



February 11, 2007

*What Who Wants ?*

Solomon states, ***“Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?”*** (Ecc 7.16). What does this mean? There are some who appear to believe that God will allow them to do anything they want and it will be alright. Paul addresses this type of thinking in his letter to the Romans. ***“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”*** (Rom 6.1-2). The idea that once one is “saved” anything goes, is not taught here. Another misused passage is **Philippians 2.12**. Paul writes, ***“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”*** This seems to imply that we can do whatever we think is needed to be right in God’s sight and once again one may believe that this is just fine. This is the same as buying car insurance then thinking we are immune from the obligation to drive responsibly. While we may have insurance we are not at liberty to be negligent. Folks understand that in a physical sense, and yet, in a spiritual sense people do not comprehend what the “big deal is”. The context of the above passage is taken too liberally, or not into account at all, by those unwilling to sacrifice things they have grown to love but are condemned in the scriptures. There are also situations in which some engage in things which would be justified in God's sight but are done in a manner that is wrong. Does god really support this way of thinking, or are we making a case for damnation if we practice such things What do other scriptures tell us about these things? In regard to Solomon's statement above, we have a very good example of those who practiced overzealous righteousness. the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees during the first century did exactly this. They had established and practiced a "righteousness" that was of their making. They were condemned for placing themselves in a position equal with Moses (**Matt 23.2**) and therefore felt they were able to change the law in favor of their own commandments and doctrines. They taught things that needed to be taught (**Matt 23.3**) but they excused themselves from practicing the same (Matt 23.4). For this they were condemned by Christ. They entitled themselves to perpetrate crimes against the poor and went so far as to take widows houses (**Matt 23.13-14**). In spite of these flagrant violations they were more than careful to tithe the very least of the herbs and spices (**Matt 23.23-24**). They were so focused on the detail of formality that they had missed the bigger picture. Christ

stated that they would have been better off to have remembered and practiced compassion and forgiveness (**Matt 23.23**). The hypocrite typically is one who creates and enforces harsh rules and judges others without ever judging themselves. In contrast is the zealous righteousness of the apostle Paul. Paul was concerned about the effect that his actions had on others (**1 Cor 9.27**). As a preacher Paul made a commitment to being faithful. He understood that the negative effect of hypocrisy is so profound that it would not only harm his reputation, but that of the Lord and the church. The pharisees had forgotten God. Religion had become a self-oriented exercise in personal gratification in the name of God. Doesn't that sound familiar? Hypocrisy will draw dislike, dissension and the eventual condemnation of God for such actions. We must also be aware that if one opposes God through disobedience we will reap the consequences of our actions. Some have assigned degrees to sin as an attempt to live a more "realistic" life. This is the application of the "don't sweat the small stuff" mentality to God. Evil expresses itself in subtle ways. Eve ate the forbidden fruit and later offered it to Adam who also ate. We all die now as a result, and Christ had to be offered on the cross to save us from sin (**ourselves**). David committed adultery and conspired to kill the husband so that he could cover up what he had done. **God was watching** and let him know that the rest of his life would be filled with turmoil. Moses struck a rock when he was told to speak to it. **God heard him** and would not let him enter Canaan. Ten spies expressed doubts about entering the promised land. Instead of receiving support and assertiveness training, God condemned them to **wander in the wilderness until they were dead**. Ananias and Sapphira "fibbed" about an amount of a donation to the church. They did not get a slap on the wrist, **they were struck dead**. Now, what is evil? What we think of as evil is not what God has in mind and our definition of righteousness is not what God thinks about it. If we don't know the Bible we don't know good from evil and if we don't know good from evil we don't know God.

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