Glad Tidings

"And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers…" (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXXV | July 27, 2025 | No. 30

Can You Discern Evil?

(Jerry Fite)

We live in times that are "upside down" as Isaiah descried in his day: *"Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).* Some in our country are aghast when they hear political leaders describe nations that want to kill innocent people as the "axis of evil." Yet, they will either join in or keep silent when the person who levies such a charge is called "evil. Are you automatically evil because you call out evil? What is evil? Do you know?

The child of God must have a grasp of this subject in order 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 to just know the difference between good and evil, but 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 not to be taken out of the world, but be kept from "the evil one" *(John 17:15).* While in this world, we must understand there is a real source for the evil present. We can withstand Satan by being armed with the word of God *(Ephesians 6:11ff.).*

Anything - thought or actions that is contrary to the standard of God's Word is not only sin, but 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 things evil. They recognize no objective standard of right and wrong, therefore no rule of good and evil. We know that sin is lawlessness *(I John 3:4).* Therefore, thoughts that are contrary to God's teaching are "evil thoughts" *(Mark 7:21).* When men commit fornication or adultery, they are committing acts that are "evil" or "wicked" *(I 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 his evil works" *(2 John 10-11).* A servant who is beating, hurting, and abusing others while becoming drunk himself is call an "evil servant" *(Matthew 24:48-49).* Even religious people who are teaching and trying to influence others away from the teaching of Christ are called "evil workers" *(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" that bring us "harm" as that which is "evil." Jesus encouraging us not to worry about tomorrow, says that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" *(Matthew 6:34).* We can look at the harm that tornadoes, hurricanes, and such recent flash floods cause, and call such events evil. Not because there is something inherently evil in nature, but that they cause much trouble and harm our lives. Paul said Alexander the coppersmith did him *"much evil"* or harm *(2 Timothy 4:11).*

When people or nations encourage the killing of innocent persons, they are promoting evil. We can call abortion evil for the deliberate taking of innocent life (murder) - *Psalms 10:8, James 5:11-12..* Such promoters and practitioners are doing evil on two counts: acting contrary to God's word and harming others.