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John Allen Chalk

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THE CASE FOR CHRISTIAN MORALS
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We live in a day of moral confusion when absolute principles of conduct are neither respected nor accepted. A famous United States Senator argues his case of mishandled funds before the Senate; a well-known Congressman is expelled from the House of Representatives for flagrant indiscretions; an internationally recognized group of corporations admit to price-rigging; large food stores reveal extensive shoplifting by housewives; high school and college students accept cheating as a way of life and make a game of stealing items from book stores and other businesses: in short, larceny grips the hearts of too many modern men and women!

This is only the surface of a deeply serious abandonment of moral goodness in our time. The July issue of a well-known American magazine carried a special thirty-page report on our changing, and hardening, attitudes toward violence and sadism. The Bible's moral guidelines have been thoroughly repudiated by many in all areas of life, from business ethics to sexual relationships.

What is the answer to this erosion of morals? What standards, if any, must be respected? Are there any moral absolutes for today's man? Somewhere along the way modern man has refused to consider the case for Christian morals, and has lost his moorings. First, let's look at man in the universal context. We are all part of the world picture regardless of how insignificant we may feel. Man is a creature of God possessing "the image of God" (Genesis 1:26, 27). Something about man, therefore, is peculiar and distinguishes him from the remainder of the animal order. That uniqueness is man's nobility and dignity, fully realized only in moral and righteous living.

We must also look at ourselves in relation to the rest of our fellow men. A famous English preacher and poet rightly said, "No man is an island." These relationships to the rest of the human family create what we call society. Even the "high priest" of the New Morality heresy, John A. T. Robinson, quickly admits that man must recognize and live by such absolute principles as "thou shalt not kill" and "thou shalt not commit adultery." Without these guidelines, and others, the fabric of ordered human society falls apart! Men who live without respect for rules of human conduct encourage and precipitate jungle conditions resulting in wholesale chaos and disorder.

There is a third view that I have chosen by which to live my life. If we view man as God's creature bearing "the image of God"; and if we accept the responsibilities of man in society; then we are fully prepared to examine the Christian life with its profoundly distinct approach to life and reality. This brings us directly to the case for Christian morals.

One can understand neither the content nor the bases of Christian morals without an informed view of the regenerate life of the person "reborn" into God's family, the Kingdom. Jesus spoke emphatically of this experience that every Christian knows. To the Jewish ruler, Nicodemus, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). When Nicodemus did not immediately appreciate the startling quality of this "birth," Jesus added, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

This new life which results from the new birth is repeatedly described in the New Testament Epistles. Paul explains in Romans 6, for instance, "We were buried therefore with him (Christ) through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The individual so united with Christ in baptism, Paul goes on to say in this same chapter, dies to sin in order that he may become "alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11).
The person who undergoes this “new birth” Jesus talked about in John, chapter three, is also described as a “new creature” or person. “Wherefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). In another letter the same writer, Paul, reminded Christians at Ephesus that they had destroyed “the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit,” and that they had experienced spiritual renewal in putting on “the new man” created by God to live rightly in truth (Ephesians 4:22-24). This new man, living a new life by God’s work in his obedient life, is rightly called by the Apostle Paul, “a son of obedience” whereas all of us who so obeyed God were at one time “children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 3:1-6).

No consequence of this very definite change in the life of one who becomes a Christian is of greater importance than the moral change. Remember that the “new man” who is the product of the “new birth” also has a “new life” to live, a radically different life from anything he or she has ever known before. This change that makes us “children of God” in his First Epistle. Of such people he says, “We know that, if he (God) shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is” (I John 3:2). The next verse reveals the consequence of this initial change we experience in anticipation of the final change into God’s glory: “And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:2). Purity, John teaches, results from our becoming the children of God; purity of life, thought, speech and conduct.

The moral consequence of the Christian’s new life is also recognized by the Apostle Paul. The Corinthians found this to be a very difficult problem, leaving all the wicked activities — fornication, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness, covetousness — they had known in their unregenerate nature, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, covetousness, and idolatry. In fact, he finally says to them, “For of this much more am I of the opinion that it is needful for you, as I did before, that those who indulge in such things shall not associate with you” (I Corinthians 5:11-13). Paul teaches the Corinthians that “the body of Christ” (I Corinthians 12:27) is a list: sexual immorality, impurity of mind, sensuality, idolatry. As “children of God” we respect His Fatherly concern and act in reverence and awe according to His wishes (Philippians 2:12-16). As “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” Christians sense and accept their moral and spiritual roles in an immoral and unspiritual world (Matthew 5:13-16). The Christian disciplines himself, in all areas of conduct and thought, because he is a soldier engaged in an all-out war with evil under Christ’s direction (Ephesians 6:10-18; II Timothy 2:3, 4). He views his own life as an athlete who carefully trains for the races and is thus able by God’s strength to run the race of life with confidence and success (I Corinthians 9:24-27).

Everywhere one turns in the New Testament, the Christian life is discussed and described in such a way that there can be no mistake of its challenge, its thrill, its totally different and opposing quality to all that the world knows. In every New Testament description of the Christian life, especially those we have briefly examined in this lesson, there is taught a corresponding and consequential moral principle or responsibility.

The Christian then makes his moral judgments in view of his human nature — as God’s creature bearing the responsibility common to all men to fulfill God’s image in his life; in view of his participation in human society — as a member of a structured, ordered family; and as one who has voluntarily chosen the way of Christ as the only way to real meaning and purpose in life. Thus living by all three of these principles, the Christian makes his or her moral judgments on a completely different basis from the self-centered and confused modern man. Christians listen to God and His Word. Christians initially and continually respond to the sovereign control of Jesus over their lives. The New Testament offers clear and emphatic condemnations of many immoralities. In Galatians, chapter five, we read: “The activities of the lower nature are obvious. Here is a list: sexual immorality, impurity of mind, sensuality, worship of false gods, witchcraft, hatred,quarreling, jealousy, bad tempers, rivalry, factions, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like that. I solemnly assure you, as I did before, that those who indulge in such things will never inherit God’s kingdom” (Galatians 5:19-21). Similar prohibitions are found in other places in the New Testament (Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5-9; I Corinthians 6:9-11).

We gain nothing by refusing to look honestly at the moral condition of our world. We live in a world of immorality, impurity and dishonesty. Moral uprightness, however, begins with you and me. The case for Christian morals must be made for all men in our time. The Christian attitude toward life begins with Christ, with our surrender to Christ, with our willing obedience to Him and His Father.

The “new birth” occurs in the baptism of the penitent believer (John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5). Those who honestly face
their sin and repent; those who examine the life of Christ and accept His way as their way; those who willingly allow God's Word to be their guide through life, living by the moral absolutes that governed Jesus' earthly life, will ultimately experience that grand transfiguration into spiritual bodies when our Lord returns (I John 3:1-3).

John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program. He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series. A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.