

Doctrine vs Judgment

According to Webster's Dictionary, doctrine is defined as...

1 *“A belief (or system of beliefs) accepted as authoritative by some group or school”*

This definition, while absolutely true, does leave out something of importance to the Christian. Paul, in his letter to Timothy says...

1 Tim 4:6

2

6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

Paul describes to Timothy that there is doctrine and then there is...

3

“Sound Doctrine”

The difference between doctrine and sound doctrine is illustrated in Webster's definition. It says doctrine is any belief or set of beliefs that a group or an individual accept to practice or follow. The sound doctrine that Paul is speaking of to Timothy is not just any belief or set of beliefs, but is rather **THEE** set of beliefs that have been given to man to follow, to guide him in his worship of God, and to lead him into a right relationship with God.

Rom 12:2

4

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul writes that we are to be transformed out of this world by the renewing of our minds by the will of God, that is His Word, the Word that is given to man to guide him into all righteousness.

2 Tim 3:16-17

5

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

God gave His scriptures, His Word, to be man's doctrine, to be that set of beliefs that man is to follow, to guide him, and to lead him into righteousness, so that man might be perfect, furnished unto every good work. That, by definition, is sound doctrine.

Judgment, on the other hand, is something different. Webster's defines it as...

6

*The act of judging or assessing a person or situation or event; judging contestants
The capacity to assess situations or circumstances shrewdly and to draw sound conclusions
The cognitive process of reaching a decision or drawing conclusions
The legal document stating the reasons for a judicial decision*

*The mental ability to understand and discriminate between relations
(Law) the determination by a court of competent jurisdiction on matters submitted to it
An opinion formed by judging something, as in; It is my judgment*

There is a distinctive difference between the definitions of doctrine, and most especially sound doctrine, and those of judgment. If doctrine is the set of beliefs that govern the actions of someone or a group of someone's, then judgments must be understood as the conclusions, or opinions, that someone draws from whatever doctrine they have accepted as truth.

Wikipedia talks about Church of Christ doctrine this way...

7 *Members of the Churches of Christ believe that Jesus founded only one church, that the current divisions among Christians do not express God's will, and that the only basis for restoring Christian unity is the Bible. ... They believe that they are recreating the New Testament church as established by Christ.*

Surprisingly, Wikipedia has put forth the tenets of the Church of Christ very accurately. God, through Paul in his writings to the Ephesians says...

Eph 4:1-6

8

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, *2* with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, *3* being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *4* There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; *5* one Lord, one faith, one baptism, *6* one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Over the course of the next few weeks, we are going to be looking at some of the things that are God's doctrine. Please take note that I didn't say Church doctrine or even our doctrine, though I think both statements would be true as well as accurate. But I want to differentiate between what we or even our local body here, the Church, might accept and the idea that God has established His doctrine. The point being that what God has established as doctrine, His absolute truth, He expects His Church and every individual to accept as their doctrine. When people ask...

9

“What does your Church teach or believe?”

The answer must be...

10

“Anything and everything God says in His Word”

It is important that when people try to create a you against us type of atmosphere that we try to point out that it's not their beliefs against our beliefs but rather it's what they have chosen as their doctrine against what God says in His Word, regardless of what we may or may not accept as doctrine.

Paul begins this passage by saying to these Christians that they should walk in a manner worthy of their calling. He addresses this idea of our calling and also defines it...

Rom 8:28-30

11

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; **30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Brother Wilson did an outstanding job last week in showing what this idea of scriptural predestination is talking about. It isn't that as individuals God has already decided what our fate will be regardless of any choice we might make. Rather it is talking about the fact that God **has** decided that that group of people who have made the decision to come to Him in faithful obedience through Jesus Christ will be saved and receive a reward in heaven. That is the group of people that have been predestined. That said, it is up to each of us, as individuals to decide whether or not we will be part of that group. That is the walk that Paul is speaking of, walking, living our lives, as if we are a part of that predestined group. That is the calling under consideration in Ephesians, God's invitation to all men to become part of that predestined group.

Paul is begging the Ephesians to pursue this walk, this life of being a Christian by pointing out to them that their attitude towards God will be manifested in their actions towards one another in their...

- 12** A) Humility
Not acting towards anyone out of arrogance or superiority
- 13** B) Gentleness
Not being harsh with one another, acting out of love and compassion
- 14** C) Patience
Giving the benefit of the doubt, understanding that we all make mistakes
- 15** D) Tolerance for one another
Acceptance of each other, even if we don't always agree with each other
- 16** E) Unity with one another
Working with each other towards the common goal

These comments have a very interesting application to all Christians, especially in light of what is about to be said in the rest of the passage. How we treat and act towards one another is a matter of doctrine. We must all be striving to be joined with one another in the preservation through the Spirit in the...

17

"Bond of Peace"

These comments are not necessarily instructing them in their relationship with God, though they could be applied that way, but I think they are intended to help define for God's children how we should act towards one another. This is the doctrine of how all Christians should behave towards one another based on the things that are going to be illustrated for us in the next verses.

So, in the course of the next several lessons we are going to look at some of the things that God says are doctrine, and we have a very good start right here in Ephesians. There is only...

- 18**
- 1) One Body
 - 2) One Spirit
 - 3) One Hope of our Calling
 - 4) One Lord
 - 5) One Faith
 - 6) One Baptism
 - 7) One God and Father

These are the things that Wikipedia pointed out as being the statement of doctrine of the Church of Christ.

Now let's look at the idea of judgment as opposed to doctrine. Doctrine says that if we choose to eat the meat, there isn't anything wrong with that.

1 Cor 8:4

19

4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.

That is doctrine, to try and make the eating of meat anything other than nothing is to violate doctrine, it is adding to or taking away from God's Word. But, and this is vastly important, just because doctrine says that there is nothing wrong with eating something sacrificed to idols doesn't mean that we should. Karen has a saying that she uses...

20

“Just because we can, doesn't mean we should”

That is the point of judgment. There are things that either doctrine doesn't address or doesn't say we shouldn't engage in that we all have to decide if it's something that we should. So while doctrine may allow us the liberty to, the question for all of us is whether or not we should. Paul says...

1 Cor 8:13

21

13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

That is the point of judgment, we get to decide, we get to make our own assessment as to how we will apply divine doctrine that may not be absolutely specific in what it says. Doctrine says there is nothing wrong with eating the meat, but our judgment may be like Paul's, it's better to not eat the meat. One is judgment the other is doctrine. Doctrine says...

Heb 10:23-25

22

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 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.

The assembling of the Saints is doctrine and it is also doctrine that the Child of God should not make a habit of absenting themselves from that assembly. That's doctrine. Judgment is when that assembly will meet, assuming that other doctrine will not be violated by the judgment, for example, meeting on Saturday evening instead of the first day of the week. Where that meeting will take place, again within the confines of...

1 Thess 5:21 23

21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil. (*appearance*)

The point being that while a building is just a building it would probably not be the most prudent judgment to rent a bar to hold the meetings in.

The danger in judgments is that we become so convinced in the judgments that we make, based on God's Word, that we begin to accept those judgments as doctrine, even if subconsciously or unintentionally. Now, please understand, the judgments we make for ourselves are important, vastly important, Paul talks about such a judgment in...

1 Cor 8:9-10 24

9 But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?

Paul warns of using the liberty of our judgment to lead someone who may not have the strength of faith that we do, into doing something that would violate their conscience, their judgment, because that would be to them sin.

1 Cor 8:11-13 25

11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. 12 And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

Judgments are never doctrine and we must always be careful that we are not making doctrine when in reality all we are doing is making judgment.

I thought it necessary to discuss the difference between judgment and doctrine prior to our looking at some of the things that God defines as doctrine. The things we will be looking at are not open for discussion or judgment, they are things that have been established as doctrine.

With that thought in mind, I remind us all of what is said in Acts 4:12...

26 ***“There is no other name under Heaven by which we must be saved”***