

Straight Bible Talk

Manchester Church of Christ, Share Christ's Love and Share His Message

Religion without Morals

October, 2006

Volume 1 Issue 10

Religious groups are being torn apart in debates over morals. Church after church has taken up the debate about what is right and what is wrong, with church leaders feuding over the definitions and religious splits following in the wake of decisions rendered.

With the emphasis on toleration, things that were once considered wrong by a majority are no longer considered wrong. People tremble in fear of offending some person or some group. Religious leaders are being blown every which way by whatever group can make the most noise.

Morals are about conduct that is right or wrong. In every society there have been morals, standards that people were expected to follow. And there have always been people who did not follow the standards; people who did not care what others said about right and wrong.

What we are seeing today is a movement away from considering any activity as wrong. In a society that believes in tolerating everything and judging nothing, there cannot be a standard of conduct that says some particular activity is wrong. The end result will be religion without morals! This will happen when we become a society without morals.

But, someone objects, things will never be carried that far. Murder, for example, will never be accepted as moral conduct. Oh! We have accepted murder of unborn infants. Other countries have accepted murder of older people who are no longer considered useful to society. Under the

innocent sounding name of "eugenics" all sorts of atrocities have been committed against people who were not judged worthy to live. Nazi Germany furnishes us with an example. Eugenics has been practiced in this country as well. Although it has only gone so far as to sterilize certain people, so that they could not have children, there continue to be people who contend that we need to carry the concept further.

Consider, also, how the word "sick" is often applied to people whose behavior has been unacceptable. If they are "sick" then they are not responsible for their bad behavior. It is due to some cause that they were powerless to resist. While the word "sick" is not being used to describe the behavior, there are those who justify homosexual conduct as conduct that they are powerless to prevent. They claim that they are "born" that way.

This may easily be extended to other types of behavior in the future. People might simply justify their actions by pointing to some "genetic cause." There are always those willing to do a "study" that will substantiate whatever the researcher wants to prove.

Sinners almost always try to justify their behavior. That is just the way people are. King Saul, in the Bible, was sent on a mission by God. Returning from the mission, he was confronted by the prophet, Samuel. Saul had not carried out the mission as prescribed by God. Instead of admitting that he was wrong, he sought another way out. He first

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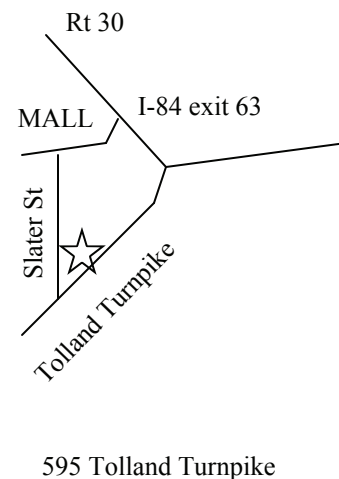
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Meeting at
595 Tolland Turnpike
Sun Bible Classes—9 AM
Sun Worship—10 AM
Sun Eve Worship—6:00 PM
Wed Bible Class—7:00 PM

“For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Hebrews 10:30-31

All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated.



claimed that he had done what he was supposed to do. When presented with the evidence that he had not, Saul blamed the people. He then tried the ploy that he was just about to do what he had been sent to do. Three strikes and you are out! Samuel (and God) accepted none of his excuses. Simply put, Saul had sinned. He was wrong. His conduct was intolerable. He was judged, convicted and stripped of his position.

Saul's conduct was wrong because he disobeyed God. In the end, all immoral conduct is an offense against God. It is not a matter of societal standards or personal likes or dislikes. Moral conduct is conduct of which God approves and immoral conduct is conduct of which God does not approve. Religion without morals is religion without God.

When men vote on what is right and what is wrong, they have removed God from the discussion. They have taken a step away from God and have taken a step in the direction of religion without morals. Every vote is one more step. Every vote is one step closer to the abyss of total abandonment of God.

Why Should I Believe What the Bible Says About Sin?

There is an alternative to voting in determining what is right and what is wrong. That alternative is the Bible. The Bible certainly contains a great deal of information about morals. In fact, our nation was founded on the moral principles that are in the Bible. We are now confronted with a situation in which many people no longer believe what is in the Bible.

Whether one believes the Bible is a matter of choice. My only suggestion is that you examine the evidence in making that choice. Whether the Bible is true or not does not depend upon whether you like what it says. Things can be true and unpleasant at the same time. When I got fired from a job, I did not like the words, but disliking them did not mean that I was not fired!

When I first began reading the Bible, I read it to prove that I was right. It was only after confrontation with those who believed the Bible that I began to see that there were things in the Bible that showed I was wrong. At that point I had two choices: 1) reject the Bible 2) change my ways. I chose the latter.

There are many people today who make a third choice. They will accept the parts of the Bible that they like and reject the parts they do not like. The Bible becomes like a buffet dinner; eat the things you like and leave the things that are personally distasteful. That works well for buffet dinners, but the question is, did God give us the Bible so that we could treat it like a buffet dinner? I think the an-

swer is obvious!

There was a time when many "theologians" regarded much of the Bible as myth. They could not find archaeological evidence for many of the places and countries named in the Bible. As the years have passed the list of places without archaeological evidence has grown shorter and shorter.

The cities, nations, manners and customs depicted in the Bible have a great deal of evidence from archaeology that says the Bible is true. Certainly, not everything that is in the Bible has been verified by archaeology. But archaeology has not proved the Bible false either and in many cases it has shown that those who wrote the Bible knew what they were talking about.

Luke, in particular, among New Testament writers almost seems to dare someone to prove that he is wrong. Both in his gospel and in the book of Acts, he gives detailed information about the state of affairs in the first century with names and places and titles that are bewildering to someone who first comes across the information. Again, not everything that Luke writes has been proven true, but as more and more evidence collects, Luke is vindicated time and time again. F. F. Bruce wrote a little book called, "The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?" that details a lot of the evidence for the trustworthiness of the New Testament.

The Old Testament, in particular, contains many prophecies concerning future events. There are predictions concerning cities, concerning nations and concerning the coming of Jesus. The detail in these prophecies when compared to the current state of affairs leaves no doubt but that those who wrote the Bible were receiving their information from One who knows the future.

If the writers of the Bible can get the future right, then they can be trusted to tell us about the present. Their stand on matters of right and wrong can be trusted because, just as they got their information about the future from God, so, too, did they get their information about right and wrong from God.

Morals are based on the nature of God and the nature of man. Those are two things that do not change. The Bible speaks of those under the Law. This was the law that God gave to the people of Israel through Moses. The Bible also speaks of those "who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law." It further speaks of those without the Law having a "conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."

Of course, one of the problems with conscience is that it can be corrupted. Through repeatedly doing what is wrong a person can become immune to the protests of conscience. But the Bible is not subject to such corruption. It continues to proclaim the same standard of right and wrong to all generations.

Thus you have the spectacle of those whose conscience has been corrupted, complaining that the Bible cannot be right in its condemnation of the evil that they are doing. Since they no longer feel guilty, the Bible must be wrong since they “feel good” about what they are doing. They may even argue that God has made them that way and they cannot help what they are doing.

Jesus spoke of those whose “right eye makes you stumble.” His advice: “tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Some object to the above by claiming that it cannot be intended literally. Perhaps so. Still, it must mean something. It shows that we have choices when it comes to committing evil. There is another choice besides giving in to the evil impulse that is within. If there is a choice then sin is not inevitable, but rather, it is something that must be conquered by choosing to do right instead of wrong. It is interesting that the context of Jesus’ remarks above involve sexual desire and lust.

There is no doubt that the desire to do evil is a powerful force that drives people. It is also true that God offers to give us an even more powerful force to resist evil. The problem is that, for all of us, it has become easier to give in to the forces drawing us into evil. Thus we become sinners, enemies of God and in need of His grace.

Is There Any Hope for Sinners?

God does not give up on people who violate His moral standards. When Cain offered an unacceptable sacrifice, God came and talked with him about what he had done and what he could do to make it right. When Cain continued in his rebellion and killed his brother, Abel, God came again and talked with Cain about what He had done. God does not want people to continue in sin, but to turn away from it and turn back to Him.

When the world was full of wickedness, in the time of Noah, God looked for a righteous man and found Noah. God then sent Noah to preach to his generation to turn them from sin. When the people did not change, God saved Noah by instructing him to build an ark in which

he and his family would be saved. God reaches out to sinners and saves those who will trust Him.

Paul wrote about God’s love for sinners in his letter to the Romans. “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

John, in his first letter wrote of the same love. “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” Jesus died for everyone. He died so that sinners might be forgiven.

Imagine how God must feel when people reject the Son of God who has been offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Imagine how God must feel after sacrificing His Son and people choose to follow someone else instead of Jesus.

Some would seek to solve the problem of sin and guilt by changing the definition for sin. Just say that it is not sin; that what you thought was wrong is now all right. That may work for a while, but it does not resolve the issue permanently.

Others would resolve the issue of guilt by teaching that good makes up for bad. That leaves one with many sins that have no corresponding good deed against which they may be balanced.

God offers forgiveness, a clean slate.

How Do I Receive Forgiveness for My Sins?

While some people “feel” forgiven, a Christian knows that they are forgiven. The difference is in reading and accepting what the Bible says about forgiveness versus just making it up.

Somebody just made up the idea that if you “accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and receive him into your heart you are saved.” I have never seen a Bible reference for that statement. Maybe because there is nothing in the Bible that even comes close to saying that. Sorry if I have offended you, but if you believe it is in the Bible, please send me the reference and I will retract my statement in the next issue of “Straight Bible Talk!”

- Please send me a free Bible
- I am interested in a Bible study program
- I am looking for a church
- Please send me a free copy of the book, "A Christian Survival Manual"
- Please add my name to receive "Straight Bible Talk" free each month
- I have a question

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Forgiveness is not about how you feel about God, it is about how God feels about you! We are intimately acquainted with our own feelings, but we must rely on some other source in order to know how God feels. God has provided us with just such a source. That source is the Bible.

The Bible tells us how God feels when we sin. And the Bible tells us exactly what we need to do in order to have God's forgiveness. Forgiveness is not about our feelings, but about our willingness to obey God.

When the rich ruler asked Jesus, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" Jesus did not respond, "Just accept me as your personal savior." Instead the ruler was told to "go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

On Pentecost, when the crowd cried out to Peter and the other apostles, "Men, brothers, what must we do?" the answer was not to ask Jesus to come into their hearts. Instead, Peter replied, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

On the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus (later to be the apostle, Paul) saw Jesus. When Saul asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" he was not told to say the "sinner's prayer." Instead, Jesus told him, "Get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." Later, when Ananias came in to him, Saul was told, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."

When the jailer in Philippi fell at the feet of Paul and Silas, he asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He was told to believe and when he believed, he was baptized the same hour of the night.

The Bible makes clear what God expects people to do in order to be forgiven. There must be a sincere belief in God and in Jesus as God's only begotten Son. There must be a sincere desire to turn away from sin. And there must be baptism, an immersion in water, in which God will wash away all sin and make the person new.

If you follow in the footsteps of those you read about in the Bible, you can have the same assurance of forgiveness that they had. The choice is up to you.

You are cordially invited to attend our worship services or other events for the community

For the younger children in your family (or for those young in heart), come to our annual

Harvest Costume Festival

**Saturday October 14th
1—3 PM**

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FREE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

For Information:

Call—646-2903

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