

## Christian Ethics 4

Ethical Situation:

### *Our Source of Ethical Standards: The Bible* Chapter 3

- I. The source in understanding which actions, attitudes, and personal character traits receive God's approval and which ones do not is the Bible.
  - A. The Bible was given to teach us how to live.
    1. Psalm 1:1-2
    2. Psalm 119:105
    3. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
    4. 1 Thessalonians 4:1
  - B. Objections to using the Bible to learn how to live.
    1. The Bible can be "offensive".
    2. The Bible does not support the "Third Use" of the law.
      - a. The three uses (per John Calvin)
        - To restrain sin in civil society.
        - To convict unbelievers of sin and drive them to Christ for salvation.
        - To instruct believers in obedience.
    3. The Bible "is about the Gospel, not about how to live."
- II. Four characteristics of the Bible.
  - A. The authority: The Bible alone, the entire Bible.
    1. The itself claims to be God's words.
    2. We become convinced of the Bible's claims to be God's words as we read the Bible.
    3. Other evidence is useful but ultimately not convincing.
    4. If the words of the Bible are indeed God's word, to disbelieve or disobey any part of scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.
    5. Written Scripture is our authority, not something in the background to Scripture.
    6. The Bible's authority is the highest authority for ethics.

- a. Human tradition—cultural norms.
  - b. Human Reason—inferior to God’s wisdom.
  - c. Experience—You may have had a positive result by making a decision based on experience, but your experience may not be “right” or “good”.
  - d. Expected results—“The end justifies the means”
  - e. Subjective Impressions—“*I feel that this is God’s will...*”
- B. Clarity—God gave us a Bible that is able to be understood.
- 1. Scripture itself supports its clarity.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

**6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.**

- 2. Qualifications to clarity—The Bible is large and complex, because of that, consider the following:
  - a. Scripture can be understood, but not all at once.
  - b. Scripture can be understood, but not without effort.
  - c. Scripture can be understood, but there must be a willingness to obey it.

James 1:22

**22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves.**

- d. Scripture can be understood, but not without the help of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14

**14 But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

- e. Scripture can be understood, but not without some misunderstanding.
- f. Scripture can be understood, but not completely.

Isaiah 55:9

**9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.**

- C. Necessity—The Bible is necessary for knowing God’s declarations of right and wrong.

*“The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws” – Grudem*

- 1. We can know something about God’s moral laws apart from the Bible.

- a. All people have an inward sense of right and wrong.
  - b. God has given humans the ability to reason.
2. The Bible alone contains God's explicit teachings about moral right and wrong.

Deuteronomy 29:29

**29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, so that we may follow all the words of this Law."**

D. Sufficiency.

1. Scriptural evidence for the sufficiency of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16

**16 All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;**

***The Goal of Ethics: Living for the Glory of God***  
**Chapter 4**

I. A life lived for the glory of God.

Isaiah 43:7

**7 Everyone who is called by My name,  
 And whom I have created for My glory,  
 Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."**

- A. A character that glorifies God (A Christlike character).
- B. A life that results in abundant fruit for God's kingdom.
- C. Behavior that glorifies God.

II. The character goal.

- A. Our character is to be conformed to the image of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:49

**49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.**

- B. Becoming like Christ is a lifelong process.

1 John 2:6

**6 the one who says that he remains in Him ought, himself also, walk just as He walked.**

- C. Discover Christ's virtues (See pages 111-113).
- D. Avoid vices (Vices = opposite Christ's virtues).

Galatians 5:19-21

**19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior, 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

III. The results of the goal.

A. We are expected to produce “fruit”

John 15:5

**5 I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him [a]bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.**

B. Personal behavior goal.

1. We are expected to not only produce fruit but keep our behavior in a manner that glorifies God.
2. Authentic obedience requires ongoing personal fellowship with God.
3. There is great joy and blessing in obedience.

John 15:10

**10 If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love.**

C. The dangers of legalism.

1. Two major errors Christians make
  - a. Fall into antinomianism
  - b. Legalism
2. Legalism regarding justification.

Galatians 2:16

**16 nevertheless, knowing that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by works of the Law no [d]flesh will be justified.**

3. Legalism in adding to the commands of Scripture.
4. Legalism in attitudes.
5. An overemphasis in legalism.

Matthew 7:3-5

**3 Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!**

Summery:

- 1. The character goal that glorifies God is to live a life conformed to the image of Christ.*
- 2. The results goal that glorifies God is to live a life that bears abundant fruit for God's kingdom.*
- 3. The behavioral goal that glorifies God is to live a life of obedience to God in personal relationship with God.*