

A Simple Verse About Right and Wrong

“ . . . abhor what is evil; cling to what is good”

(Romans 12:9). This short verse (actually it is just the second part of the verse) would be a fine one to commit to memory. It states or implies at least three vital points.

First, **there is such a thing as good and evil**. People used to understand that. We used to know that one is supposed to keep his word, that greed is a bad thing, that marriage is for life, that homosexuality is a perversion, etc. Now, several generations have grown up listening to denominational preachers say that it does not matter what you believe, thereby undermining Bible authority.

We have heard libertarians rationalize any and every kind of conduct. We have grown accustomed to comedians making daily fodder of sin of every kind. Is it any wonder people are confused? Come to think of it, this is nothing new. Long ago Isaiah wrote, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; . . . who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight” (Isaiah 5:20-21).

Second, **it is both possible and necessary to discern good and evil**. Personal preferences and moral relativism leave us adrift. There is a fixed standard. It is God. He is right or righteous. “A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4). His word, His self-revelation, is the yardstick by which all conduct is measured. It is the standard by which we shall be judged (John 12:48).

Discerning right and wrong begins with the “thou shalt/thou shalt not” passages. We must also take into account principles of conduct, such as maintaining a clear conscience (Romans 14:22-23), not putting other things before God (Matthew 6:33), leaving off questionable things that would lessen our influence for good (Matthew 5:16), etc. Paul often prayed that Christians would grow in this area of distinguishing conduct (Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12).

Third, **we must act in keeping with the quality of any given behavior**. If a thing is good we are to cling to it. The original verb in our text is from the Greek noun for glue; be glued to it. On the other hand, if conduct is bad, we are to abhor it. *Abhor* is from the Latin word for horror, which literally means to shudder. We should shudder at the very idea of some kinds of behavior [misbehavior].

Simply put, Romans 12:9 tells us to use God’s word and draw the line between good and evil. Once that line is drawn, do not see how close to it you can get without stepping over; stay as far away from evil and as close to God as you can.

- by Frank Himmel

Running Amuck Online

The computer, with internet and e-mail capabilities, has proven to be a mixed blessing. Like many other opportunities God has made possible, it has been used both for building up and tearing down; for good and for evil.

It has truly been a blessing that some computer-literate brethren have developed and maintained web pages as still another means to reach the lost and edify saints. Indeed, the more well-designed internet sites which direct people back to the Bible, the better. Perhaps home pages will be to this generation what church bulletins were in the past.

The opportunity for almost instant communication with large numbers of brethren at the same time has arrived via e-mail lists: Preachers have been able to share sermon ideas and illustrations with each other; congregations have been able to issue their own “Macedonian calls” for help (Ac. 16:9); news of interest to Christians everywhere has spread all over the world quickly, allowing us to rejoice or weep with others (Rom. 12:15), and to pray for one another (Jas. 5:16); open-forum discussions of Bible topics have taken place.

It should be no surprise that Satan and his forces also take advantage of this avenue of communication. Besides the obvious use of the internet to peddle smut, infidelity and humanism, he has used it in a more subtle way to spread false doctrine and gender strife.

It seems, based on the discussions I’ve seen on the various e-mail “lists,” that a few brethren are inclined to run amuck. I don’t know—maybe there’s something about sending comments over a modem that emboldens some to make outlandish arguments. Or, maybe arguments are being

made while “on-line” and not enough thought and study has gone into them. The result is less than edifying.

I’m not calling for an end to discussions, nor am I suggesting any kind of imposed control—other than self-control. It would be good if we all would measure our words as we discuss the Bible among ourselves.

- by *Al Diestelkamp*

Claiming ‘Victim’ Status

We hear it frequently in the news these days. It has been a common defense in some high profile criminal cases. The basic argument is that people can be excused for committing even hideous crimes if they can demonstrate that something awful happened in their past.

Unfortunately, this approach has proven successful in our perverted justice system. Murders, kidnappers and sexual offenders of every sort have been set free or have had their sentences reduced. As a result, we are seeing more and more criminals rush to assume "victim" status.

It is happening in the church, too. It is not uncommon for sinful brethren to attempt to "turn the tables" on those who are trying to restore them. "You didn't show the proper love toward me;" "You were unkind and didn't help me enough when I needed you;" "You were too harsh in the way you rebuked me;" etc., etc., etc. You see, they have learned how to become the "victims."

We agree that brethren can sometimes approach situations in the wrong way. All of us need to show love, forbearance, patience and kindness. Sometimes we fail in these things. Everyone can do better.

But, we are weary of sinners turning the whole matter of forgiveness around. If they have their way, the faithful ones are forced to beg them for forgiveness, while their own sins are ignored. This simply will not work!

Observe the case of Peter rebuking Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:18-24). Simon was told that "wickedness" and a bad heart had left him in the "gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Surely he could have complained about Peter's harsh words, or unloving manner. Undoubtedly he could have countered with accusations about how he had been mistreated by others. Instead, he humbly accepted the rebuke and requested prayer. Sinners in the church today need to learn a lesson from him. Think!

- by *Greg Gwin*