

DISCERNING BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

Lesson #9

TEXT: **Heb. 5:12-14**

INTRODUCTION:

- A. AS WE COME TO UNDERSTAND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIN, WE MUST:
 - 1. Change our desires.
 - 2. Limit our opportunities to sin.
 - 3. Exercise self-control.
 - 4. Seek forgiveness.
- B. WE MUST BE ABLE TO DISCERN BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.
 - 1. Knowing the difference does not come automatically upon conversion.
 - 2. It is an ability that comes with time and "exercise" (**Heb. 5:12-14**).
- C. DECIDING WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG INVOLVES ASKING A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MATTER AT HAND.

I. IS IT CLEARLY CONDEMNED IN THE BIBLE?

- A. MANY THINGS ARE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED AS BEING WRONG.
 - 1. One list of such things is found in **Galatians 5:19-21**.
 - 2. A similar list is found in **Eph. 5:3-7**.
- B. FOR THINGS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE, THAT SETTLES THE MATTER.
 - 1. At least as far as Christians are concerned
 - 2. There is no room for debate when the Scriptures clearly condemn a practice.
- C. BUT NOT ALL THINGS ARE MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE.

II. IS IT SIMILAR TO SOMETHING CONDEMNED?

- A. **Galatians 5:19-21**, NOTICE THE PHRASE "AND SUCH LIKE."
 - 1. Why are all these things alike, what do they have in common?
 - 2. They all show domination by the flesh. They violate the same principle.
 - 3. When uncertain, we should ask "Is it LIKE any sins specifically mentioned."
- B. YOU MIGHT EVEN COMPARE IT WITH THE GOOD THINGS MENTIONED.
 - 1. Notice those things in **Gal. 5:22-23**.
 - 2. Is it more like the "fruit of the Spirit" or the "works of the flesh?"

III. DOES IT HURT YOUR CONSCIENCE?

- A. THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE...
 - 1. In light of the following Scriptures(**1 Tim 1:5, 18-19; 3:9**).
 - 2. Violating our conscience till it is dead is a sign of apostasy!(**1 Tim 4:1-2**).
- B. THIS MAY HELP US TO BETTER APPRECIATE **Romans 14:23** . . .
 - 1. Doing something when you doubt it is right is to violate your conscience.
 - 2. That, declares Paul, is sin!
 - 3. So an act may be good in of itself, but...
 - a. If you think it is wrong (because of incorrect knowledge).
 - b. Or have doubts about its rightfulness, then don't do it!

IV. WHAT DO MATURE CHRISTIANS SAY ABOUT IT?

- A. THIS, OF COURSE, IS NOT THE ULTIMATE DETERMINING FACTOR.
- B. **Hebrews 5:14** SAYS THOSE WHO BY "REASON OF USE" ARE IN A POSITION TO DISCERN
 - 1. This is why the advice of mature Christians can be helpful (**Phil. 3:17**).
 - 2. Rehoboam's failure to listen to the advice of(**1 Kings 12:6-20**).
 - 3. Paul taught Titus that the younger should look to those older(**Titus 2:3-5**).

V. DOES IT HINDER YOUR INFLUENCE?

- A. PAUL STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF INFLUENCE.
 - 1. His concern for how his influence affected others(**1 Cor. 9:19-23**).
 - 2. He commands us to do likewise, imitating Christ!(**1 Cor. 10:31-11:1**).
- B. PETER TAUGHT THE VALUE OF A GOOD EXAMPLE.
 - 1. In helping a wife win her husband to the Lord(**1 Pet. 3:1-2**).
 - 2. **Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:11-12**.

VI. IS IT POOR STEWARDSHIP?

- A. WE ARE "STEWARDS" OF OUR TIME, MONEY, AND BODIES.
 - 1. The Lord's Parable of the Talents(**Matt. 25:14-30**).
 - 2. Paul's instruction concerning our bodies(**1 Cor. 6:19-20**).
 - 3. His directions for those rich in this world(**1 Tim 6:17-19**).
- B. SOME HARMLESS ACTIVITIES REQUIRE SO MUCH TIME AND ENERGY.
 - 1. There is none left for the Lord!

2. Time is limited; priorities must be set and kept(**Eph. 5:16; Matt. 6:33**).

VII. WOULD JESUS DO IT?

- A. THE GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP(**Luke 6:40**).
- B. "WOULD JESUS DO IT?" IS AN APPROPRIATE QUESTION.
- C. WE WANT TO BE AS LIKE CHRIST AS WE CAN BE(**Phil. 2:5**)
THE MORE WE KNOW ABOUT HIM, THE BETTER WE'LL BE..

CONCLUSION:

- A. AN HONEST APPRAISAL USING THESE QUESTIONS WILL HELP US DEFEAT SATAN BY DISCERNING GOOD AND EVIL..
- B. THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IS "DO WE WANT TO OVERCOME SIN, OR DO WE WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN WITH NO INCONVENIENCE?"
- C. SOME QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE YOUR THINKING:
 1. Do you have some older Christian to whom you feel free to go to for advice?
 2. Do you feel that you usually give enough thought to the effect of your actions on other people?
 3. Are you trying to keep a good conscience in all that you do?
 4. Will you ask, when in doubt, "What would Jesus do?"