



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 31:03:2010

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STUDY 38: SINS OF OMISSION AND COMMISSION

James 4:17

“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

This scripture reveals the two sides of the coin of sin. A comparison of the rendering of this passage in some modern translations of the Bible can help shed more light on its meaning.

1. “The man who has knowledge of how to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (1965 Bible In Basic English)
2. “If you don't do what you know is right, you have sinned” (Contemporary English Version).
3. “So then, if we do not do the good we know we should do, we are guilty of sin” (Good News Bible).
4. “Whoever knows what is right but doesn't do it is sinning” (God's Word).
5. “If, however, a man knows what it is right to do and yet does not do it, he commits a sin” (1912 Weymouth New Testament).

As we explore the correct application of this scripture in our personal lives, we can benefit from the following illustrations from some well known Bible commentaries:

- **The People's New Testament** => The connection of thought is probably as follows: "I have warned you that such boasting is wrong, and that the right way is to speak submissively (as in James 4:15). **If you know how to do the right and yet do it not the sin is the greater on account of your knowledge.**"
- **Adam Clark's Commentary On The Bible** => **To him that knoweth to do good**
- As if he had said: After this warning none of you can plead ignorance; if, therefore, any of you shall be found to act their ungodly part, not acknowledging the Divine providence, the uncertainty of life, and the necessity of standing every moment prepared to meet God - as you will have the greater sin, you will infallibly get the greater punishment. **This may be applied to all who know better than they act.** He who does not the Master's will because he does not know it, will be beaten with few stripes; but he who knows it and does not do it, shall be beaten with many; (Luke 12:47,48). St. James may have the Christians in view who were converted from Judaism to Christianity. They had much more light and religious knowledge than the Jews had; and God would require a proportionable improvement from them.
 1. Providence is God's government of the world; he who properly trusts in Divine providence trusts in God; and **he who expects God's direction and help must walk uprightly before him; for it is absurd to expect God to be our friend if we continue to be his enemy.**

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern

2. That man walks most safely who has the least confidence in himself. True magnanimity keeps God continually in view. He appoints it its work, and furnishes discretion and power; and its chief excellence consists in being a resolute worker together with him. **Pride ever sinks where humility swims;** for that man who abases himself God will exalt. **To know that we are dependent creatures is well; to feel it, and to act suitably, is still better.**
- **Matthew Henry Concise Commentary** => Omissions are sins which will be brought into judgment, as well as commissions. He that does not the good he knows should be done, as well as he who does the evil he knows should not be done, will be condemned. **Oh that we were as careful not to omit prayer, and not to neglect to meditate and examine our consciences,** as we are not to commit gross outward vices against light! **We are taught, in the whole of our conduct, to act up to our own convictions, and, whether we have to do with God or men, to see that we never go contrary to our own knowledge** *To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin; **it is aggravated sin; it is sinning with a witness; and it is to have the worst witness against his own conscience**....* Let us therefore take care that conscience be rightly informed, and then that it be faithfully and constantly obeyed; for, if *our own hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God;* but if we say, *We see,* and do not act suitably to our sight, then *our sin remaineth* (John 9:41).
 - **John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible** => **Jam 4:17 - Therefore to him that knoweth to do good,....** this suggests, that a Gnostic, or one that knows the will of God, in the several branches of it, revealed in his word, **and doth it not, to him it is sin:** it is a greater sin; it is an aggravated one; it is criminal in him that is ignorant of what is good, and does that which is evil, nor shall he escape punishment; but **it is much more wicked in a man that knows what is right and good, and ought to be done, and does it not,** ... and **his condemnation will be greater;** (Luke 12:47). **The omission of a known duty, as well as the commission of a known sin, is criminal.**
 - **Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary** => The general principle illustrated by the particular example just discussed is here stated: **knowledge without practice is imputed to a man as great and presumptuous sin.** James reverts to the principle with which he started. **Nothing more injures the soul than wasted impressions. Feelings exhaust themselves and evaporate, if not embodied in practice. As we will not act except we feel, so if we will not act out our feelings, we shall soon cease to feel.**
 - **Wesley** => **James 4:17 - Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not - That knows what is right, and does not practise it.** To him it is sin - **This knowledge does not prevent, but increase, his condemnation.**