

FAITH & FREEDOM

LESSON 3: ETHICS

Introduction

We live in tumultuous and rapidly changing times. We might with King David ask the question, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3) I submit there are a number of things the righteous can do. We need a Biblical understanding of the events we are witnessing and the evolution of prevalent ideologies. We need to not be distracted from God's mission for us during these last days. We need to stand on the front lines and not sit on the sidelines in silence.

Where do we start?

In the past two lessons we looked at "foundations" God established in the Bible because when we examine modern events and ideas we should look at whether they are an attack on those foundations. We also considered deceptionism, the work of Satan in this world to deceive and to gain power. Today we look at ethics to get an appreciation for how we should go about discerning right and wrong.

1. **Ethics and morality:** Ethics is the process of analyzing data for the purpose of determining moral values.

— Wayne Grudem on Christian ethics, "What does the whole Bible teach about which acts, attitudes, and personal character traits receive God's approval, and which do not?"

2. **Relativism:** There are no absolute or universal standards. Ethics are subjectively determined by the individual and tested by cultural acceptance. What is moral depends on the situation and being loving.

— Arguments for: recognizes cultural diversity, fair in light of global diversity, humane and livable.

3. **Emotivism:** Reasons that ethical statements are simply emotional conclusions that are not factual or empirical. Only empirically verifiable statements have meaning.

— Arguments for: Statements of morality cannot be scientifically verified and so depend only on emotional feelings.

4. **Utilitarianism:** This ethic maintains that what is moral or right is that which produces the greatest good or least harm for the most people. It focuses on the consequences from which rules may be developed.

— Argument for: Can be applied to all ethical dilemmas. Because there are no fixed rules, you just assess the outcome of an action, and this is more humane.

5. **Ethical Egoism:** An individual uses human reason to determine right and wrong based on self-interest.

— Argument for: All people have similar desire for power, peace, and avoiding death (law of survival).

6. **Absolutism:** In this view there are fixed or transcendental rules (for example, in the Bible).

— Unqualified absolutism: There are no real moral conflicts, just apparent moral conflicts.

— Conflicting absolutism: There are moral absolutes but they may conflict. We have no choice but to sin, but should choose the lesser of two evils.

— Graded absolutism: Some moral norms are higher than others. It is morally right to break the lower norm in order to maintain the higher norm.