Healthy Biblical Position on Privacy and Security

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Second revision: March 17, 2016 The other day I indicated to a Bible-believer friend that I would prefer to only communicate with this person (and everyone else) by means of Telegram or secured email, rather than SMS messaging or totally unsecured email. To my surprise, this person replied back that they were 'unsure of their biblical position on privacy'. Being quite surprised, and being who I am, I replied back in a simple email that "this is not a topic of discussion because it's so simple" and I blasted out my points. I am not sorry for hitting this person hard with my opinion, but I am sorry, perhaps about making it sound like the dialogue was one way, and for not dedicating further explanation to my strong opinion. People like me need to remember that technology for most people is like some kind of 'magic'. It just kind of works. And when it doesn't work they hate it. It makes their life more convenient (so they think) and they do *not* want to change what works for them today. That's why you will see old people emailing forwarded attachment for young people to waste their time trying to open and then regret wasting their time opening... But as a first step, I tried to imagine what they must be thinking about in terms of a position and brought it up with another believer and he came up with these things they must be considering:

- God knows all, and my privacy exists not. If I'm not hiding from God, then why do I need to hide from people/man?
- God's will will be done, somewhat independently of my technological choices (Though He will choose to work through man).

I now can see how thoughts like these might actually put someone in a position of inaction or even a kind of technological paralysis, if you will. Again, I understand more than anyone how making a big technological change takes time and thinking and often gets dropped down the list. But if you claim to to believe and follow the teachings of the Bible, then you have a much different position to take and to me, this is a very simple position which I established with the following series of questions which needed to be answered:

- Is technology based in the world, or based in heaven?
- Did God warn us about end times events?
- If God gives a warning, do we heed the warning or do we go along as if He never spoke?

And so, this conversation, to me, is very similar to the conversation of "Why should I be worried about the environment if Jesus is coming tomorrow and the whole earth will be destroyed anyway?" The reason someone would take this shallow perspective about God's wonderful creation is because the creation scriptures were either missed, or God hasn't yet opened their eyes. But it's certainly *not* the right way to treat the world while you are here.   People who have not yet gotten serious about their privacy and security with their technology are much like those who haven't spent the time or energy to be concerned about the environment. Yes, Jesus is coming tomorrow, but before that He has called us to be wise stewards of things while here and respect His creation. Yes, Satan is having a heyday by spying on you but there are wonderful solutions out there that are not difficult to implement. But, back to the unanswered questions above:

Is technology based in the world, or based in heaven?

It's wordly. It's part of the world's system. Although it's not in the Bible I feel confident there is no internet connection or GPS needed in heaven. Furthermore, I feel that God has given us creative minds to help protect us against evildoers and the enemy's work against us and our families while we bring the Good News to a dying world. Another analogy I thought of was the smoke alarm. Can God save you supernaturally from the perils of fire in your home? Certainly. But he has also given us a simple device and a 9 volt battery which allows us to focus on sleeping instead of wondering if the house is on fire.... I really like that peace, but feel free to remove your smoke alarm, cowboy...
Did God warn us about end times events.

Yes. There will be a mark of the beast which will prevent you from buying, selling, and essentially living normally in this earth's system. If you do not believe this will be facilitated by technology, you need not read further - you are out to lunch and seriously need a cold glass of water splashed in your sleepy face. It's in the book of Revelation. I think chapter 13. Go ahead, read your Bible. You clearly have missed your quiet time...
If God gives a warning, do we heed the warning or do we go along as if He never spoke?

Now, if you thought I was being hard on you up till now, put on your seat belt. I have a strange feeling you will agree that the prophetic mark of the beast will be a technological device/system/chip/etc. The Bible also says that we will be 'hated by all nations for the name of Jesus." (Jesus said that somewhere). So I don't foresee any other future for the Bible believers other than bleak in this world. That's also why Jesus said to 'take up our cross daily' and why Paul said somewhere "I die daily". This world ain't our home sheepsters. And so eventually all of us will be persecuted and killed. Jesus promised it. It's a guarantee. Sure, the rapture might happen before, during or after, but we can be sure that before then the enemy will be gathering digital data on who the believers are for simple one-stop destroying. If there were no options at all to prevent, slow down, hinder, make more difficult, aggravate, challenge, etc this process, I'd say lie down in a ball and do nothing because it's over. But there are lots of easy, fun, and excellent solutions to make the process much more difficult. So, do we just go the way of the world in the treatment of our privacy and the privacy of our family, or do we take wise, active steps towards protecting this precious gift called privacy? Do you let your children change into their pyjamas in front of an open window at night time because 'you have nothing to hide', or do you close the blinds as a preventative measure to prevent evil behaviour towards you? Maybe you want to change naked in front of the window, but please, for the sake of your children, who rely on your wise leadership, close the blinds for them. And do the same with your digital life if not for you, for your children. God did not put these prophecies in His word *only* as a warning. A smoke alarm does not sound just to let you know the building is on fire, but to motivate you to get up and *do something*! Jesus instructed us to be alert and to have our lamps full of oil for we know not when He is coming. This 'being alert' is accomplished through the intellect as well as the spirit. Jesus also said "Wow. You guys fully trust your weather network meteorologists but you can't even see the signs of my coming!" So, Jesus gives us helpful hints along the way. Jesus also said that your body is the temple. I believe that means that we are to do as much as possible to respect that life and preserve it for life is a gift and the life is in the blood. If you foolishly hand yourself over to be persecuted when a handy-dandy preventative tool was available, that's just a dog gone waste, in my humble opinionatedness. Since we are absolutely certain that persecution is coming, we must also be aware that there is a Judas in every group, unless you think that you are less susceptible than Jesus to a Judas. The Word of God also talks about how our enemies will be those people of our own families for the name of Jesus. Why do I mention this? Because it's critical that everyone be on board with privacy-protecting technology or the weakest link will collapse the group. Especially if you are meeting in homes and looking less 'churchy' than the mainstreamers. The JW's like to look at persecution as a blessing but that's not the blessing God is talking about. Let's work with this quick example. Scenario 1: You are standing beside a railroad track. You hear a train coming. You jump on the track and say "God will save me!" SPLAT! Ooops. Scenario 2: You are standing *on* the rail road track. You hear a train coming. You stand still and take no action

and say "God will save me!" SPLAT! Oops. In both cases, you have committed sin. The first was a sin of action and the second a sin of inaction. In my increasingly opinionated humility, I believe by not protecting the privacy of yourself and your family and putting yourself in harms way knowing now that there are ways to prevent harm - that you are not pleasing the Lord.

Conclusion

How about this: Let's forget your personal pain, suffering and inconvenience related to improving your technological habits. Let's say you just don't care about you and that 'God is coming soon anyway, so whatever." By not doing your part you are definitely hurting someone else who values privacy right now, because the seeds of loosely transmitted data are always felt in a crop down the road. You are also assisting their enemies in all of their dirty work. You are *not* "assisting terrorists" as the popular media would like to deceive you into believing. No matter what way you look at this, giving freely *your* data only assists them with the task of hurting you and those around you - perhaps not today but one day. I also don't mind a little bit of self-inflicted, but I shudder to think that lack of care about myself (ie. an unencrypted email about Jesus to my friend) might wind *them* up in jail or worse. In this case sharing is *not* caring. Perhaps you are thinking that by handing over all your data freely that you are helping the world catch bad guys. Ok, let's roll with that idea. Then, since you are not bad, you are actually wasting the time and computer resources of these good cops and their spy work because they are using unnecessary resources to spy on you - a good guy. If you just encrypted, they would have passed over you and moved on to the foolish criminal who didn't encrypt and caught him quicker.

Ultra Conclusion

The root cause of this 'position problem' is not a biblical one but an earthly one. It's one that needs to be dealt with in the earthly, soulical, intellectual way with the reasoning faculties that God gave you. The problem is also rooted in your priority set. Are you watching TV for an hour a day? You could have spent that "technology time" learning about privacy solutions instead of having the boob tube pump fear into your heart with unfounded comments like 'assisting terrorists'. The other root cause of the problem is habits. Bad habits die really hard. The first step to stop smoking is to hear about the possibility that it might be bad for your health. This blog has now been that to you for technology. You know now. You cannot claim ignorance. The second step is to learn more to find out if it's true. This blog is only partly that. You must now go and learn for yourself to see if what I'm saying is hogwash or beefdirt (just made that up). The third step is to take action. Do something. Don't just hand everything over to everyone on a silver platter - it's really unwise - and it's not nice to people who are trying to maintain *their* right to privacy.

Final note

I know this isn't easy. That's why I'm writing hard to you. It takes a bit of a kick in the hindquarters to start down a new road. But here is the great news - each day gets easier. With the right people around you and with enough time dedicated, you'll be making great choices for you and your family in no time. I hope this will spare many of you brothers and sisters a lot of future pain. I'll do my best to blog more practical solutions here as I find time but don't sit around and wait for me. The answers are easy to find. And please - don't be offended someone cuts off communication with you using technology if you refuse to remain unwilling to become proactive; You can't expect them to put themselves or their family at risk for you when there are solutions available.

Milestones to Start (some are instant, some quick, some perhaps less quick)

Things You Can do Today to Improve

1. Start hanging out with people who care about privacy. If most of your circle 'has nothing to hide' - you're in deep doo-doo. Find a local Ubuntu group, for example.
2. If using chatting IM apps, use Telegram. Telegram has encryption. Ditch the others ASAP. Bring your friends to Telegram when you ditch.
3. Replace SMS with Telegram app wherever possible. SMS is brutally spied on.

4. For email set up PGP encryption.
5. Convert all your current computers to Ubuntu operating system
6. Get immediately off: Facebook and Linked in and any other compromised 'social media'.
7. Ask all of your friends and family to respect you and your privacy by not asking you to participate in anything that violates your privacy (ie. unsecure email, SMS, etc)

Things you can do Today and Tomorrow (money may not permit today, but should be in plans)

1. Start hanging out with people who care about privacy. If most of your circle 'has nothing to hide' - you're in deep doo-doo. Find a local Ubuntu group, for example.
2. When you buy your next mobile device, make sure it's Ubuntu
3. Disconnect from everything Google. And I mean *everything* (yes, it's possible)
4. Wipe the hard drives 100 times and sell or discard anything Apple/Mac