

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Recognizing Good and Evil

(Jerry Fite)

Paul exhorts Christians to “*Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good*” (Romans 12:9). Not only does this command of God demand the recognition of good and evil, but it implies a strong reaction to both. “Abhor” in this text not only denotes “hatred” of something, but it manifests one moving away “from” it. If you abhor a certain food, you not only dislike it, but usually will not want to be in the vicinity of it when it is time to eat. “Cleave” here in verse nine denotes “joining” close to something like two objects fitted together with “glue”. We are not to be just agreeable with good; we are to be joined to it. We are not to merely dislike evil; we are to so abhor it, that we keep ourselves from it.

Paul implies that good and evil exist together in this world. “Good” by definition is something that is good in character; with an emphasis upon it being “beneficial in effect”. “Evil” denotes something base in its character with the emphasis upon it being “harmful” and “painful” in effect.

We can recognize good and evil in ideas and concepts like we can recognize good and evil in people; we can know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-17).

It is not difficult to label the concept of a superior “Aryan” race leading to murdering over 6 million of Jews as evil, while recognizing Hitler and his henchmen as being wicked men in executing their evil plan.

Even before seeing the fruits of good and evil, we are able to know objective good and evil through the teaching of inspired Scripture. Through the study of Scripture, we are “*completely furnished unto every good work*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We learn from Scripture that “unbelief” is evil (Hebrews 3:12); vaunting ourselves above God regarding who is in control of our seeing tomorrow is evil (James 4:16); and receiving a false teacher into your home is partaking of “*his evil works*” (2 John 11). Being hospitable is not always good; unbelief is not inconsequential; and planning tomorrow apart from the Lord’s will is not minor.

The way our society is thinking today, Paul’s strong exhortation is impossible to apply. In the minds of many, there is no objective standard to determine what is good or what is evil. So, the best one can do today is be “authentic” to your way of thinking, even if it is “evil”. With no standard for determining evil, many look at one’s consistency to his or her beliefs as being laudable. Could not Hitler demand respect today for being “authentic”?

To comply with Paul’s exhortation is to make one intolerant today. Not many years ago, one could weigh the concepts and words of another, and be free to tell them that they were wrong. Today, to be so glued to what you believe is right, which makes another feel they are wrong is to make you intolerant and unloving. To voice abhorrence of the evil acts of others is to make you an intolerant bigot, guilty of hate speech. The demand to tolerate all beliefs without voicing any condemnation is really the new intolerance. How are your senses being exercised (Heb. 5:14)?