

James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he becomes guilty of all. (NASB)

1. I normally introduce the verse we are about to study with a translation from the New American Standard Bible as noted above. One of the issues we will encounter in our exegesis from the Greek requires that we also introduce verse 10 with a translation from the King James Version:

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (KJV)

2. It turns out that the NASB translation is a much better translation and becomes a good example of why the King James Bible needed an upgrade which the NIV and NET Bibles also provided.
3. This verse introduces not really a switch *from* the Royal Law but *advancing* the Royal Law to include the Law in general, especially with regard to legalism. This subject is addressed in verses 10–13. Verse 10 begins with the causal conjunction, **γάρ** (*gár*): “for.”
4. The situation addressed in this verse is designed to amplify the concept of the Royal Law, first noted in Leviticus 19:18 and is expanded here to include the entire Law.
5. Remember what Jesus said to the lawyer who asked Him, “Which is the great commandment of the Law?” in Matthew 22:36–40. Jesus responded in verses 37–40 by saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.”
6. The Lord then continued by citing the Royal Law, concluding His remarks with this doctrinal principle:

Matthew 22:40 “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

7. The phrase, “the whole Law and the Prophets,” is a term that refers to the entirety of the Tanakh. This concept comes over into the New Testament since both these commandments are specific to all dispensations beginning with the Mosaic Law.
8. The causal conjunction *gár*, “for,” indicates the cause for applying the Royal Law. If you do not do so then your entire spiritual life is put on hold. Those who do not have unconditional love toward others enter into a behavior pattern that puts one’s spiritual life on hold because of reversionism.

9. When one's abandonment of his spiritual life is prolonged it eventually results in reverse process reversionism. This condition is summarized by the principle, "inversion of thought."

Reverse Process of reversionism is an inversion of thought into soul degeneracy by the reversal of objects. In this final stage of reversionism, the bona fide objects of love, including consistent study of the Word of God, personal love for God, occupation with Christ, and familial absolutes, are all reversed. This inversion occurs when a believer abandons the pursuit of truth and instead focuses on the "things of the world."¹

10. Anyone who does this is identified next by the indefinite singular noun, **ὅστις** (*hóstis*): "whoever." It is followed by an indefinite relative clause which is designed to illustrate a principle with a principle.

11. The principle is established in:

James 2:8 If [**protasis of a 1st-class condition**] you apply the Royal Law according to the Scripture, "You shall unconditionally love from personal integrity those you encounter," [**apodosis**] honorably, you must keep on doing this. (EXT)

12. In verse 9, James reveals how the sin of partiality violates the Royal Law and uses it as a principle for what follows. In verse 10, James begins with, "For whoever keeps," the aorist active subjunctive of **τηρέω** (*tērēō*): "to keep watch over; to guard; to denote the condition that is to remain unharmed."
13. The idea is to protect the Word by preventing one's volition from violating its commandments. This requires the individual to consistently obey all commandments without fail, and to do so perfectly.
14. Therefore, if one decides to keep the Law perfectly, then he must take on the obligation to do so by guarding it with his volition on a daily basis, never allowing himself to flag in his duty to maintain absolute perfection.
15. In order to accomplish this feat, the individual must obey the "whole law": **ὅλον τὸν νόμος** (*hólon tón nómos*): literally, "all the law," but consistently translated in all the English versions, "the whole law."

¹ See Joe Griffin, "The Doctrine of Reversionism," in *James: Chapter Two*, Joe Griffin Media Ministries, lessons 10–11: <http://www.joegriffin.org/Pages/ClassInfo.aspx?&seriesid=JAS2&classnumber=10>



16. What emerges is this expanded translation, “For whoever perfectly obeys the whole law.” Not just the Royal Law, but now all of Scripture’s imperative moods.
17. Next comes the caveat, “and yet stumbles,” the aorist active subjunctive of **πταίω (ptaíō)**: “to make a mistake, go astray, sin.” This is followed by the prepositional phrase, “but in one point”: **δὲ ἐν εἰς (dé en heís)**: “but in one.”²
18. The word “point” does not occur in the Greek text, but in context, the number one refers to any commandment found in Scripture. The noun “one,” (*heís*) is defined as, “a single thing, with focus on quantitative aspect, *one*—in contrast to more than one.”
19. Now, when that one sin occurs, James drives home the point, “he has become guilty of all.” The verb “has become” is the perfect active indicative of **γίνομαι (gínomai)** and is correctly translated.
20. The King James translates *gínomai* with the verb “is.” This misses the point which we must explore.
21. This verb is an intensive perfect which may be used:

... to emphasize the results or present state produced by a past action. The Greek perfect is concerned with result. The use of the perfect does not exclude the notion of a completed act; rather, it focuses on the resultant state.³
22. The best translation is, “He has become something he was not before.” The Bible regards a person innocent until he is confirmed guilty. So, this individual starts out innocent but is later found guilty by the Law.
23. The verb *tērēō* means that this person guards the Law for the purpose of keeping it unharmed. So, he starts out innocent. He is a good Jew guarding something very important and is doing a wonderful job.
24. Then, suddenly, he sins “in one point.” The King James continues by translating the verb *gínomai* with “is” instead of “has become.” It is only at the point of committing a sin that he becomes guilty.
25. The biblical principle is that a person is innocent until proven guilty. This divine principle is incorporated into our Constitution and reflected in Amendments IV through VII.

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed. rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 291.

³ Daniel B. Wallace, “Intensive Perfect,” in *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 574, 575.



26. April 15 is fast approaching and if you had, according to the Internal Revenue Services, “excessive income,” then you are to send what is considered your excess to the Federal Government. Make sure every “t” is crossed and every “i” dotted or you will be considered guilty until you prove yourself innocent.
27. On the other hand, the Bible indicates that you are innocent until you violate a divine standard at which point you become guilty. And when you have become guilty of one commandment then you are said to be guilty of all.
28. The word “guilty” is the predicate adjective **ἔνοχος (énochos)**: “guilty of sin and consequently obliged to punishment on that account.”⁴
29. This individual has become something he was not before which is guilty. What this refers to is how Jews misunderstood the meaning of the Mosaic Law. Many thought if they kept all of its 600-plus imperative moods, then they would go to heaven when they died.
30. None was capable of doing this, yet all tried really hard to do so. To make his point, James digs halfway into the Pentateuch at Leviticus 19 verse 18 and hauls out this commandment by the Lord, “... you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
31. Jesus told the lawyer in Matthew 22 that the most important commandment after the mandate to “love the Lord your God” is to “love your neighbor as yourself.”
32. This confirms from both testaments that Number 2 on the divine hit parade is the Royal Law. And how is this law to be understood and applied? First of all, if you love God, then you have the ultimate example of how to love your neighbor.
33. To understand love, the believer must understand the love of God. The love of God is the integrity of God. The integrity of God is made up of His righteousness which refers to the absolute standards of His character.
34. Righteousness refers to absolutes. Whatever God thinks is absolute truth; there is no falsehood, error, or prevarication. If God is love, then that love must be based on absolute principles in His dealing with mankind.
35. Man is fallen; therefore, he must believe in Christ to acquire the thinking of God from Bible study. Spiritual growth builds up an inventory of righteous absolutes in the soul.

⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 592.



36. God's integrity also includes His justice, the attribute that protects God's righteous standards. When they are violated by man then justice must address that violation with the purpose of changing one's behavior.
37. Spiritual growth also informs the believer about divine justice and how it disciplines violations of God's righteous standards.
38. The free will of man must use his inventory of divine standards to inform himself of how to make good decisions from their positions of strength. However, events and circumstances occur that cause the sin nature to react toward some of them.
39. Volition must intervene to apply justice to the situation and guard against becoming guilty of violating a divine standard, namely, to "love your neighbor as yourself."
40. When functioning under the principles of personal integrity, the believer is fulfilling the Royal Law for it is his integrity that does not allow his sin nature to seek revenge.
41. So, it turns out that love for those individuals in your periphery is really the application of personal integrity that is developed through consistent Bible study and the accumulation of divine standards.
42. The Royal Family Honor Code gives wonderful examples of how to use the Royal Law toward one's adversaries. For example,

Romans 12:17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

v. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

v. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." (See Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30)

v. 20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." (See Proverbs 25:21–22)

v. 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (NASB)



43. These Honor Code examples give guidance on how to avoid conflict among believers as well as unbelievers. Its examples demonstrate the integrity of God. His integrity consists of His Righteousness, Justice, and Omniscience to produce His love that functions under His policy of grace.
44. Believers become more efficient at applying the Royal Law as they acquire expanded knowledge of God's righteousness and justice.
45. Therefore, the love of God is defined by the attributes of His integrity which function under a policy of grace. If a believer is to love God, He must busy himself about acquiring those standards of integrity that are found in Scripture in imperative moods.
46. If you love God, it means you have acquired His righteous standards while relying on volition to guard against falling under the disciplinary hand of justice should you violate them.
47. If you love those in your periphery, then you have accumulated principles from divine righteousness which direct you not to take vengeance against them, but to allow God to execute His justice which is always fair.
48. The Love of God is the Integrity of God and the Integrity of God is the Love of God. Whatever Righteousness demands Justice must execute. Whatever Righteousness rejects Justice must discipline.
49. The believer's love for those in his periphery is the expression of accumulated righteousness in the soul backed by his volition functioning under the guiding hand of Justice.
50. Believers do not have the authority to impose Justice on those in their periphery who sin or commit wrongdoing, but rather to allow the Justice of God to manage the situation.
51. In all cases, the integrity of God and the love of God function under the divine policy of grace. In the same fashion, believers are to love those in their periphery under the divine policy of grace.
52. Failure to do this results in being ensconced in the error discussed in James 2:10. For example, to violate the divine standard of not showing partiality would be a stumble which results in being guilty of all imperative moods.
53. We recently visited Luke 18:18–27 where the rich young ruler approached the Lord to ask, "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"
54. In the Lord's response, He cited from the Ten Commandments, numbers 6 through 9, having to do with murder, adultery, theft, and perjury. Jesus then went back to the imperative to honor one's father and mother in number 5 and then summed it up by giving a summary of number 10, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Exodus 20:19*b*).

