

Weighing Sins

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Bible Matters sources)

Introduction:

- A. Human beings have a penchant for pushing limits
 - 1. Higher, further, faster, better, harder
 - 2. Led to technological development, records broken
 - 3. Also led to increased access to and forms of engaging in sin
 - 4. Humans, who at some level believe they must avoid sin, still try to see just how close they can get to the edge
 - 5. Our capacity for justification and rationalization is well developed
 - 6. Culturally, we are skilled at redefining sinful behaviors to make them accepted and even endorsed
- B. God is well aware of these tendencies
 - 1. Hence Gal. 5:19-21 - "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are and the like"
 - 2. Things similar to the works of the flesh are works of the flesh, and fall under the same condemnation

I. "THINGS LIKE THESE"

- A. Paul did not supply an exhaustive list of sins; he is not pretending every sin that could be listed is listed
 - 1. Sins have similar traits
 - 2. One cannot reduce the text to a legalistic base and justify whatever is not explicitly condemned by Paul

II. THE MEANING

- A. It means that we must use discretion
 - 1. Humans have always been good at coming up with new ways to sin
 - a. Rom. 1:30 - "Inventors of evil things"
 - 2. This requires our capacity for reason and compare similar things
- B. It means that we must learn to see things the way God sees them
 - 1. Rom. 14:23; 2Tim. 3:16-17
 - 2. The Bible authorizes everything that is good
 - 3. If it's not authorized in the Scriptures by either restrictive or permissive authority, it cannot be a good work
 - 4. If it cannot be justified by the scriptures, it is sin
 - 5. Therefore, while many would say that whatever is not condemned is justified, the Bible teaches us the exact opposite: whatever is not justifiable is condemned
- C. It means we must be honest with ourselves
 - 1. We must not allow our judgment be tainted by our desires
 - 2. We must be honest about our motives behind our actions
 - 3. Do they meet God's standards for motives?

III. THE APPLICATION

- A. Weigh the matter according to the works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit
 - 1. Gal. 5:17-24
- B. Substance abuse
 - 1. The Bible says nothing about the abuse of recreational mood and mind altering substances
 - 2. But Gal. 5 condemns the mood and mind altering practice of sorcery
 - 3. We can also see that it is against the fruit of the Spirit of self-control and goodness
 - 4. We therefore reason that it is wrong because it is "like these"
- C. Gambling
 - 1. The Bible says nothing about gambling, but in view of what motivates gambling, we discern that it involves covetousness, and that according to Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5, covetousness is equated with idolatry
 - 2. Therefore, gambling is a "thing like" idolatry, and is condemned
 - 3. Gambling is also a violation of the principle of love
- D. This discernment can be used for every practice
 - 1. Is it related to works of the flesh?
 - 2. Or does it manifest the fruit of the Spirit?
 - 3. If we have reason to be convicted that the Scriptures authorize the practice, we can proceed
 - 4. If we have no such conviction, it is sin

IV. THE GREATER CONTEXT

- A. It is less about lists of good and bad deeds, and more about the fact that they represent the greater conflict going on within us, between spirit and flesh
 - 1. The godly desire of our spirit to do what is right
 - 2. The wicked desire of our flesh to satisfy its lusts
 - 3. The spiritual part of us must win the battle - Gal. 5:16-18
- B. How shall we win?
 - 1. Crucifying the flesh and its passions - Gal. 5:24
 - 2. Fleeing from sin - 1Cor. 6:18
 - 3. Find the means of escaping temptation supplied by God - 1Cor. 10:13
- C. It is a battle that we can overcome and win.
 - 1. If we set our minds to do so
 - 2. If we determine to no longer walk in the flesh, but walk in the spirit
 - 3. If we refuse to get as close to the edge of sin as we can
 - 4. If we remember that just because something is not explicitly condemned does not make it right
 - 5. If we pray continually for deliverance from temptation, as Jesus taught His apostles
 - 6. And if we repent every time we stumble