

Victory of the Lamb - Soul Searching – Morality
October 1, 2017 – Pastor Bill Limmer

In our culture, in our day, sanctify us with your truth, your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends,

A few weeks back my phone vibrated in my pocket when I was in the middle of an appointment. So after I was through with the appointment, I checked my phone. It was my son. I called him and said, "Sorry I was in an appointment." He responded with the phrase, "It's all good." Have you ever heard or used that phrase? The question I have for you is "it all good?" And how do we know? Let's turn to Genesis 3 to find out.

In some demonic supernatural way Satan entered into the body of a snake. And Genesis 3 says, **Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"** ²**The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,** ³**but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"** Eve responds back to the devil. "Oh, it's all good. We can eat from fruit from all the trees in whole world. Except for just one. And it's in the middle of the garden so we know where it is at so we just stay away from it. So it's all good." ⁴**"You will not certainly die,"** the serpent said to the woman. ⁵**"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** "Oh Eve, Satan" said. "God is lying. He is limiting your choices. You are free to eat of even this tree in the middle. You won't die. You know what good is, wait till you try evil! You will be like God. It's all good." ⁶**When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom,** she thought to her itself. It is just a piece of fruit. And it is much like the others. And I will gain wisdom. It is all good.

She took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷**Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.** It looked all good. It seemed all good. It felt all good. It tasted like some of the other fruit but it wasn't all good. This is how we know. ⁸**Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.** ⁹**But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"** ¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid. ¹¹**And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'"** What a difference that choice made! 😞 Now instead of enjoying the freedom of relationship with God, they were afraid of God. Instead of enjoying his company, his presence, his friendship, his love, they tried to hide from the one who made them in his image. It wasn't all good. It's all good is the lie that changed everything and almost. I will tell you what it didn't change later. ¹²**The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."** And the strife of family life began. Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? Ever cover up something you did do. Instead of living in harmony with Eve, Adam shirked responsibility and blamed Eve. ¹³**Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."** Eve was like, Satan convinced me it was all good. She had been fleeced. Her freedom brought death. Just because we are free to make choices doesn't mean our choices are without consequence.

For about 240 years, it has been noted that the highest value of the United States has been freedom. We are self-proclaimed the land of the free. (Tim Keller p. 100) “the ideal of individual freedom in Western society has done incalculable good. It has led to far more just and fair societies for minorities and women.” But freedom has become to be defined as the absence of any limitations or constraints on us. We can do whatever we want. The prevailing guide is I am responsible only to myself. If it feels good do it. However, hedonism has destroyed families and homes. The freedom of “it’s all good” postmodernity is at best inconsistent. People may say they are relativists but a person can’t really live that out. In theory people may say they are relativists, but in practice with those who disagree with them, they are absolutists. Just check out FB and Twitter and you will see this inconsistency is a major source of the polarization we see in our society. Someone somewhere will be appalled whether you stand, sit or kneel or not show up for the national anthem. Another example of why freedom as the highest value doesn’t work is because any number of people are mortally afraid of saying something is right or wrong because it will potentially curtail someone else’s freedom. And so many people and perhaps you have experienced this tension, if you disagree with someone on the basis of God’s word which is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness and you actually say you are called a hater. And so instead of being called a hater many Christians keep their mouths shut. An ideology of extreme personal freedom can be dangerous because it encourages people to leave homes, jobs, cities, marriages in search of professional and personal fulfillment, thereby breaking the relationships that were probably their best hope for such fulfillment. This is an example of negative freedom. Freedom from. Other example would of negative freedom would freedom from doing anything about injustice or racism. Christianity speaks of this as sins of omission – not doing the good we are to do.

Secularism knows there is a right and wrong but has a problem with the establishment of a moral compass. Secularists today say I feel it is right to do this or that. The moral source is a feeling inside. But if there is no God, it doesn’t appear that there could be any moral obligations-objective facts that exists whether you feel them or not. How could anyone say there is a right or wrong for you to do, whether you feel it or not unless there is a moral source outside them they must honor. If there is an omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely good God, he himself, or his law, could be that moral source. Romans 2:14,15 says, **(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.)** There is a moral touchstone.

When I was fifteen and learning how to drive. My father and I were at a stop light getting ready to cross under the bridge of Interstate 10. We were the first car stopped in our lane. Soon other cars filled in the other lanes as oncoming traffic turned left in front of us. The car to my right was a standard shift car. The road was on an incline and that car next to me started to roll back a little. My immediate and frightened reaction was that I was going forward. I’m pushing on the break harder and harder as I see this car roll a little bit backward because I am sure that I am going forward. My heart is racing. I’m just learning how to drive and I have my foot on the break and I’m thinking I’m going to get us in a wreck because I am going forward. I’m about to push the brake pedal all the way through the car when I look up and see the bridge of interstate 10. It is not moving. It is unmovable. When we need to see whether something is correct or incorrect we need to look at the unmovable. God’s Word is the Rock, the pillar,

the doesn't change or move. With culture shifting gears on us and rolling back and forth, we need the constant to keep us line with God.

When freedom and not love is the highest values we have abortion, addiction, aimless wandering, boredom, cheating divorce, drunkenness, emotional manipulation, fear, fractured friendships, grief, guilt, homosexuality, hurt, injustice, mediocre marriages, misunderstanding, mocking, murder, objectifying people especially women thanks to our own sinful nature and Hugh Hefner Empire, pain, poverty, racism, red lines on your pdf, remorse, slander, totalitarianism, hedonism, selfish-individualism, shame, theft, and we can top it all off with a cherry of prideful self-righteousness on top. All of these are either examples of sin or consequences of sin and will continue until your soul is ripped from your body by death. And your soul separates from your body is free to live away from God. When it comes to freedom of choice, it's all good is a lie. We have been immoral. We have taken advantage of God. We have pursued our individual freedom at the expense of others, of ourselves and of God. That's not at all good.

But Christianity is really the only world view that works in the reality of immorality. It is the only one the knows what to do with evil. God saw this unbridled rebellion vs God and all the Godlessness and said, "that's not good." Let's check it out.¹⁴ **So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^[a] and hers; he will crush^[b] your head, and you will strike his heel."** This is recognized as the first promise of the Savior of the world. God saw that that you and I were not only immoral but we also lived from time to time amoral lives. And in love God made a choice. God chose to go on a rescue mission for his rebellious children. You see the lie didn't change God or his character. **When the fulness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of women, born under the law to redeem those under the law, that we might receive full rights as sons.** Galatians 4:4,5 This is how good God is. He saw every single evil, imperfection, sin, it's all good that wasn't and meticulously gathered them all up, not even leaving a trace anywhere and put them all on his son Jesus. Who then met the fury of his Father's justice on our behalf. Taking the very punishment we deserved. And that's not fair but that's what happened. And not only that but in exchange gave us his goodness, his perfection, his righteousness in place of evil. And that is not fair but that is what happened. Jesus lost his glorious nature and took on human flesh and died for us for our immorality. In Jesus you see God says, I will adjust to you. I will sacrifice for you. I will give up my glory and immortality for you. Then I will give up all my light and joy and my very life in the Atonement. He was nailed to the cross so he could not move. How is that for giving up freedom. Christianity is the only religion that claims God gave up his freedom so we could experience the ultimate freedom- from evil death and Satan. He sacrificed his independence for us in love.

Through Jesus, and through Jesus only, it's all good. 1 John 2:1 **But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. It's all good.** When you and I grasp how Jesus saved us at infinite cost to himself, how he emptied himself of glory and took on a humble form to serve our best interests, it creates a grateful joy that inwardly moves us to want to please, to know and to resemble him. Friends, Jesus is the only one the you will ever live for that will not exploit you. (Galatians 5:13,14) **You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in**

keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself. Love is the highest value. And Jesus lived it out because we are his greatest treasure.

And so we pray: Create in me a clean, O God and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence but restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me., (John 8) Jesus you said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Jesus you are the truth. Your sacrifice has set us free. Free from slavery to sin, death and Satan; and free to live for you. And that is all good!