

Sins of Doctrine vs. Sins of Judgment

1 There are two dynamics of sin that we see in the scriptures, at least for the context of this lesson. There are sins of doctrine. These are the violations of either omission or of commission. What I mean by this is that there are things that God tells to do, don't forsake the assembly, lay by in store on the first day of the week, sing and make melody in your heart. These are all commandments that God has given that need to be obeyed. When we choose to not obey them, that is a sin of omission. Then there are things that God has told us not to do, don't lie, don't steal, don't hate or be hateful, when we violate His commandment and engage in one of these, that is a sin of commission. While these transgressions should be relatively easy to understand and avoid since they basically consist of either do or don't, man has seen fit to pervert God's truth to his own means and thus adulterated God's word by saying that the means justify the ends.

God's word must be seen to be the ultimate statement of righteousness...

Rom 1:16-17

2

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

It is only in the truth that is the Word of God that the righteousness of God is revealed, and it is only in the righteousness revealed in the Gospel that salvation can be found. Paul makes this point in...

Rom 6:17-19

3

17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, **18** and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. **19** I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Paul illustrates our obedience as though we are slaves to that which we obey and when we present ourselves as slaves to God through obedience to His righteousness He sanctifies us in our faithful obedience through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.

1 Tim 4:6

4

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.

Here is the point; the Gospel is the Word of God revealing in Christ, through Christ, His righteousness which will lead the faithfully obedient disciple to the sanctification offered by God through salvation in Christ Jesus.

That is the importance of not disobeying the doctrine of God, whether by omission or commission.

1 Peter 2:7-8

5

7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," **8** and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

Peter describes for us the idea of sins of doctrine. If I were to try and sum up the dynamic of this idea, it would simply be, "If God says it, I do it."

The second idea we want to look at is the "Sins of Judgment." What I mean by this is that there are things that can be sin to me when in fact they are not sin to others.

There are three points to this idea of sins of judgment we want to look at.

6

First is the idea of sinning against our conscience...

Rom 14:21-23

7

21 It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. **22** The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. **23** But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

That is what Paul is describing here in Romans. The context of Paul's statements here is that there were some who thought the proscriptions of the Old Law were apparently still in effect under the New Law, or at the very least had been so intent on keeping the Old Law and its proscriptions against eating certain meats that they were of the opinion that eating those meats were still a violation of Law. Paul states quite clearly that the fact that the Law had changed concerning the eating of meats was not the issue. Paul isn't addressing sins of doctrine, whether or not the actual eating was to be considered a violation of Law, but rather he is talking about those who thought that it was a sin, and that is what Paul means when he says...

8

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

The point Paul is making is what is meant when we talk about a sin of judgment. It is scripturally possible to sin when we violate our own conscience by doing what we think should not be done. Paul talks about eating meat that is thought to be unclean, but let me illustrate it this way. If I think it a sin to walk on the left side of the street and even though thinking that, I allow myself to

be lured to walking on that side of the street, my actions constitute sin, not to anyone else but to me. The sin is not in the side of the street I walk on, the sin is that I walk not from faith. That is Paul's point. Our faith in what we do can be just as important as what the scriptures have to say about it.

The New Law doesn't teach that eating any meat is sinful, yet Paul says that if we believe that eating so-called unclean animals is a sin, then we should not eat, otherwise to us it will be sin, because it is not of faith.

9 The second thought of leading others to sin against their conscience through our influence is illustrated for us by Paul in...

1 Cor 8:8-13

10

8 But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. **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? **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.

Interestingly, while the context here in 1 Cor. is different than what we just saw in Romans, the topic is still the eating of meat. But where the context in Romans was the discussion of clean versus unclean animals, the context in 1 Cor. is about animals that have been sacrificed to idols. Regardless of context, the discussion in both passages references the judgments that we make, the opinions we draw, based on our understanding of the scriptures.

As we have seen, the judgments we make, the opinions we hold, are vitally important to the decisions we make. Not only will we be held accountable for the judgments we make, we will be held accountable for the actions we take in regard to those judgments.

There is another area in which we will be held accountable concerning our judgments, and that is in how we allow them to influence others.

Paul says that...

11 **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?

Our judgments and opinions, Paul calls them our liberties, have an influence on others, like it or not, whether it is intentional or not. We must understand the importance of that influence. If I, because of my understanding, recognize that I can eat whatever meat I choose, and I know that I have a brother who believes that the eating of meat sacrificed to idols is sinful, and I don't guard against having such an influence on that brother that he is lured by my judgment to violate his conscience, then not only has he sinned, violating his conscience because of my influence, I have also sinned because of my influence on him to violate his conscience.

Here is where this discussion needs to have some caveats. We are not talking about something as silly as which side of the street to walk on, or people who would use this principle to

foment their own agendas and opinions, no, we are talking about people who have diligently searched the scriptures and from an honest and open heart, based on a desire to rightly divide the Word of God and have come to an errant conclusion. This eliminates those with agendas, those with preconceived biases, and those that are self-seeking instead of being compassionate and kind to their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul accepts and respects the validity of the belief that those who thought the meat sacrificed should not be eaten. But he also knows that there is no significance whatsoever attached to the meat in a religious sense. To do so would in some perverse way validate the idol and the worship thereof, and idols are nothing more than the imagination of man. But because of his respect and love for his brother, Paul says to be intensely aware of the influence that our judgments and opinions have on others.

This brings us to our third point in this idea of Sins of Judgment...

12 The idea of becoming so absolutely convinced of our own judgments that we make the scriptural error of letting our judgments become to us as doctrine and then trying to bind them on others.

Paul states it this way in...

Rom 14:1-4

13

1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. **2** One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. **3** The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. **4** Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Again, back to the illustration of eating versus not eating or what is being eaten. Paul makes the point that regardless of which side of the issue you land on, respect the conclusion of your brethren. You might consider them to be weak in their judgment based on your understanding of the scriptures, but know that they might consider you to be the weak brother in your understanding. Paul's point is that we are not to bind our judgment on others. We are not to look with contempt on anyone just because they don't see things the way we do.

Paul's poignant statement of...

14 **4** Who are you to judge the servant of another?

Is both an admonition and an indictment to all purveyors of their own agendas. Judgment of the righteousness of one's heart is not an authority we have been given, nor is absolution. Paul's exhortation is that we look on each other with love, compassion, and kindness and leave the judgment to the master, Christ.

Again, at this point another explanation is probably needed. This is not to say that as Christians and members of God's Church we are not to make an assessment based upon God's word. In 1 Cor. 5 Paul chastises the congregation for not addressing the sin that was openly being practiced

among them, in effect giving the congregation's consent and condoning of the sin. We must address sin as Satan strives to introduce it into our midst and we must address it firmly and from the scriptures. Just as important as our not letting sin encroach into the Church is the fact that it is not our judgment that defines sin, it is God's word. It is not our agenda that defines the way of righteousness, it is God's word.

Col 3:17

15

17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Last week we spoke about the requirements that God puts forth for the man who would be a Deacon. As I mentioned then, I have been asked to speak on the requirements for Deacons and Elders. This lesson speaks to one of the greatest dangers that can happen to anyone who finds themselves in a position of authority, especially within the Church. There is little that is more dangerous than applying one's own agendas and opinions as the rule of God. The offices of Deacon and or Elder put a man into a position where authority can easily be abused or perverted. God's Word must always take precedent over personal opinion, regardless of how strongly we might feel about our opinion.

In the final analysis the one thing that must be, is Love. Do we show love for each other when we give the benefit of the doubt? Do we show love for each other when we respect opinions that are different than ours? More important, do we show love for God when we show love for each other?

The greatest manifestation, that as man, we can show is seen in...

John 14:15

X

15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Love is the great connector between man and God and also the great equalizer between man and man.

1 Cor 13:8-13

16

8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part; **10** but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. **11** When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. **13** But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The real question is how do we show our love for God? Do we do so by making His Law our law? By loving Him and each other? By understanding that it is our responsibility to keep and maintain His Law in every detail? That is true love.