

Doubtful Things

The doctrine of **Doubtful Things** refers to those issues that are not directly dealt with in the Scriptures. It is primarily related to a believer's attitude toward the weaker Christian.

R. B. Thieme draws a distinction between sin and doubtful things. In so doing he selects Proverbs 6:16-19 to describe the primary areas of sin with which God is concerned. He observes that many believers think only in terms of a few taboos, and that they are scarcely aware of the existence of extremely damaging sins in their own lives. Taboos are certain practices commonly condemned by many Christians, but not specifically condemned in the Scriptures. Among these, Thieme lists what he calls "the 'big five' – don't drink, don't dance, don't smoke, don't go to shows and don't wear make-up!" He claims that many people "judge everybody on the basis of the taboos, yet they themselves are habitually committing sin after sin."

From a study of James 2 and 1 Corinthians 8-10, Thieme draws three principles or laws governing one's response to doubtful things.

The first principle is the **law of liberty**. This means that "biblically speaking, I have the right to do certain things. There are certain things that I can do that will not hurt me, nor will they disturb my spiritual equilibrium."

The second principle is the **law of love**. Thieme's introductory statement of this principle summarizes well his exposition of 1 Corinthians 8:

The law of love takes other believers into consideration. In effect, this law says that because of my love for the weaker and often legalistic brethren, and in order to keep them from being highly critical or upset and disturbed, there are certain things which I have the liberty to do, yet I will refrain from doing them – not because they are wrong in themselves, but because as a believer advanced in doctrine I want to help other believers rather than hinder them.

Based upon 1 Corinthians 10:23, Thieme draws the third principle: **the law of expediency**. This law is primarily directed toward the unbeliever. A Christian may have to make decisions in the area of doubtful things in order to maintain a testimony in his life before the unbelieving world.

In summary, the law of liberty applies to the mature believer who, because of knowledge, understands that "aside from immorality, all things are lawful." This law, however, is superseded by the higher law, "the law of love" in many cases, and it is superseded by the "law of expediency" in other situations.