

LOVING WHAT IS RIGHT

Introduction

- A. Text: **Jas. 1:25-27**.
- B. In an effort to discredit the originality of Jesus' teaching, it is often pointed out that several ancient moral teachers are known to have said, "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you."
- C. It is noteworthy, however, that the so-called Golden Rule of Jesus in **Mt. 7:12** is phrased positively — it contains a crucial element absent from the more ancient sayings.
- D. The difference between negatively refraining from doing evil and positively acting to do good is illustrated by the story of the Good Samaritan - **Lk. 10:25-37**.

I. WERE NOT THE PRIEST AND LEVITE PROBABLY "GOOD MORAL PEOPLE"?

- A. These men would no doubt have abhorred the disgusting immorality of the thugs who beat up and robbed the man by the roadside.
- B. Were they not like many of our acquaintances: "decent, clean, upstanding folks" who are basically "on the side of what is right"?
- C. What are the characteristics of the "good moral person" as we usually think of him?
 1. Do we not tend to define morality in terms of not murdering, not committing adultery, not lying, etc.?
 2. Do we not perhaps even secretly congratulate ourselves for being above average morally — because we would not stoop to engage in the despicable things we see others doing?
 3. Is the strength of our morality measured by *the intensity of the negative feelings we have about im-morality*?
 4. Are we "good" because we have *a long list of practices we are against*?
- D. If this is our "morality," we are no better than the Pharisees — for they were people who scrupulously avoided un-righteousness.
 1. Pharisaical "self-righteousness" is well illustrated in **Lk. 18:9-14**.
 2. The Pharisees possessed not sanctification, but sanctimoniousness ("hypocritical high-mindedness").
- E. Our righteousness must exceed this type, not merely in quantity but in quality: "For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (**Mt. 5:20**).

II. THE TRUTH IS, THERE IS MORE TO BEING "MORAL" THAN LOOKING DOWN ON IMMORALITY

- A. Consider carefully whether you agree with this quotation: "**Loving what is right is different from hating what is wrong and feeling right about it**" (Roy Masters).
 1. There are obviously many things in the world that we ought to feel a genuine revulsion for — but neither ought we to confuse this revolting feeling with a true love for what is good.
 2. We don't truly qualify as being on the side of truth and goodness if all we do is criticize sin vocally.

- B. Do we, for example, love "justice"?
1. If so, what are we doing to secure justice for the victims of wrong treatment and oppression? Cf. **Mt. 25:41-46**.
 2. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (**Isa. 1:16,17**).
- C. Granting that these are works of the individual rather than the church, what are we doing about them individually?

III. GOD IS CONCERNED WITH WHAT WE DO ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW TO DO

- A. A part of our problem is that we tend to judge others by their *actual performance*, while we judge ourselves by our *ideals*.
1. We think of ourselves as being fairly "good" because we know our goals are good, we know that we are capable of doing good, we know what we intend to do, etc.
 2. But the person who truly loves what is right is not merely the person with high ideals and positive potential — he is the actual doer of good.
- B. *Can Do* and *Have Done* don't even live in the same neighborhood! Cf. **1 Kgs. 20:11**.
- C. The Book of James has some clear teaching regarding "knowing" and "doing" - e.g. **Jas. 1:21-27; 2:14-26; 4:17**.
- D. We tend to speak carelessly when we repeat Edmund Burke's statement: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."
- E. Are these folks really "good" who passively sit by and let evil triumph, disapproving of it all the while?

Conclusion

- A. Talk is cheap! Loving good requires doing good.
- B. When it comes to standing "on the right side," are we actually guilty of standing "on the other side"? Cf. **Obad. 10,11**.
- C. To know the Lord's will and not do it is to be a fool - **Mt. 7:26,27**.
- D. There is happiness and blessing in doing the right thing when we know to do it.
1. "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them" (**Jn. 13:17**).
 2. "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (**Jas. 1:25**).