

## ***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*

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## ***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*

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### ***Should We Be “Tolerant?”***

Many people have the opinion that we all should be “tolerant” of the religious views of everyone else. In fact, about the only thing that receives much criticism these days is the ‘intolerance” of some of us who argue against certain religious beliefs. We’re frequently viewed as being “fanatics,” and mean-spirited “bigots.” They tell us to be less judgmental and learn to accept all forms of religious expression as being equally good and beneficial.

All of this stems from an apparent failure to distinguish between different forms of “tolerance.” There are at least three kinds:

- *Legal tolerance*: This is the recognition that everyone has a legal right to believe and practice whatever he or she feels is best and right.
- *Social tolerance*: This is the notion that everyone ought to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their particular religious convictions.
- *Uncritical tolerance*: The idea that no one ought to ever make a judgment relative to what others believe religiously. It suggests that it is not possible to determine what is right or true, and that all religious beliefs and practices are equally good.

We agree that all Christians are obligated by the Word of God to honor the first two forms of “tolerance.” We would fiercely defend the legal right of every person to make their own decisions in matters of religion. Furthermore, we understand that the Lord has taught us to treat everyone with honor and dignity (1 Peter 2:17). To do otherwise would put us in direct violation of His will.

It is the idea of “uncritical tolerance” that is not found in the Scriptures. Instead, we are commanded to compare what people teach and believe with what the Bible says (1 John 4:1,2; Galatians 1:8,9; Matthew 7:15-20). We are to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3). In this regard, there is no room for tolerance -- we must be faithful to God and His word (2 John 9-11).

- by *Greg Gwin*