



“Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice” (Deuteronomy 26:17).

Maintaining Morality

Central Truth: God’s people must follow the moral principles set forth in the Bible.

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Topic: Ethics; Morality.

Ask the question, “How can I distinguish between right and wrong?” Many people will answer, “There is no clear distinction. The situation determines what is right and what is wrong.” (A good preparation for this study would be to go back and review our recent study of “Situation Ethics,” **L202**) Situation Ethics has undermined the moral principles on which a healthy society is built. It has demoralized our nation. Those who hold that opinion may be sincere; but if so, they are sincerely wrong.

It is the presence of a standard which is true for all people, in all situations, at all times that determines if a thing is right or wrong. We believe God has given such a standard. It is recorded in the Bible. In all matters of moral judgment therefore, we say with Isaiah, “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Isaiah 8:20).

We hear a great deal about the “new morality.” In truth it is but the old immorality flaunted in a different dress. This study is planned because of the subtle influence of the new morality. It is even influencing Christians! (Look at the style of swimsuits some Christians wear.) I wonder, “What ever happened to old-fashioned modesty?” We are living in a generation that has become hardened to sin and is no longer able to blush (Jeremiah 8:12). What a tragedy!

Morality Defined

Morality has to do with the principles or standards of right conduct. A person is moral when he or she conforms to the standards of goodness or rightness in conduct or character. The term is often used to refer to sexual purity, but it reaches far beyond that subject. An action is moral when it conforms to right standards and immoral when it does not.

Morality depends upon a standard of truth. There must be some authority which says, "This is acceptable and that is unacceptable; this is right and that is wrong." But where is such an authority to be found? Certainly not in the opinions of the general public. There can be no agreement on moral principles in an unregenerate society.

The standard which governs morality must never change. To change would show that something about the standard was wrong. But the opinions of society are constantly in flux. What a difference there is between the standard of one generation ago and that of our present generation! We need something more sure than popular opinion by which to approve or disapprove our actions.

Christians look to the Bible as a divine moral standard. Not even the smallest mark in its writings will change (Matthew 5:18).

Christians believe the standard of moral rectitude is the Holy Bible. All acts and opinions must be judged by "thus saith the Lord." Since the Word of God is the standard by which we will be judged in the last day, it is the standard by which we must live in the present day.

Morality Denied

Advocates of the "new morality" reject what you have just read. They declare that the standard of moral virtue is subject to change. They deny that there is an objective standard of truth that applies to all people, in all places, and at all times. Their concept of what is right and wrong depends upon the belief patterns of a particular culture. Therefore they follow the principle, "Eat, drink, and be merry." But remember that Jesus said a man who lives by that philosophy is a fool (Luke 12:20). It is still extreme foolishness for a person to live as if God has no standard of right and wrong by which we who bear His image should live.

Those who follow the new morality reject, not only the Bible, but also those who teach and live by the Bible. They refer to us as "Bible thumpers" and other derogatory names. But that does not change the truth of our

position. The Bible is declared unacceptable in public debate, as is evident in many television talk shows.

They advocate “choice,” but no objective standard to guide those choices. Each person becomes his own authority, which is what the devil got Adam and Eve to do in Eden. A “contraceptive solution” is offered as the sole answer to social and moral ills. They invade the public school system to indoctrinate the young with their “new” code of morality and to “clarify” the value system of our nation's children.

The result of this approach to life is readily seen. Since there is no standard of moral purity (according to their opinion), do not teach sexual abstinence before marriage. Instead, instruct the children how to perform sexually and pass out birth control devices. And since there is no standard for God-approved marriage, teach the perversion of same-sex marriage as simply an alternate lifestyle. The crime, violence, and immorality in our society can be traced directly to failure to accept a biblical standard of morality.

Morality Defended

Christians must take the lead in redefining moral virtue. We must insist that there is a divine standard by which all actions and attitudes are judged. Whatever agrees with that standard is right; whatever disagrees with it is wrong. That standard is based on the nature of God. Therefore, the standard does not change because God does not change. What is right has always been right; what is wrong has always been wrong.

Deuteronomy 26 relates that Moses informed ancient Israel on how to come before God in her national assembly each year. She was to come to the central sanctuary and bring her offerings to the Lord. She was to confess her former bankruptcy in slavery and the blessings of God which had made her a prosperous and free nation. She was to recount her obedience to God's commands, saying, *“I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them”* (verse 13). And on the basis of that confession, she was to ask God's blessings with these words, *“Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers”* (verse 15). Examine that instruction and see six principles which should be applied today. They will defend biblical morality now as they did then.

Recognize the person and authority of God (verse 13). He gives laws to govern our belief and our behavior. Those laws are to be remembered and obeyed. A nation has no right to ask or expect God's blessings unless she is

living by His laws.

God made us, and He knows which lifestyle will help us and which will harm us. The laws He has given are those which will promote our welfare. He desires to give us a good life and a pleasant end to life (Jeremiah 29:11). The only reason a person would refuse to live under God's guidelines is that he does not trust God or he wishes to rebel against God. It is best for the creature to submit to the Creator.

Admit personal responsibility to obey the laws of God (verses 13, 14, 16). Five times the personal pronoun I occurs in their confession of obedience. The whole nation was required to make that confession, but each person made it for himself. Are you reminded of Paul's statement, "*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God*" (Romans 14:12)? When the Bible says "*every one,*" it means "the entire group taken one at a time." That means you are not to live by the standards of people about you. You are personally responsible to know and follow God's rules.

Expect God to bless moral purity (verse 15). He is a holy God who inhabits a holy place to receive the person who is of a contrite and humble spirit (Isaiah 57:15). Sin can never enter there, and sinners will never be received there. God says moral impurity of whatever kind defiles and pollutes the land. The immoral are excluded from God until they repent and receive forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ. God will judge immorality, but He will bless morality wherever it is found.

Make a personal proclamation of loyalty to God (verse 17). Here is the ideal: "*Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice.*" That suggests (1) a clear-cut decision, (2) a surrender to God's laws, (3) a willingness to be instructed in His ways, and (4) a public demonstration of that commitment. It is like Joshua saying, "You choose which God you will follow. But whatever you choose, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (See Joshua 24:15.)

Cultivate a personal relationship with God (verse 18). Read verses 17 and 18 together. You have proclaimed God to be your God, and He has proclaimed that you are His child. That indicates a love relationship. You do not want to disappoint the one you love. So cultivate a personal relationship with God that you may know His principles for living and that you may live by those principles to your mutual delight. A personal relationship is possible because He is "*a God at hand . . . and not a God afar off*" (Jeremiah 23:23).

Expect vindication by the justice of God (verse 19). He will punish

wrong and reward right, *“for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth”* (Psalm 96:13). When God's judgment is applied and His truth measures belief and behavior, right will be vindicated and rewarded. Do not be deceived by the standards of this world. You are in the world but not of the world because Jesus has chosen you out of the world so that you may be a beacon light for righteousness. Shine for Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

1. How would you define morality?
2. How does morality apply to more than sexual conduct?
3. Is there a standard that determines right and wrong for all people, at all times, and in all situations?
4. Where is that standard to be found?
5. What are some of the basic principles of that standard?
6. How do “situation ethics” and the “new morality” deny that standard?
7. How can you be sure that standard does not change?
8. How has society changed in regard to that standard?
9. How does Psalm 96:13 relate to that standard?
10. How can you be sure you live by that standard?