

# Glad Tidings

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

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## Discerning Evil

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**W**e live in “upside down” times. It is not good, but it is not new. In 750 B.C. Isaiah said, “*Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil...*” (Isaiah 5:20). Some will call you a “bigot” if you describe their thoughts or actions as “evil.” Often, they do so without seeking to know “why” the thoughts or deeds are “evil.” No thought-provoking, standard-investigating dialog is allowed. We are left to wonder who in this conflict is truly the “narrow-minded bigot.” When nations that seek to kill innocent people are called by a President as the “axis of evil,” many are aghast to hear such words come from a leader of the free world. They will either join in or keep silent when the President is called “evil” for speaking out. What is evil? Do you know?

The child of God must have a grasp of this subject to please God and grow to maturity. “*But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil*” (Hebrews 5:14). We are not merely to know the difference between good and evil, but also know what is good and what is evil.

Satan is described as the “*evil one*” for he is opposed to all that is good or commended by God. Jesus prayed His apostles to not be taken

out of the world but be kept from “*the evil one*” (John 17:15). While in this world, we must understand Satan is the source for evil. We withstand him by being armed with the Word of God coupled with prayer – the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-20).

Any thought or action that is contrary to the standard of God’s Word is not only sin, but it is evil. When Paul speaks of “the evil” that he would not do, but yet practices, he says it is “sin that dwelleth” in him (Romans 7:19-20). No wonder it is difficult for some in our society to call evil things evil. They recognize no objective standard of right and wrong, therefore no rule of good and evil. We know that sin is “*lawlessness*” (1 John 3:4). Therefore, thoughts that are contrary to God’s teachings are “*evil thoughts*” (Mark 7:21). When men commit fornication or adultery, they are committing “*evil*” deeds, being “*wicked*” (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:13). Even doing something that we judge in our conscience as being unlawful is “*evil*” (Romans 14:20).

God is not hesitant to describe men who do not bring the doctrine of Christ to us as doing an “*evil work*.” Therefore, we are not to give such teachers greeting or God’s speed or else we will be participating “*in their evil works*” (2 John 10-11). A servant who is

beating, hurting, and abusing others while becoming drunk himself is called an “*evil servant*” (Matthew 24:48-49). Even religious people are called “*evil workers*” who draw people away from the standard of righteousness in Christ through the influence of their teaching (Philippians 3:2). People are recognized as “*evil*,” not because of intolerance or prejudice, but because their actions contradict the revealed Word of God.

God allows us to call those “*troubles*” in life that bring us “*harm*” as being that which is “*evil*.” Jesus, encouraging us not to worry about tomorrow, says “*sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*” (Matthew 6:34). We may call the harm that blowing hurricanes, or freezing Arctic fronts impose on us as “*evil*.” There is nothing inherently evil in nature, but these natural events often bring us harm. This also applies to the actions of people. Paul writes, “*Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil*” (or harm) (2 Timothy 4:14).

When people or nations encourage the killing of innocent persons, they are practicing “*evil*.” They can be called “*evil*” because they either contradict the clear teachings of God’s Word; or they harm people; or they do both. May we discern what is evil by applying God’s standard!