



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## A Simple Verse About Right and Wrong

- by Frank Himmel

*“. . . abhor what is evil; cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9).* This short verse (actually it is just the second part of the verse) would be a fine one to commit to memory. It states or implies at least three vital points.

First, **there is such a thing as good and evil.** People used to understand that. We used to know that one is supposed to keep his word, that greed is a bad thing, that marriage is for life, that homosexuality is a perversion, etc. Now, several generations have grown up listening to denominational preachers say that it does not matter what you believe, thereby undermining Bible authority.

We have heard libertarians rationalize any and every kind of conduct. We have grown accustomed to comedians making daily fodder of sin of every kind. Is it any wonder people are confused? Come to think of it, this is nothing new. Long ago Isaiah wrote, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; . . . who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight” (Isaiah 5:20-21).

Second, **it is both possible and necessary to discern good and evil.** Personal preferences and moral relativism leave us adrift. There is a fixed standard. It is God. He is right or righteous. “A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4). His word, His self-revelation, is the yardstick by which all conduct is measured. It is the standard by which we shall be judged (John 12:48).

Discerning right and wrong begins with the “thou shalt/thou shalt not” passages. We must also take into account principles of conduct, such as maintaining a clear conscience (Romans 14:22-23), not putting other things before God (Matthew 6:33), leaving off questionable things that would lessen our influence for good (Matthew 5:16), etc. Paul often prayed that Christians would grow in this area of distinguishing conduct (Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12).

Third, **we must act in keeping with the quality of any given behavior.** If a thing is good we are to cling to it. The original verb in our text is from the Greek noun for glue; be glued to it. On the other hand, if conduct is bad, we are to abhor it. *Abhor* is from the Latin word for horror, which literally means to shudder. We should shudder at the very idea of some kinds of behavior [misbehavior].

Simply put, Romans 12:9 tells us to use God’s word and draw the line between good and evil. Once that line is drawn, do not see how close to it you can get without stepping over; stay as far away from evil and as close to God as you can.

## The Cure for Our Souls

by Bill Fairchild, Jr.

“Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?” (Jeremiah 8:22, NKJV).

In every generation, diseases and illnesses of every sort are threatening our well-being and in some cases our lives. It was not so long ago that Polio was a serious illness for so many. Now in our time, cancers of every sort, HIV, and Hepatitis C have become our modern nemesis!

Each of these diseases serves to challenge the medical community and research institutions at alarming costs in the effort to find a cure.

Found in the heart of the Old Testament, the weeping prophet Jeremiah has seen with his own eyes the sickness and stubbornness of his people. He also understood that because of their rebellion against the God of heaven and His will, his people could not be healed by the “balm of Gilead.”

Gilead stood on the eastern side of the Jordan River. There would be trading caravans that traveled through this area from the east, moving south in the direction of Egypt. One of the products they brought with them to sell was an aromatic substance used for healing, called balm. In time, then, the term “balm of Gilead” became a phrase associated with “cures” and “healing.”

Jeremiah asks a very poignant question comprised of two parts, “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” It is this type of question, asked centuries ago, that even now echoes through time and resonates with us today. It speaks to mankind of our own shared human experience of pain, brokenness, and longing for healing. It points us to the “balm of Gilead,” a symbol of God’s provision for spiritual healing.

The “balm of Gilead” was a real, tangible substance, a resin derived from a tree native to the region of Gilead. It was known for its healing properties, used to soothe and heal physical wounds. But in the context of Jeremiah’s lament, the balm of Gilead takes on a deeper, spiritual significance. It becomes a metaphor for God’s healing, a symbol of His ability to soothe our spiritual wounds and restore our broken souls.

In the same way, mankind is lost in sin and need of a Savior. God’s love for us is demonstrated in the great sacrifice of His “only begotten Son!” It is as real as the balm of Gilead, as tangible as the resin from the tree and it is by His grace and mercy that forgiveness of sins, the opportunity to be at peace with God and be adopted into His spiritual family can be obtained.

The “balm” God offers is found in the person of Jesus Christ, the Great Physician, who came to heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds - yours and mine! And the healing that He provides is not something to be taken lightly. It is not some sort of a superficial band-aid for the heart and soul of man, but rather it is a cleansing that reaches to the very depths of our being.

It is deep and lasting. It touches our wounds with His love, soothes our pain with His grace, and restores our souls with His truth. It is a healing that transforms us, that makes us new creatures in Christ, which brings us the joy and peace of the salvation He alone provides. And it is to be understood that the “balm” found in Jesus requires our choice and participation. We must choose to come to Him and surrender our will to His!

This choice is not always easy. It requires humility, courage, and faith. It requires us to let go of our pride, our fear, and our self-reliance. It requires us to trust in Jesus, to rely on the strength, comfort, and guidance that will never fail us, and to rest in His love. He alone can heal us of all our sins!