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John 8:1-11

Right and Wrong vs. Good and Evil

1. “But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
2. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.
3. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court,
4. they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.
5. ‘Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?’
6. They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.
7. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’
8. Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.
9. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.
10. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’

11. She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.’”

This is such a great passage of Scripture--There are so many important lessons packed into these 11 verses. This passage gives us a clear expose of how right and wrong significantly differs from good and evil. Being right and being good are not always the same thing. Likewise, being wrong does not necessarily mean a person is evil.

With regards to right and wrong, the woman caught in the act of adultery was obviously in the wrong. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were right. The Law of Moses did require that those committing adultery were to be publicly put to death.

But this passage also brings out the fact that, although the Pharisees were technically and legally right, they were at the same time, practicing evil. Their reason for bringing the woman to Jesus was to test Him as verse 6 states, “In order that they might have grounds for accusing Him.”

Also note that the Mosaic Law required the stoning of both parties involved in adultery. Where was the man? If the woman was caught in the “very act”, why didn’t the Pharisees bring the male adulterer before Jesus, too? Some have suggested that the woman was set-up. But regardless, what the Pharisees really wanted was to do away with Jesus, and ultimately they carried out their evil

desire. So in this example we have people who are in the right and at the same time working evil, because of their intent and heart condition.

So right and wrong/good and evil are quite different from each other. In Hebrews 5:14 the word of God calls Christians to maturity. Quote: “Who because of practice, have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” The new Testament’s spiritual objective then is the discernment of good and evil, which is significantly different and deeper than merely knowing right from wrong.

Jesus himself often ate with sinners--prostitutes, tax-gathers, and the like--who were obviously in the wrong. When the Pharisees could not understand this, Jesus offered the following explanation: “It is not those who are well . . . who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:31 and 32

And it was on the basis of good and evil, not right and wrong, that Jesus would later prophesy to the chief priests and elders: “Truly I say to you, that tax-gathers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you.”

Matthew 21:31

And so it is with our ministries today as Christians. We are to seek out those who are lost--who are in the

wrong most definitely--but (more importantly) those who have good hearts. Those who sincerely hunger and thirst for righteousness, but don't have the knowledge and power to do what is right.

At the same time, we are to shun those who are evil. As Jesus put it: "Do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they turn and tear you to pieces." Matthew 7:6

That is why we must discern the difference between right and wrong/good and evil. So that we might act upon the good.