

FULFILLING THE REGAL LAW

by Larry Dickens

James writes about applied faith. Here the impartial practice of hospitality is echoing your faith in the Lord because it exemplifies in its personal application of God's regal law of brotherly love.

Several principles are obvious:

1. **God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34)**; He expects the same of His children. Even further, God chose the poor of this world to be rich in faith (verse 5). The poor righteous man is a far better person than a rich man (Proverbs 28:6). So worldly Aches should not be esteemed above righteousness.

2. **How guests in the assembly (verse 2) are treated is always a matter of concern to God.** He wants the unlearned (1st Cor. 14:16, 23) to be able to say "Amen" to what they see. If proper hospitality is important at a spiritual assembly, must He not also care about the hospitality of Christians in social settings as well?

3. **"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).** In defining the standards of behavior toward our beloved brethren, God then wants us to learn to look at men as He does!

4. **Showing partiality is sin because it violates God's regal law.** See the "golden rule" (Matthew 7:12). Just a brief walk in the shoes of the poor man would help us quickly to see the poor man's reaction to hospitality with partiality.

5. Logically argued, it doesn't make sense to honor men who are successful by oppressing others (verse 6), while dishonoring those who love God (verse 5).

Whatever reasons we might show partiality, they're not virtuous. If we make "distinctions among yourselves" and we become "judges with evil motives," hasn't the pharisaical heart (hypocrisy) permeated the fabric of our character? Are we not "practicing our righteousness before men to be noticed by them" (Matthew 6:1)? Could it be that our actions betray our covetousness (Ephesians 5:5) or our love of money (Hebrews 13:5)? And are we leaving with the rich unbeliever an honest impression?

Much good is done (and taught) by the example of proper hospitality both in and out of the assembly:

1. When carnal (money) considerations are deliberately abused, we testify to the importance of spiritual values in our lives (Matthew 6:33).
2. Any man rich in faith (rich or poor) will most likely be too humble to desire special hospitality, but to displace the faithful brother because he's poor is a blatant slap in the face of the richness of his faith. By showing hospitality without respect of persons, we declare to everyone in the assembly that all people (Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female, rich or poor) are important to us & are recognized as equals in the sight of God (Galatians 3:28).
3. Impartiality, regardless of the money, discourages the vanity of riches in the life of the rich man himself. We could cause the rich man to stumble in pride or in love of money or in the sins of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:6). It is sad (and it is sin) anytime we do not discourage evil.

4. By practicing equality in hospitality, we may avoid casting the stumbling block of discouragement in the already arduous road of the poor brother. It is ignominious anywhere, but especially in the assembly, when our misbehavior causes a weaker brother to stumble (Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 8:11).

5. By hospitality without partiality, we just might entertain angels (Hebrews 13:2) that otherwise we might miss. I doubt if angels (or even God's faithful) usually come disguised as rich men.

6. **When we apply the golden rule (royal law of love), we put into practice the virtue of brotherly love. Violating the regal law of brotherly love is sin. If the sin is to make "distinctions among yourselves" and to become "judges with evil motives," does this principle not also apply to favoritism because of popularity, race, education, politics, or religious position? This is not some theological or sociological position. The holding of faith (verse 1) by the careful practice of brotherly love affects what we do (hospitality) & how we do it (without partiality). Hospitality, whether at home or in the assembly of the saints must be practiced; and that without respect of persons. None may be overlooked & no one may be honored to the slighting of another. We can be sure that God will be observing our attitude of love toward one another and the behavior that it elicits, especially in the assembly.'**

¹ Dickens, L. (1998). [Fulfilling the Regal Law: Hospitality without Partiality \(2:1–9\)](#). (D. Bowman, Ed.) *Christianity Magazine*, 15(6), 15.