

Subject: *The Sin of Omission*

Scripture: *Numbers 32:20-27*

Look again at verse 23. What kind of sin is that verse talking about? Is it the sin of lying or stealing? Is it the sin of adultery or blasphemy? It is none of these sins. It is the sin of failing to do what we ought to do or the sin of omission. Look at the story as it begins in Num. 32:1.

1. A selfish request (vs. 1-5)

2. A solemn reminder (vs. 6-15)

3. A satisfying response (vs. 16-19)

4. A serious responsibility (vs. 20-27)

The Bible describes different kinds of sins:

- Sins of ignorance and sins of presumption (willful sins)
- Sins of action and sins of attitude
- Sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit
- Sins of commission and sins of omission

Sins of commission are things we do that we ought not to do. Sins of omission are things we fail to do that we ought to do. Sins of omission are probably the most common sins. Sins of omission are the most deceptive sins. Sins of omission are the most destructive sins. What does the Bible say about sins of omission?

James 4:17 *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*
(Failing to do good is a sin of omission.)

1 Samuel 12:23 *God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you*
(Failing to pray is a sin of omission.)

John 3:18 *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Hebrews 3:12 *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*
(Unbelief is a sin of omission.)

1 Corinthians 4:2 *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*
(Unfaithful stewardship is a sin of omission. When we are unfaithful with our time, our talents, and our possessions, it is a sin of omission.)

Last Sunday we studied the Parable of the Rich Fool, a farmer who had bumper crops and built bigger barns and thought he had it made, but he died like a fool and left it all. It wasn't what he did; it was what he failed to do. He left God out of his life. It was a sin of omission.

There are so many other things that would be sins of omission: failure to read and study the Bible; failure to pray; failure to be a true follower of Christ; failure to witness; failure to worship; failure to serve others.

I want to close this sermon by making three observations.

Observation 1: Sins of omission are respectable sins.

Think of the examples of these sins: failure to do good; failure to pray; unbelief; unfaithful stewardship; and the rich farmer who left God out of his life. We can be guilty of any or all of these sins and still be considered a “good person.” The rich farmer was an honest, hard-working, respectable man. No one would have thought of him as a terrible sinner, yet he was guilty of the worst kind of sin—leaving God out of his life and living for himself.

Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

You can tell if someone is drunk, but you can't tell if someone is not filled with the Spirit.

If God has told someone to serve Him in a specific ministry and that person is disobedient, you and I will never know it.

Observation 2: Sins of omission are the cause of other sins.

The reason we often do what we ought not to do is because we have failed to do what we should do. In other words, sins of commission are rooted in sins of omission.

When someone asked Christ about the greatest commandment He actually gave a summary of all Ten Commandments.

Matthew 22:35-39 ³⁵ Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, ³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law? ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Romans 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

If we are doing what we should, then we won't do what we shouldn't.

If we are where we should be, then we won't be in places where we shouldn't be.

If we are with the right kind of friends, then we won't be with the wrong kind.

If we are filling our hearts with biblical truth, then we won't be filled with garbage.

Observation 3: Sins of omission are costly sins.

Numbers 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out. (= “you will suffer for your sin”)

Sins of omission have serious consequences to us and to others. That is the whole point of the story in Numbers 32. The actions of a few tribes would affect the whole nation. The same is true of our families and our church family. What we do affects others, and what we fail to do affects others. Families and churches always suffer when there is apathy and indifference.

What should a message like this do in our hearts?

It should convict us and lead us to repentance.

It should crush our pride and remind us that we're not as good as we think we are.

It should make us thankful for God's mercy and forgiveness.

We should deal with the sin of omission like we deal with all sin—confess it and forsake it.

***Proverbs 28:13** He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

***1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*