

The Mirage

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.
--Isaiah 5:20

There was a cartoon I remember seeing as a kid that involved a character crawling along in the desert, barely alive and without water in the scorching heat and the merciless blistering sun. Suddenly, he sees just in the distance, an oasis. Palm trees blowing in a gentle breeze. A pool of cool water to quench his thirst. Filled with excitement, he jumps to his feet and gallops toward the water. When he reaches it, he dives right in, scooping water into his mouth as fast as he can, only to find out he is increasing his thirst and misery by heaping hot, dry sand into his parched mouth. Because the oasis was just a mirage. It wasn't really there. As real as it seemed, it was just a figment of his imagination.

That cartoon would sometimes come to mind for me when I lived in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and drove down one of the local streets there. The street where I worked for 6 years had a strip bar where nude dancing was done named "The Oasis: A Gentleman's Club." The picture of a palm tree and pool of water in the desert on the sign looked exactly like the mirage in the cartoon I remember from my childhood.

The sad dilemma created in a world that calls evil things good is that men are lured into sins that war against their souls and destroy them from the inside out. Thinking they are just finding cool water to quench the thirst for pleasure within them, they just increase that thirst. The oasis is just a mirage, they learn too late. It leaves them not satisfied, but more hungry than they were to start with for a sinful pleasure that cannot deliver the joy and relief it promises.

When evil is mislabeled as good, men are duped into trying to quench the fire of their passions with gasoline, and before they know what has happened, that fire rages out of control. When passions run high, a man can foolishly convince himself he might engage in sin without being harmed. "Can a man heap hot coals into his lap and not be burned?"

Woe to our worldly culture that has reversed everything in the moral sense. We call what is bitter sweet. What is dark light. What is evil good.

Adultery is "an affair." Fornication is "getting lucky." Obscene pornography is "adult entertainment for mature audiences." Blasphemy is "artistic freedom of expression." Slaughter of the innocent in the womb is "reproductive freedom." Drunken carousing that forfeits all self control is "partying." Destroying the mind and body with chemicals is "recreational drug use." Lying is "exaggerating" and "spin control."

And preaching the gospel, which is the power of God to set people free from

bondage to sin is "religious intolerance."

The Bible warns us that woe, suffering and pain is the end of the road traveled by those who mislabel sin as something satisfying, and label God's righteousness as a hindrance to freedom. Every passion for worldly pleasures enslaves and destroys. The one "who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives." But a passion for Jesus breaks the chains that bind us and sets us free.

Thanks be to God, for providing His way of escape. May we always be granted the wisdom to see sin for the destructive killing force that it is, and turn from it, fleeing to God's presence in times of temptation and weakness. May we always guard our hearts from the deceptiveness of our carnal desires.

"He whom the Son of Man sets free, shall be free indeed."

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