



The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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Who Sets The Standard

By
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Webster's New World Dictionary defines the word *moral* as, "1. Relating to, dealing with, or capable of making the distinction between right and wrong in conduct. 2. Relating to, serving to teach, or in accordance with the principles of right and wrong. 3. Good or right in conduct or character; often, specifically, virtuous in sexual conduct: opposed to immoral. *Immoral* is defined as, "1. Not in conformity with the accepted principles of right and wrong behavior; contrary to the moral code of the community; wicked; especially, not in conformity with the accepted standards or proper sexual behavior; unchaste; lewd; licentious; obscene." Synonyms of moral would include such words as, "righteous, ethical, virtuous, and well-conducted." Synonyms of immoral would include such words as, "depraved, wicked, lewd, licentious, vicious, and dissolute." Morality then, has to do with one's actions or conduct, and especially sexual conduct. It includes mental, as well as physical action. How and what we think, as well as what we do. Jesus said, "But I say unto you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her as already committed

adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). The wise man, Solomon, said, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..." (Prov. 3:7). These statements should impress upon us the importance of guarding our thoughts as well as our actions.

But who determines what is right or wrong, moral or immoral? Webster says that one could be considered immoral if he or she lives, "contrary to the moral code of the community ... not in accepted standards of proper sexual behavior ..." But again, who decides what the "accepted standard" will be? Secular Humanists have long preached the concept that there is no absolute standard by which our thoughts and actions are to be governed. They say man is the highest source of authority, and morality becomes a matter of whatever is right in one's own eyes. Although such a theory does have a great amount of appeal, and certainly would allow for each man to "do his own thing," it will never work because there would be as many standards of morality as there are human beings. Furthermore, if there is no absolute standard by which we are governed, then there is no such thing as right or wrong, moral or immoral. Even humanists realize this for they have tried to devise a guide by which one can determine right from wrong.

The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

In the past they have called their proposed method, "Values Clarification." But, is it just an irony that those who teach no absolute standard have no confidence in their own philosophy, and realize that there must be a way of determining what's right from wrong? I think not, for reason or good sense teaches us that there must be a way of deciding what's moral from immoral. Furthermore, if there is to be a fixed standard of morality, then it must come from a source outside of man. Experience teaches us, and the Bible confirms it, that even the wisest of men cannot agree

among themselves on many things. "Every way of man is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:12). "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes..." (Prov. 12:15). Jeremiah tells us that man is a poor judge in directing his own steps. "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

We need to understand this fundamental truth! Just look at the world around you. Do you not see the moral decay? Alcoholism, drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, abortion on demand, pornography, etc., are of epidemic proportion in this country. Adultery and sexual immorality are not only practiced openly, but avowed to be the norm. Why? The answer is simple. Man is trying to direct his own steps, and is ignoring that fixed standard of moral conduct that comes from a source outside of man – *God's Word!*

God, because of His inherent authority, is the only one who can decide for all others what is right or wrong. After all, God created man and knows what is best for His creation (cf. Deut. 6:24). Who is in a better position to decide what is right or wrong for man? We have already shown that man is not a competent source of authority in regard to such matters. Moreover, not only does God have the authority to set the standard, He has already done so. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). "Therefore, all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way" (Psa.

119:128). Read Romans 1:18-32, and Galatians 5:19-21.

Until man comes to grips with the fact that God's Word is the fixed standard for moral conduct, he will continue to reap just what he sows (Gal. 6:7). "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressor shall fall therein?" (Hosea 14:9).

GOD'S FORGETFULNESS

One of the things I have noticed about myself the last few years is that I'm becoming more forgetful. I notice that I forget small things like where I put my car keys, my wallet or my cell phone. Yet even more troublesome to me is forgetting more important information like names, dates or appointments that I used to be much better at remembering. Perhaps it's because I'm more easily distracted and not as focused as I used to be. Perhaps I'm just getting older. Or, perhaps the files in my memory are slowly becoming fragmented like the hard drive on my computer. Whatever the case may be, forgetfulness can be very frustrating and problematic. In extreme cases it may even be considered to be a character flaw or defect.

However, while forgetfulness may be seen by many as a negative quality in people, in one sense it can be said to be a positive characteristic of the divine, holy nature of God. In fact, there is one circumstance in which our omniscient God has actually chosen to be forgetful.

Speaking of the superiority of Jesus Christ, and the new covenant, the Hebrew writer states in chapter 8:10-12, "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man His neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*" Did you get that? By virtue of the new covenant, God has mercifully chosen to not only forgive our sins but to also forget them.

The magnitude of God's forgiving and forgetting our repented sins is a blessing that is difficult to comprehend. In our minds it seems almost unfathomable as we have difficulty forgiving and forgetting the sins of others. Not so with God. "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*" (Psa. 103:12). God forgives us and remembers our sins no more!

How is that possible? By being baptized into Christ we put on Christ, walking in a newness of life. Gone are our iniquities of the past, forgotten are our days of sin. What God sees in us instead is the righteousness of His son. Knowing Christ can present us faultless in the presence of God's glory we can rejoice, because concerning our sins, He has graciously chosen to have a terrible memory! (Jude 24) - Jeff Haught