

# Good and Evil

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Upon High  
Places

## **INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT Youth Department of the General Conference**

My dear youth:

There has always been talk of good and evil, two opposing situations or states, as far apart as the East is from the West, with such distinct and different results that make both conditions eternally antagonistic. The good is related to everything that is good in itself, which produces pleasure and never harms the person. While evil is the absence of goodness: it harms, degrades, consumes, destroys, and causes pain in the human soul.

Many, trying to blur the line between the two terms, argue that good and evil are two abstract concepts whose understanding depends on the person's culture, education, outlook on life, religious beliefs, etc. They make it relative and try to convince us that good and evil is something that does not exist and that it depends on the point of view of each one.

### **The Judeo-Christian view**

For the Hebrew and Christian worlds, good and evil would be related to faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the ten commandments. God rules and governs the en-

tire universe. He is the author of life and therefore the absolute owner of everything. No one has ever seen God, but He has revealed His character, that is, His attributes. One of the most important is kindness: **“No one is good but One, that is, God.”** Mark 10:18. This means that nothing bad can come out of the heart of God, nothing that harms us, nothing that negatively alters the course of the universe in its normal parameters.

Likewise, God is love (1 John 4:7). What gives us the security that goodness and love combined will produce only harmonious notes that delight the creatures that He has created. From God, therefore, no action can be expected that contributes to harming the happiness of all the inhabitants that populate the universe.

It is impossible for God to destroy His work, to alter the orbit of the planets of the galaxies and to cause a cataclysm. It is impossible for us to go to sleep and wake up without oxygen on our planet, for the sun to stop shining on us, or for the water to disappear from the face of the earth. It could happen if God wanted it, but He decides to keep everything in such a way that I have its usual positive effects, because God is good and full of love. Only if evil arose from Him could we expect the worst, but this is impossible.

And that divine nature, from which only good emanates is the same that God wants to implant in those of us who love and follow Him. **“See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.”** 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

All government is inspired by laws under which justice is administered and preserved. We can understand that the divine government is the most important of all, and that it is also inspired by the Holy Law of God, since this is a reflection of the character of its Legislator.

The limitations of the Law of God mark the line between good and evil. For example, when Joseph, the son of Jacob, the Hebrew, was tempted by a woman, he refused to give in and said: **“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”** Genesis 39:9. Joseph was alluding to the sixth commandment of the law of God that says: **“You shall not commit adultery.”** Exodus 20:14. The young man remained in the right, he respected the good, that is, what the Law prohibits from doing. The Apostle Paul urges Christians to embrace the good: **“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** Romans 12:21.

Paul understood good in the same way as Joseph, sixteen hundred years before he said, **“I cannot do this evil against God.”** Therefore, the great apostle said: **“Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”** Romans 7:12. Just like its Lawgiver, His Law is holy, just, and good. It is based on holiness, justice, and goodness. Practicing it, observing it, will never make a person unhappy, will never degrade him, will never harm him. Obeying it is the guarantee of the preservation and empowerment of good in the entire universe.

## **Sin and the birth of evil**

When God created this planet and placed Adam and Eve, the first humans, on it, the concept of good was engraved in their hearts. They moved, breathed, thought

and spoke in an atmosphere of goodness, also called holiness. They were perfect and lived being good, doing good, giving no room for evil, even though it already existed because of Satan's rebellion in heaven. We know that they were holy and good because they were created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) and just like their Creator, they reflected these divine attributes.

Their perfect state, their good and their Edenic home, depended on the observance of God's commandments; they regulated their existence and guaranteed the absolute prevalence of good. Notice that God told them that they should not touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that they should not take its fruit and eat it, that they should not desire it, and that if they did, then evil, with all its burden, would enter in their hearts and in the world (Genesis 2:17).

Unfortunately, and in a way that we cannot clearly understand, the happy couple, who lived well and possessed everything necessary for their eternal happiness, listened to the deceitful words of the serpent, Satan's medium. Arguing with Eve the serpent contradicted God's assertion that they would die if they tasted the forbidden fruit, and based his deception on the following reasoning: **"For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** Genesis 3:5.

Let us note that the devil introduces the knowledge of evil as a very powerful incentive to eat the forbidden fruit. Knowing evil was going to bring Adam and Eve a state of unknown happiness. And this was precisely the opposite. Evil was going to crush them, they would lose everything they had received from God, they and their children would suffer unspeakably, but they did not realize how subtle this deception was. Their purity, their well-being, their emotional and physical stability, depended on knowing and abiding only on good, that is to say, on obedience to divine Law.

"God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil. He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance. Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life...." *Conflict and Courage*, 13.

By disobeying, the human race set itself on the path of evil. But God is so extraordinary and wonderful that he foresaw this situation and through Christ has given us a passage of escape, that we may choose the good and follow it with the help of the Holy Spirit. Today the Lord offers us this invitation: **"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live."** Deuteronomy 30:15-19.

## Conclusion

Dear youth, as we see, good and evil are present in our midst, and while God wants us to choose good so that we can be happy and full in Him, the enemy strives to lead us to ruin by inducing us to choose evil. Everything is reduced to living according to God's will expressed in His Law or constantly transgressing it. May the Lord help us to always choose the good, because living in this way is the only thing that will sanctify us and make us happy. **“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”** Joshua 24:15. May God bless you. Amen.

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For personal and group reflection:

1. How would you define *good*?
2. How would you define *evil*?
3. Why does evil exist?
4. Is it possible to live doing good or is it impossible for us?