

There IS no Difference

Rom 3:21-23

1

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

As with many passages that we can read in the scriptures there are many truths and lessons that can be learned. This is just such a passage. Paul writes of the Righteousness of God being manifested apart from the Old Law. This is a wonderful lesson on both what the Righteousness of God is and how it is manifested to man. He talks of the Righteousness of God being revealed through faith in Christ Jesus, but only to those that believe. And the Apostle talks about...

2

"There is no difference"

This is a captivating statement. In what is there no difference? Does he mean that all men are alike in all respects? Obviously not, there are vast variations in men. Some are regenerate in their acceptance that there is a God. Some blaspheme the very existence of Jesus as Christ and as Son of God. Some deny the eternal truth of the inspired Word of Truth. Some seek God, but only on their terms. Some seek to do right, but only in half-way measures. Others are sincere in their seeking, but look for God in the teachings of man, and there are those who give themselves to God through Jesus Christ in faithful obedience to the Word. Even in the different categories, if you will, that we have enumerated, each man is different, what he is, who he is. All men are not totally lost to Satan, though some are; all are not equally stubborn with hardened hearts, though that is an affliction many bear; so when Paul said, "There is no difference," he did not mean that there are no differences of outward character.

Does our outward character matter? Do the convictions of our heart mean anything? What do we show to the world and to our brothers and sisters in Christ? The truth is inescapable, it shall be found, in the final analysis, that the thoughts of our hearts and the actions of our opinions were have to stand the scrutiny of the truth of the Word and we will be judged by the righteous judge.

Luke 12:47

3

47 And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,

God is not unjust; even when taking vengeance upon the unfaithful and disobedient, He offers justice to all, at all times. It is for our good, and for the good of those about us, that we should be moral, and temperate, and chaste, and honest, that we should be the kind of person God wants us to be. The deeds of our lives, all the deeds of our lives, will be what we are judged by according to God's Word.

The point is that the differences that there are in personalities and characteristics in men don't mean that there is a difference in how those men will be judged by the unwavering standard regardless of their sincerity of opinion or intent of heart.

4

“For there is no distinction”

The sad part of this discussion is that we all know people who have yet to be converted that are good, kind, compassionate people. They think of their fellow-man, they are honest, trustworthy, they are good people, but they have no relationship with God, because they have yet to choose to have a relationship with God. Oh they might attend services, maybe even participate in the Worship of God, but they haven't or maybe won't, take that culminating step of committing themselves to God in faithful obedience.

As we look at this idea of there being no distinction, there are some thoughts that come to mind. There is no distinction...

5

- 1) In Sin
- 2) Penalty for that Sin
- 3) Propitiation for Sin

This first thought, there is no distinction...

6

- 1) In Sin

This may very well be one of the most difficult ideas for the world to accept. It flies in the face of all logic and what man thinks is common sense. I mean seriously, telling a little white lie, that dress makes you look sixteen again or you look just as young as ever, even though you are balding, how in the world could these ever possibly equate to being as bad as a horrendous crime like rape or murder? Its man who measures the enormity of a sin based on man's reasoning's and opinions. There is a danger in that kind of thinking. When we begin to place degrees on sins, we begin the process of minimalizing some sins in comparison to others. The little white lie isn't as bad as stealing which isn't as bad as being a drunkard which is better than being a murderer. This dynamic is what governs our judicial system here in the states. The penalty for shoplifting is far less than the penalty for counterfeiting. The penalty for grand theft auto is less than for murder. This is what is taught us and what we have come to expect so we transfer that thinking and those assumptions to sin and the Law of God. That assumption is both invalid and in error. As far as the Law of God is concerned, sin is defined as...

1 John 3:4

7

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Sin is lawlessness. Sin is doing those things that are against God's Law. God's Law offers no degrees of sin nor does it offer degrees of punishment for that sin.

Is there a distinction between sins? If so, are there distinctions in the penalty for sin? There are some passages that get turned to by people who want to argue for degrees of punishment. The first that is often cited is, I think, misused.

Luke 17:2

8

2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.

The point Christ is making here has nothing to do with final punishment; rather He is talking about the heinousness of leading a child astray. False teachers, blasphemers, deceivers, any and all who lead others astray however, including their example would be better dead than lead someone else away from God. This passage is not speaking of final judgment, but there is one that causes some confusion...

2 Peter 2:20-21

9

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. **21** For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

Many look at Peter's statement here and conclude that he is saying that in some sense the punishment will be worse for the one who having believed, turned away, back to the world of sin. In a sense, that is what he is saying, but in application the point isn't that there will be some parts of Hell that contain greater torment than others, degrees of punishment, but rather, I think it is meant to describe for us how it is going to be for the one who has fallen away knowing that he had the opportunity to be saved, and made the choice to give it up. We know that there is apparently an awareness of those in torment. That is seen in the account of Lazarus and the rich man...

Luke 16:22-23

10

22 Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. **23** In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

The rich man was aware of where he was at, he was aware that Lazarus was not in torment. I have to believe that the one who is judged as unfaithful will be aware of their circumstances and why they are there. Now compound that awareness with the knowledge that their sins had been forgiven and they chose to give it up. It truly would be better if they had never known the way of the truth then to suffer an eternity knowing they had given it up.

That's what sin does to man. It separates him from God. It brings about death.

James 1:14-15

11

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. **15** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

James gives us the progression of sin here. Man is tempted, lured towards disobedience by his own desire and lust, by the opportunities that Satan presents. Then when man gives in to that desire and lust and disobeys, that is sin, and it results in death, spiritual death, separation from God. That is the result of sin, any sin, any act of lawlessness, any disobedience, regardless of how small or incidental we might think it to be. God does not think of any sin as small.

James 2:10

12

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

Which point is it ok to ignore? Which point does God consider to incidental? A small lie? Is it ok to hate your brother?

1 Peter 1:22-23

13

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, **23** for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

God commands us to love one another. Well, surely, he doesn't mean everyone. Which point is it ok to ignore?

Heb 10:24-25

14

24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, **25** not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

God commands us to assemble. Seriously, he doesn't mean every time, does He? I mean, as long as I am there once or twice, I'll be ok. That decision is way above my paygrade. I only know what God says in James about obedience and in Heb. about assembling, you have to make your own decision from there.

This brings us to our next point in this idea that there is no distinction. There is no distinction in the...

15 2) Penalty for Sin

We have already had some discussion concerning the penalty and the fact that there are degrees of punishment in heaven. Sin, disobedience to God's Word, is sin, whether it be for what we might consider to be something trivial or something enormous. In...

Rev 21:8

16

8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone,

Liars, those that are immoral, are lumped into the same category as the abominable and murderers, and all will be cast into torment, to die eternally. Where is the distinction between the penalty for these sins? There is none. All are cast into the lake.

John 3:35-36

17

35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. **36** He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John here equates belief to obedience, the point being that if someone says they believe but don't obey, they lie.

Paul, speaking to Jews that had believed and come to God through Christ, uses the Old Law as an illustration to show them the principles that have always been applicable to God's Law and

how He expects it to be honored. He demands it be obeyed, and He wrecks vengeance on all those that choose to not obey it.

Rom 2:12-13

18

12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; **13** for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

There is no distinction between those that are with the Law or those that are without the Law, all that sin will be judged by that Law. Just hearing it and even knowing it is not enough, God demands doing it, faithful obedience. The thing is, regardless of man's reaction to the Law; belief, disbelief, obedience or disobedience, man will be measured by that Law.

Matt 10:28

19

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

God can and will destroy body and soul in hell for the unfaithful and disobedient. This is where the points we tried to earlier become important. Sin is faithlessness. Sin is disobedience. Sin is what brings the wrath of God. As we saw in James, sin brings death, eternal death in hell.

But, this lesson is not all about gloom and doom, if you will, our last point is...

20

3) Propitiation for that Sin

1 John 2:1-2

21

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; **2** and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

22

Hilaskomai (NT:2433)

Was used amongst the Greeks with the significance "to make the gods propitious, to appease, propitiate," inasmuch as their good will was not conceived as their natural attitude, but something to be earned first.

The idea is to satisfy. Jesus, through His sacrifice became the propitiation, the satisfaction, for the penalty that sin demands, death. That penalty must be paid, because that is God's Law. Somehow, somehow, that penalty must be paid. Christ paid that penalty for all men...

1 Cor 15:21

23

21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

There is no distinction, all men sin. There is no distinction, all sin is disobedience. There is no distinction, all sin brings about death, spiritual death. There is no distinction, Christ paid that penalty for all men who come to Him in faithful obedience. The only question left is..

24

Did He pay it for you?