our ability to ever find true and total happiness" (p. 158). Perhaps the last quote gives us a key as to why the first exists. Mr. Barna is probably right. Many Americans, including a large number of Christians, have the sense of frustration mentioned in his statements above. Why?

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Self-esteem is basically the way one feels about oneself. If we generally feel good about ourselves, we have self-esteem. If we do not think that we are "pretty good" in most ways, we are likely to suffer from low self-esteem. To recognize that we are sinners and that we need Christ is not low self-esteem. It is reality (Romans 3:23; 6:23). It is also possible for a person to think more highly of oneself than one ought to think (Romans 12:3). It may be possible that one is not happy in this life because he/she thinks that one who is a Christian should not have any problems. Jesus plainly told His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Is it possible to have proper self-esteem and true happiness? Yes!

In Christ we have the promise of every spiritual blessing now and the promise of eternal life (Ephesians 1:3, 7; 2:1-5). Shouldn't that make us happy? When we realize that we are somebody, not because we are so great, but, because we are in Christ, we should have the proper kind of self-esteem! Feel good about yourself because you know that you have been saved. Jesus died for you! He was raised and now lives and reigns to keep you saved. Yes, we sin and that can create low self-esteem. But Christ keeps on forgiving you if you keep on confessing your sins and seeking His forgiveness (1 John 1:7-10). If Jesus can love me, though I keep on sinning, who am I to think less of myself than Christ does?! If you cannot accept that, your faith is too weak. Do you believe the Scriptures listed and quoted above? If so, then think of yourself what God thinks of you. **You are His child!** It really isn't important whether you are pretty or handsome, rich, popular, intelligent, etc. If your inner being is rooted in Christ and His word, **no one in this world can be better than you are.**

As for true happiness, read Philippians 4:4-13. Again, true joy is not found in outward circumstances, but in the Lord. Total happiness must wait for heaven, where there are no tears (Revelation 21:3-5). True happiness is knowing the Lord's will and doing it (John 13:17). Read Romans 8:31-39 and thank God you are His, in Christ.

Great preaching requires great listening.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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