

Let The Bible Speak Series

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The Difference Between Good and Evil

Good morning and welcome to Let The Bible Speak. We are glad that you are a part of our audience today and we hope that our study together will prove profitable for all. Our text is taken from Hebrews 5: 12-14 "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The people of our text had failed to grow and develop as Christians. They should have been teachers, but were not. They lacked skill in determining the difference between good and evil. "Discern" implies the ability to discriminate, the ability to know right from wrong. This is not a matter of choosing between the pleasant and unpleasant, but rather between good and bad. What may be pleasant may be bad, and what may be unpleasant may be good. The problem is not one of choosing that which necessarily pleases me, but choosing that which is best for me and others, the church and the gospel. How does one acquire this ability? "By reason of use" means their faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good and evil. "Train" in Greek literature refers to the training that an athlete undergoes. It suggests tremendous self-discipline, which an athlete must have in order to develop his muscles. Just as the athlete must exercise and practice, so must these brethren in order to develop themselves. Because they had grown dull and sluggish, their only hope in bringing about the change necessary was rigorous training. Can you tell the difference between good and evil? Do you know how to determine right from wrong?

I. The Difference Between Good and Evil.

1. Many today make no distinction between good and evil. To them nearly all moral practices are good and almost all religious teachings are right. (No such thing as religious error) Recent poll: 79% of Americans believe salvation is possible regardless of the faith one holds or the church they attend. To them, the right or wrong of an act or teaching is not in the deed or precept but rather in the mind of the participant. Everything becomes relative. Everything is dependent on the situation and the people involved. Truth is no longer absolute, but is determined by the person and his/her feelings. If this were true, no man could ever choose evil, provided he thought he was choosing good, and any way which seems right would be right. Yet, Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Some ways are good and some are bad; and the bad way has its penalty in spite of how inviting it first seems to the traveler. Switching the road signs, will not make a bad road good or a good road bad. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" Isa. 5:20.

2. The right or wrong of a thing is not just a matter of personal thinking.

Since truth and right are facts rather than abstractions, then I must change my mind to fit them rather than change them to fit my mind.

3. The Bible freely speaks of good and evil:

Good man-----Evil man Good works—Evil works
Good path-----Evil course Good advice—Evil counsel
Good name-----Evil name Good fruit—Evil fruit
Good heart-----Evil heart Good morals—Evil dealings

Good report-----Evil report

II. Biblical Failures In Discernment.

1. The young prophet deceived by a lie (1Kings 13).

He was a fine specimen of humanity. He is called "a man of God." He had courage---cried out against the altar at Bethel, not fearing King Jereboam. God commanded him to neither eat or drink, return a different way. He could not be taken by flattery. Refused invitation of a King. Obedience meant more than royal honors. But an old prophet turned his mind. How? He told him an angel said "bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water" "But he lied to him." His downfall was wrapped up in one statement: He failed to discern between the truth and a lie. He believed a lie. 1Thess. 2:11 "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie..." Many today do the same thing. Faith only saves, baptism not necessary for salvation, once saved always saved. Faithful service is good but not necessary. A little lie won't hurt. No one is perfect etc.

2. The rich man who was called a fool (Luke 12:16-21).

He was smart enough to make money, but not smart enough to discern material from spiritual values. Enjoyed a bountiful harvest, his barns ran over. Planned bigger barns and then fill them. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." God called him a fool and told him he would die that night. He was a fool, because he left God out of his life, and he thought his soul could live on things stored in barns. His tragedy was one of discernment. "a mans life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. So many today fail the same test. They spend life working and earning and leave Christ out completely.

3. Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

She had to choose between two important things: preparing a meal or listening to Jesus. She chose the less important activity. Her sister, Mary, sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. Then Jesus kindly talked to them about which one had the finer perception and the greater power of discernment. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." "Cumbered or troubled"---often we are so troubled by the passing things of life that they consume us. They get all our attention, time, and energy. "Mary, has chosen the good part" ... Note: it was a choice. We choose what consumes us in life. We must, therefore, discriminate and discern what is best. Often in our homes we loose sight of this. We become so involved in making a living for our family that we forget the real needs of the family. We are all blind until we see, that in the human plan Nothing is worth the making if, it does not make the man Why build these cities glorious, if man unbuilt goes? In vain we build the work unless, the builder also grows.

How often, we buy clothes and food for our children and provide for their education, but fail to prepare them for eternity. David prayed: "And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provisions." 1Chron. 29:19

"And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them (his children), and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts, thus did Job continually." Job. 1:5

"I saw tomorrow look at me, from little children's eyes,
And thought how carefully we would teach, if we were really wise."

4. The self-righteous men who sought to stone a woman. John 8:3-11

The men who brought this woman to Christ were both self-righteous and hypocritical.

They strutted in their piety, claiming to be sticklers for the Law of Moses. They reminded Christ that the law demanded stoning for such an offence, and demanded of him a verdict in the case. Jesus answered: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. Because these men lacked discernment, they made the following mistakes:

a. They did not bring the man. "Taken in the act..." where was the man? Did he escape? Did they allow it? Was he among the ones there? The Bible commanded punishment for both in Deut. 22:22; Lev. 10:10.

b. They made a spectacle of her by setting her in the midst of the crowd.

Why did they not take her to the Sanhedrin for judgment? Obviously they wanted to use her to entrap Christ.

c. They sought to entrap Christ since the Roman authorities limited the right of the Jewish people to carry out a death penalty, had the Lord answered either way He would have been open to criticism either by the Law or the authorities.

d. According to Deut. 17:7 it was the duty of the witnesses to a crime to throw the first stone. Christ tells them to "get on with it" He will have nothing to do with it.

They were the witnesses, it was not his responsibility.

e. The one who executed the law must be free from the same crime, lest by stoning the woman he condemn himself as worthy of a like death. Their own conscience condemned them. Jesus did not condemn her i.e. he did not condemn her to stoning nor did he intend, presently, to stand in judgment of her sin.

But "go and sin no more.."

III. Guideposts To Wise Discernment

1. Faith is a Guidepost to Wise Discernment.

One of the greatest perceptions of discernment is Moses and the causative force in his life was faith. Heb. 11:24 "By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction..." Faith led him to make the right decision.

2. Hope is a Guidepost to Wise Discernment. Was another power which influenced Moses in his choice. "For he had respect unto the recompense of reward." V. 26

3. Love is a Guidepost to Wise Discernment. Jesus said "If a man love me, he will keep my words." John 14:23

A greater love for human glory than for God was the deciding factor which caused some to reject Christ. John 12:41,43 "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Many today who fail to make this discernment find themselves away from Christ and the truth. 2Tim 3:4 "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Paul teaches that those who love not the truth will not find the truth, but rather will be possessed with a delusion (working of error) which will cause them to believe a lie and be damned, 2Thess. 2:10-12.

4. Courage is a Guidepost to Wise Discernment. Mt. 10:28 "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" This should help us all in making the right decision. We are charged with doing right, let the world do what it may. "Buy the truth and sell it not" Prov. 23:23 Fear often gets in the way of right judgments. Fear of financial loss, fear of job loss, fear of prestige loss, fear of ridicule,

fear of persecution or loss of life. Saul explained his great disobedience with one word, fear "I feared the people and obeyed their voice." 1Sam. 15:24

5. Examples of Jesus Help Us in Discerning Wisely.

Of him it was prophesied "He may know how to refuse the evil and choose the good."

He is the only person who ever perfectly discerned every problem and every issue of life.

He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15 The devil, and all the combined forces of the opposition, hounded him, tested him, tried him, tempted him, persecuted him, and crucified him, yet he handled every matter with perfection. To the extent that we follow the principles of Christ, we shall be wise discerners.

6. Investigation is Necessary in Making Wise Discernments. Never reach a decision of consequence without fully investigating. I should be sure I have all the facts before I condemn others or plot a course of action for myself. I must deal with knowledge instead of presumption, gossip or rumors. Some have repeated tales without investigating which falsely damaged reputations. People have accepted doctrines without searching the scriptures. "Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge" Prov. 13:16 The Bereans so acted. They searched the Scriptures daily...Acts 17:1, so should we.