

A Biblical View of Conflict and Its Resolution

Week 2

The violence of the conflict within us

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<http://www.calvaryrpc.org/SundaySchool/>
<http://www.logicteacher.com/conflict/>

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the updated New American Standard Bible

Class Goals

- To understand what the Bible says (both explicitly and by implication) about conflict
- To learn how to distinguish between necessary and unnecessary conflict
- To learn practical, biblically-acceptable methods for resolving conflict

The Class So Far ...

- Last week we took a quick tour through most of the subjects and ideas that we'll be discussing this quarter
 - ▶ Recall that our emphasis is on conflicts with others, including
 - One v. one (1 v. 1)
 - One v. several (1 v. n)
 - Several v. several (m v. n)
 - ▶ Three main categories of responses to conflict
 - Escape
 - Escalate
 - Resolve

Your Assignment was ...

- Homework — Find more examples in Scripture of conflicts
- Send me specific questions or issues that you would like for us to address in this class
 - ▶ Email to conflict@logicteacher.com
 - ▶ Paper to me personally

Some Homework Results

- Matt 10:34-39 — division as a result of believing in Christ
- Acts 15:1-29 — pressure to appear like Jews
- Acts 17:5-9 — persecution
- Philippians 1:15-18 — conflict in evangelism
- Philemon — mediation (or arbitration?)
- David & Saul; David & Absalom
- Jesus and the Pharisees

Internal & External Conflict

- How we respond to conflict with others is often related to how we respond to internal conflicts
 - ▶ Tendency to pretend internal conflict doesn't exist implies tendency to try to escape conflict with others
 - ▶ Tendency to dwell on internal conflict implies tendency to escalate conflict with others
 - ▶ Tendency to resolve internal conflict implies tendency to resolve conflict with others
- For this reason, we're going to discuss internal conflict today

Internal Conflicts Involving ...

■ Sin

- ▶ Wanting to do something you know is wrong
- ▶ Not wanting to do something you know is right

■ Choices

- ▶ Deciding among equally acceptable actions
- ▶ Seeking to choose that which is most wise

■ Desires

- ▶ Mismatch between interests and abilities
- ▶ Or between interests and responsibilities

■ History

- ▶ Guilt or regret over previous choices
- ▶ Wishing you could “do it over again”

Internal Conflict Involving Sin

Romans 7:15-24

(15) For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

(16) But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.

(17) So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

(18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

(19) For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

(20) But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

(21) I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

(22) For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

(23) but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

(24) Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Resolving Sin-based I.C.

- Recognize that through Christ we need not give in to sinful desires
 - ▶ **Romans 7:25^f** – (25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. (8:1) Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ...
 - ▶ **1 Corinthians 10:13** – No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
- Recognize that temptation itself is not sin
- Pray for strength, search the Scriptures for wisdom, seek godly counsel, ...
- If you give in to sinful desires, repent, and seek forgiveness from anyone you have wronged

Internal Conflict Involving Choices

■ Examples

- ▶ What job should I take?
- ▶ How should I educate my children?
- ▶ Where should I go to college?
- ▶ Which house should I buy?

■ Except in special cases, there is no sin involved in any of the possible choices

- ▶ But, we often act as if it is
 - “I don’t want to make the *wrong* decision.”
 - “What if I don’t get it *right*?”
- ▶ Result can be internal conflict, anxiety, and perhaps even sinful worry

Resolving Choices-based I.C.

- **Seek wisdom and comfort through prayer**
 - ▶ **Philippians 4:6-7** — Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- **Apply Scriptural principles in making your decision**
 - ▶ **Chief End Principle:** Do that which gives glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 14:7-8; Colossians 3:17; ...)
 - ▶ **Edification Principle:** Do that which edifies others (Romans 14:19-21; Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 10:23; ...)
 - ▶ **Providence Principle:** Consider your abilities, interests, and circumstances (Romans 8:28; Esther 4:14; ...)
 - ▶ **Authority Principle:** Give deference to those God has placed in authority over you; accept responsibility for those in submission to you (Ephesians 5:22-6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:5; ...)
 - ▶ ... See <http://www.logicteacher.com/liberty/> for notes from 4 part series on Christian Liberty

Internal Conflict Involving Desires

- Not talking here about sinful desires, but
 - ▶ Desires that do not match abilities, or
 - ▶ Desires that are not consistent with responsibilities
- Examples
 - ▶ Want to be an engineer, but horrible at math
 - ▶ Very good at math, but have no great interest in it
 - ▶ Want to be a preacher, but unable to speak in front of a crowd
 - ▶ Want to write history books, but can't support your family doing so
 - ▶ Want to lead a covenant group, but situations in your family require significant time and energy

Resolving Desires-based I.C.

- Recognize God's sovereignty in all things, including distribution of abilities
 - ▶ 1 Corinthians 12
- Strive to determine your true abilities
 - ▶ Do not give up too soon
 - ▶ But, do not give up too late, either
- Do not seek your ultimate happiness or “identity” from your job, but rather from glorifying God by using the abilities He has given You as best as you can
- Understand that fulfilling responsibilities has a higher priority than satisfying desires

Internal Conflict Involving History

- Guilt over past sins
 - ▶ May have continuing consequences
 - Lost job or position
 - Legal actions
 - Problems in relationships
 - ▶ Consequences may seem to have ended
- Regret over past decisions
 - ▶ “If only I had / hadn’t ...”
 - ▶ “I wish I could go back and ...”
 - ▶ “If I had to do it over again, I’d ...”

Resolving History-based I.C.

■ Past sins

- ▶ If not confessed: confess, make amends as necessary
- ▶ If confessed: accept consequences, ask God to help you to view your past sins as He does

■ Past decisions

- ▶ Recognize that you cannot change the past
- ▶ Understand the difference between decisions that may be “unmade” and those that cannot
- ▶ Seek to learn from past mistakes so as not to repeat them
- ▶ Look forwards not backwards

Philippians 3:13-14 — Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,(14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Items Discussed Today

- How we respond to internal conflicts shapes how we respond to conflicts with others
- Internal conflicts are likely to involve
 - ▶ Sin
 - ▶ Choices
 - ▶ Desires
 - ▶ History
- Scripture provides guidance on how to resolve internal conflicts of all these types

For Next Week

- Homework — Think about some conflict that you've had in the past. What were the reasons for this conflict?
- Lesson — “The consequence is numberless disputes and conflicts”

Note: Lesson title comes Edgar Allan Poe, “The Imp of the Perverse”

We tremble with the violence of the conflict within us, -- of the definite with the indefinite -- of the substance with the shadow.