

JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT, PART 1

Marion R. Fox

Introduction

Perhaps few passages of Scripture are known more than Mt. 7:1: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” But few people know that Jesus said: “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” (Jn. 7:24). How can these two passages be reconciled? Remember that the immediate context of Jn. 7:24 is found in Jn. 7:14-24. In this article, I will deal with Jn. 7:24 and reserve Mt. 7:1 for a later article.

Definitions of the Words “Righteous” and “Judgment”

Jesus is preaching to the Jews (who at that time were under the Law of Moses). Therefore, the words “righteous” and “judgment” are defined both by the Law of Moses and by the context of John 7. In fact, the children of Israel were to judge righteous judgment (Deut. 16:18-20).

Each city was to have judges who would judge at the gates of the city (Deut. 16:18). (This means that the judgment was public.) These city judges were to: “(J)udge the people with righteous judgment” (Deut. 16:18). These judges were not to have: “(R)espect of persons” (Deut. 16:19, Lev. 19:15, etc).

These judges were not to allow themselves to be influenced by bribes (Deut. 16:19). A bribe does not always have to be in the form of money, it could be: “If you do this for me, I will do such and such for you.” The bribe might even be implicit and not explicit. (Just the knowledge that one of the persons being judged can affect his life, might prejudice the judge.) These judges were not to allow the words of the righteous to be perverted (Deut. 16:19). The judges were to do that which is altogether just (Deut. 16:20). The judges were to condemn the wicked and justify the righteous (Deut. 25:1). Judges must neither justify the wicked nor condemn the just (Pro. 17:15). There are two ways that one might be unrighteous in his judgment set forth in this passage. First, one might justify the wicked and second, one might condemn the just.

The Lord defined “righteous judgment” for the children of Israel in many passages of Scripture. The Lord defined the word “righteous” (or “just”) when He declared that they were not to have diverse weights (Lev. 19:33-37, Deut. 25:13-16, Pro. 11:1, 20:23, Mic. 6:11, etc.). The word “righteous” is also defined in the New Testament (Lk. 1:6). The participle translated “walking” explains how they were righteous. We are righteous when we walk in the commandments and ordinances of God blameless. A man is not blameless, if he is not righteous.

Justice comes from God (Pro. 16:11, Ezek. 45:10, etc.). Without knowledge of God, man will not be just (righteous) in his dealings with other men. We can see injustice in the world

because man refuses to have God in his knowledge (Rom. 1:18-23, 28-29, etc.). God serves as our example of true righteousness.

The *a fortiori* Principle Applies This Principle to Christians

Jesus used a principle of Bible interpretation where He argued that whatever is true of the lesser is true of the greater. He used this principle in Mt. 12:9-12, Lk. 13:10-17, and 14:1-6. This principle was also used by Peter in Acts 10:27-28 (God has cleansed animals, men are greater than animals; therefore God has cleansed men). One cannot understand the book of Hebrews without using this principle. The *a fortiori* principle explains how the just balance and scales applies to us in the Christian dispensation. The following argument establishes the point being made by Jesus in Jn. 7:14-24: If the Jews were required to use a just balance and just scales in secular matters, then the Jews were required to use just measurements in determining spiritual matters (matters of right and wrong or good and evil).¹

The Context of John 7:24.

Jesus went up into the temple to teach (Jn. 7:14) and the Jews marveled because he had not gone to the right schools (Jn. 7:15). That is, Jesus had not studied under any prominent rabbi. In fact, He had not studied under any rabbi. They seemed to forget that Jesus had understanding without studying under a rabbi (Lk. 2:46-47). Jesus responded that His teaching was not His own, but that it came from God (Jn. 7:16). The point here is that the Scriptures (the Word of God) are the standard, not what some rabbi teaches. Jesus informed them that one must “will to do his will” in order to know of the doctrine (Jn. 7:17). It is the aim of The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies (where I serve as director) that honest students (cf. Acts 17:11) should be helped to learn how to understand the Scriptures for themselves. It is our goal to make our students into independent students of the Word of God and send them forth with the injunction to study the Word for themselves.

Jesus informs them that one who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but if one seeks the glory of Him (God) that sent him, he is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him (Jn. 7:18). A man who seeks his own glory will elevate his will above the Will of God and will interpret the Scriptures incorrectly.

Jesus points out to them that they were not following the Law of Moses because they were rejecting Him and seeking to kill Him (Jn. 7:19). The Jews claimed that Jesus had a demon and asked: “(W)ho seeketh to kill thee?” (Jn. 7:20 [Some in the audience knew that the Lord’s charge was true [Jn. 7:25].])

Jesus pointed out that they marveled at one work (Jn. 7:21), but the miracles that He worked proved Him to be “approved of God” (Acts 2:22). He is almost certainly referring to His healing on the Sabbath (Mt. 12:9-14). This event is one event for which they sought to kill him (Mt. 12:14). This is where the Lord introduces the “*a fortiori* principle” of biblical interpretation.

¹ The *a fortiori principle* is discussed extensively in Fox, Vol. I, 2003, pp. 590-597.

Jesus proves that they are unrighteous in their judgment, because Moses had instructed the priests to circumcise a boy on the eighth day (even if it fell on the Sabbath day – Jn. 7:22-23 [Lev. 12:1-3]). With this background, Jesus commands them to judge righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24).

Jn. 7:24 Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

They were judging according to appearance of the eye, not according to the reasoning of the heart. They should have reasoned from the Scriptures that such an act would not be sinful, but they were so blinded by their traditions and unsound interpretations of the Scriptures that they falsely accused a righteous person (Jesus) of sin.

Righteous judgment demands that we apply the same standard to all persons that we judge. The Jews did not condemn the priests for circumcising a boy on the Sabbath day. However, they condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath day. (Therefore they were unrighteous in their judgment.) They were unrighteous because both acts were acts that were enjoined by God. First, the children of Israel were commanded to circumcise every male child on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12, Lev. 12:1-3, etc.). Second, the children of Israel were commanded to love their neighbor (Lev. 19:18). Love for our neighbor entails helping him in his time of need. Jesus was displaying His love and compassion for people by healing their diseases. We must also judge righteous judgment.

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JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT, PART 2

In the first article written under this heading we learned some aspects of the Lord's words of Jn. 7:24. Clearly, they were commanded to judge righteous judgment and that judgment was based upon the Law of Moses. Under the New Testament we have a system of righteousness that is superior to the Old Testament. However, what is righteous today was righteous under the Old Testament. The definition of the word "righteous" has not changed from the Old to the New.

The Nature of God Serves as a Pattern for Our Judging Righteously

God is no respecter of persons (2 Chron. 19:7, Acts 10:34, Rom. 2:11, Eph. 6:9, Col. 3:25, and 1 Pet. 1:17). If we would take upon ourselves the divine nature, we would also not have respect of persons. In fact, the Children of Israel were often told not to have respect of persons: Lev. 19:15, Deut. 1:17, 16:19, Ps. 82:2, Pro. 18:5, 24:3, 28:21, and Mal. 2:9. Christians are also forbidden to have respect of persons: Jas. 2:1, 9, and Ju. 16.

Evidence That is Necessary When Judging Righteous Judgment

Under the law of Moses the children of Israel were forbidden to convict a person without adequate evidence (Num. 35:30, Deut. 17:2-7, and 19:15-20). To what does the Lord refer when he speaks of the two or three witnesses? This Old Testament principle applied to a tribunal or trial (Num. 35:30, Deut. 17:2-7, and 19:15-20). Note that they were to have at least two witnesses (Deut. 19:15), they were to inquire diligently (Deut. 19:18), the witnesses were to have a severe penalty for lying (Deut. 19:18-19), and both were to stand trial (Deut. 19:17). In the judicial system of the United States, only the accused is tried, but under the Law of Moses, both the accused and the accuser were under trial. Paul made this binding upon the church and elders (1 Tim. 5:19-21).

There are several important principles associated with the two or three witnesses in the Old Testament. First, they should inquire diligently into the matter (Deut. 17:4). Second, they should be sure it was true (Deut. 17:4). Third, they were to make sure it was certain (Deut. 13:14 and 17:4). Fourth, the accusers were to be first in line to punish the person (Deut. 17:7). And fifth, no person was to be convicted on the testimony of only one witness (Deut. 17:6).

The word translated "diligently" in Deut. 17:4 and 19:18 is also translated "thoroughly" in 2 Kgs. 11:18. The word translated "inquisition" in Deut. 19:18 is translated "search for" in Ezek. 34:8 and "examine" in Ezra 10:16. Hence, the witnesses should thoroughly search for or examine the matter to determine the truth. Under the Law of Moses, the Children of Israel were to go to the priests for judgment in matters that they could not decide (Deut. 17:8-9). They had miraculous guidance, in these matters, that we do not have today.

It is unbecoming to a child of God for him to judge another by unrighteous methods or standards. Jesus commanded not to judge by appearance (John 7:24), but to judge righteous judgment. Jesus, by contrasting these two, made it clear that judging only by appearance is unrighteous. Isaiah contrasted righteous judgment with judging by sight of the eye and hearing of the ear (Isa. 11:3-4). Solomon points out that the first one to present his case seems just (Pro. 18:17- ASV). Therefore, if one only hears one side of a matter he is prone to make an unjust decision (judgment). This alone without Mt. 18:15-17 should prohibit a Christian from going to others with an alleged wrong before going to the person he is accusing of sin (*such is unrighteous - unfair*). The Christian will recognize that his perception of the matter may be wrong (Jer. 10:23).

The Old Testament law did not convict a person of sin without evidence and the person charged with sin having an opportunity to defend himself (John 7:51). It is shameful that brethren who are under the new and better law should do this (Pro. 18:13).

Judgments Made by the Church

When brethren have problems (just like in the Old Testament) the Lord has designated a method of solving them (Mt. 18:15-20). These instructions relate to matters where there are personal problems (sins against a person). These instructions do not relate to such matters as marking false teachers (Rom. 16:17-18) or heretics (Tit. 3:10). However, we must always be righteous in our judgment of others (including false teachers and heretics) and a failure to be righteous is sinful.

Note the pattern in Mt. 18:15-20: (1) We are to go to the brother who has sinned against us and try to reconcile the matter (Mt. 18:15). (2) We are to take witnesses, who will try to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused (Mt. 18:16-17). These witnesses are to exhort the person they determine to be guilty to repent (after they have judged righteously - Mt. 18:17). (3) We take it before the whole church (Mt. 18:17) who also must judge righteously and determine who is guilty. If the church determines that one is guilty, the person who is innocent will treat the guilty party: "... as a Gentile and a publican." However, the church must exhort the guilty party to repent (Mt. 18:17). Only after he refuses to hear the church is fellowship to be withdrawn from the person.

It is possible that the truth may not be evident (1 Tim. 5:24) and that the church may not be able to determine who is guilty and who is innocent in the matter to be judged. In this case, we must wait upon God to settle the matter. Is the church qualified to settle every matter that might come up between brethren? The answer is: "No." The smaller matters are to be brought before the church (1 Cor. 6:1-2). The church may not grant a divorce because that is the domain of the civil government. Remember we must render to Caesar what is Caesar's (Lk. 20:25). The church does not have the authority to probate a will. The church does not have the authority to punish a criminal (perhaps one member of the church murders another member). The church may withdraw fellowship, but the family of the murdered person may go to the civil government for justice without violating 1 Cor. 6:1. In fact, God decreed that a murderer must be punished for his crime (Gen. 9:6).

What if a Christian goes to the church and gets an unrighteous judgment? In this event, he must live with the judgment (1 Cor. 6:5-7).

If the church cannot determine who is guilty in the matter, they should defer to decide. Note the words of 1 Tim. 5:24: "Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment; and some men also they follow after." Just like in the Old Testament the judges might not be able to determine guilt or innocence. If it amounts to the word of one person against the word of the other person, the church cannot decide. Remember, the church must have two or three witnesses (Mt. 18:16, 1 Tim. 5:19, etc.) to establish a matter.

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JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT, PART 3

In our first two articles we determined the necessity of judging by the righteous standard of truth. We learned that it is wrong to be partial or to have prejudice in our judgment of others (1 Tim. 5:21). We learned the necessity of having sufficient evidence to convict a person of sin before we condemn him. We also learned the necessity of evaluating the evidence properly before making a decision of either guilt or innocence.

What About the Prohibition of Matthew 7:1?

Few passages of Scripture are more well-known than this passage. Many people think it is wrong to judge under any circumstance because of their misunderstanding of this passage and its context. Some interpret this passage in a manner that contradicts other passages of Scripture (i.e. Jn. 7:24). Jesus said:

Mt. 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you. 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Many people can quote Mt. 7:1, but few are aware of the four verses that follow verse 1. In verse 2 Jesus used the Greek word *gar* that means: “*Gar* may express: (1) a *ground* or *reason*, (b) an *explanation*, (c) a *confirmation* or *assurance*;” (Dana and Mantey, p. 242) It is evident that verse 2 begins an explanation or the reason for the words of verse 1. We ask the question: “Why did Jesus say: ‘Judge not that ye be not judged?’” The answer is: “You will be judged by the same standard and by the same measure that you apply to those that you are judging.” This passage is a warning about judging capriciously.

Jesus also warns about being a hypocrite in our judgment. He warns about judging others by a standard we are not willing to apply to ourselves. Note how the man judging has a beam in his eye, but is trying to get the mote (small speck of wood) out of his brother’s eye. Obviously, he is not willing to live by the same standard he applies to others. He is a respecter of persons and is unrighteous because he has respect of persons. He respects himself more than he respects others.

Other Characteristics of Unrighteous People

Unrighteous people frequently follow the crowd (Ex. 23:1-3). There is a psychological phenomenon called: “Groupthink” that comes to bear in this matter. We see this occurring when the crowd cried out: “Crucify, crucify him” (Lk. 23:20). Note how the crowd moved like a herd of cattle to all shout the same thing (Lk. 23:20-23). Even Pilate (who knew Jesus was innocent – Lk. 23:14-15) was caught up in the frenzy (Lk. 23:20-24). Groupthink comes into play when a prominent person or group of people push a

matter and the other people (frequently those who do not have the prestige of the group) go along with the wishes of the group rather than think for themselves. We see this occurring in the church today when a prominent clique of preachers or a school pushes a particular matter. Many jump upon the bandwagon and get involved without even thinking for themselves.

Unrighteous men have an improper thought pattern (Isa. 55:6-8). The unjust (unrighteous) man has no shame (Zeph. 3:5). Unrighteousness even deceives men (2 Thess. 2:10). God is righteous in His thoughts (Isa. 55:8). Unrighteousness in little matters leads to unrighteousness in big matters (Lk. 16:10). Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness (1 Cor. 13:4-6).

Unrighteousness hinders the cause of the truth (Rom. 1:18). Unrighteousness among God's people becomes a stumblingblock to the conversion of aliens. Unrighteousness among alien sinners hardens the hearts of people and it makes them less receptive to the gospel. Those who live in sin are presenting themselves as instruments of unrighteousness (Rom. 6:12-13).

We must remember that every unrighteous thought, word, and/or act is sin (1 Jn. 5:17). When our thoughts are unrighteous, we sin. When our words are unrighteous, we sin. When our actions are unrighteous, we sin.

The leaders of God's people must hate unjust (unrighteous) gain (Ex. 18:21). It is a sad day when the leaders of the people are unjust (unrighteous) in their decisions. It is indeed a dreadful thing to see men decide their stand on matters based entirely upon what they will gain by standing for a certain matter. (Will I be accepted by a lot of people? Will I retain my popularity? Will I be evil spoken of or will all men speak well of me [Lk. 6:26]?)

Both the just (righteous) and the unjust (unrighteous) shall be resurrected (Lk. 14:13-14 and Acts 24:15). Both will be resurrected, but both will not receive the same reward (Jn. 5:28-29 and Rev. 20:11-15). They will not receive the same reward because God is a righteous judge (Ps. 7:11, Ecc. 3:17, Jn. 5:30, 2 Tim. 4:8, and Rev. 19:11).

Questions for All to Answer

How do you make decisions on where you will stand on a doctrinal matter? Do you see which way the crowd is going (Eph. 4:14)? Do you follow the multitude (the crowd) in making your decisions (Ex. 23:2-3)? Do you see which way certain prominent men in the brotherhood are going? Do you see which way your favorite school is going? Do you see which way your parents are going? Do you see what many brethren (men born since the end of the age of miracles) taught and/or practiced in the recent past?

Are you on the strait and narrow way or are you on the broad way? (Mt. 7:13-14). Do you follow the Scriptures as your guide or do you follow men as your guide?

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JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT, PART 4

In the three prior articles I defined the words: righteous (just), righteousness (justice), and righteously (justly). These words were defined both by lexicons and by the context of the Scriptures. A righteous man only condemns a person when he has adequate (sufficient) evidence and he has evaluated the evidence properly. A righteous man will neither justify one who has sinned nor will he condemn one who has not sinned (Deut. 25:1, Pro. 17:26, 24:24, etc.). The judgment of a righteous man is righteous because he judges by the standard of the Scriptures (Jn. 5:30). Note the words of the Lord:

Jn. 5:30 I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

In this article we will be considering examples of unrighteous men from the Scriptures. This will enable us to make application of the principles set forth in the three prior articles.

Was Timothy Conducting Himself in an Unrighteous Manner?

Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:19-21:

Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at *the mouth of* two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear.

21 I charge *thee* in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality.

The reader should remember that the requirement of having two or three witnesses is found in the Old Testament. It required adequate (sufficient) evidence to establish a matter. In addition, the Old Testament required that the evidence be evaluated correctly. These principles have been established in the three earlier articles on the subject of righteousness.

The one making a judgment must be unbiased and without partiality (otherwise he is not just [or righteous]). A righteous man will get sufficient evidence before he judges a matter (Pro. 18:17). A righteous man recognizes that it is a shame and a folly to judge before he has sufficient evidence (Pro. 18:13).

A Consideration of 1 Tim. 5:19-21

Against an elder receive not (The Greek syntax is in the form of a commandment to stop doing something. This indicates that Timothy was guilty of violating the principles set forth in this passage.) **an accusation** (Here Paul is instructing Timothy to judge elders by the same standard that he judged other people.), **except at** (The Greek literally reads: “If not upon ...”) **the mouth of two or three witnesses** (The fact that this is a prohibition against continuing his actions proves that Timothy was guilty of being unrighteous in his dealings with this elder or these elders. Timothy may have been guilty of receiving an accusation from only one witness or of presuming evil without evidence of any kind [perhaps not even having one witness]. It is possible that Timothy saw something that looked like sin, but was totally innocent.) 20 **Them that sin** (The verb translated “sin” is

in the Greek present tense [indicating that he is writing about one or ones who persist in their sin].) **reprove** (Trench defines this Greek word as: “*Elencho*, however, is a much more pregnant word. It means to rebuke another with the truth so that the person confesses, or at least is convicted, of his sin [Job 5:17; Prov. 19:25]. This is also the case in juristic Greek, where *elencho* is not merely to reply to but to refute an opponent.” [p. 30] It is evident that Timothy was not only required to know of their sin, but he also was required to be able to prove that they were guilty of the sin.) **in the sight of all**, (Clearly, Timothy must not only know what sin they are guilty of committing, but he must be able to prove their guilt before all.) **that the rest also may be in fear**. (The purpose of his not only pointing out their sins, but proving that they were guilty, was to cause others to fear committing the same sin.) 21 **I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice**, (Prejudice was to judge without evidence and was to be unrighteous. “*an opinion formed before the facts are known, a pre-judgment, a prejudice ...*” [Thayer, p. 540]) **doing nothing by partiality**. (“*an inclination or proclivity of mind, a joining the party of one ... partiality ...*” [Thayer, p. 547] This word literally means: “To lean toward” a person. Partiality could work wrongly in two ways: [1] One could be partial toward his friends and not expose their sin and [2] One could be partial against those with whom he was not friends and be harsh in judging them.)

It is plain that while Timothy was a good man, he was guilty of being unrighteous in his dealing with an elder or some elders. I have seen this same thing occur when a preacher will tell other preachers something like: “The elders at church ‘X’ mistreated me” and the preachers who heard this would condemn the elders without hearing all of the evidence. I have seen (and heard) preachers who repeatedly have problems with the elders where they have preached (the elders were always at fault). I know of preachers who had problems almost everywhere they had preached.

The Mob Was Unrighteous

The mob that condemned the Lord to be crucified was unrighteous (Mt. 27:20-25). Most of the mob did not know the charge against Jesus (Mk. 15:12-14 and Lk. 23:13-23) and yet they condemned Him to be put to death. Of course Jesus was totally innocent of any wrongdoing (1 Pet. 2:22).

JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT, PART 5

We shall consider the unrighteous acts of Job's three friends, in this article. These men accused Job without evidence and did not even know (specifically) what charge to make against Job. Their unrighteousness was based upon their misunderstanding of the nature of God. Because of this, they were unrighteous in their false accusations against Job.

Job's Character

In order to understand the nature of Job's character we must look at his character at the beginning of the book of Job and the development of his character as he endured trials. In the beginning of the book of Job, Job was upright (Job 1:1, 8, and 2:3). This same word is translated "righteous" (KJV) or "upright" (ASV) in Job 4:7 and 23:7.

The Unrighteous Judgment of Eliphaz

Eliphaz made an unrighteous judgment when he said:

Job 4:7 Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent? Or where were the upright cut off? 8 According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, And sow trouble, reap the same. 9 By the breath of God they perish, And by the blast of his anger are they consumed.

Eliphaz did not understand the righteous nature of God linked with His longsuffering nature (2 Pet. 3:9-12). He did not know what charge he was making against Job, but he "knew" Job must be guilty (Job. 5:17). Eliphaz claimed that his counsel was for Job's good (Job 5:27). Job asked Eliphaz to reveal his sin (Job 6:24-25), but Eliphaz did not give him an answer. Even the reproof of Eliphaz was without substance. Job appealed to Eliphaz to be righteous (Job 6:29-30) when he said: "... let there be no injustice." (ASV - vs. 29) This is the same word translated "unrighteousness" in Lev. 19:15 and 35.

Eliphaz continued in his unrighteous judgment of Job in Job 15:5-6. In chapter 15 he even ignores the evidence that Job had set forth. The ignoring of evidence is another mark of an unrighteous man. Job was made a byword because of their false accusations against him (Job. 17:6).

After Job had refuted the claims of Eliphaz, Eliphaz made slanderous charges against Job (Job 22:5-11). Note how Job denied these charges in Job 29:11-17.

The Unrighteous Judgment of Bildad

Bildad did not understand the righteous nature of God either (Job 8:4-5, 13, and 20). Job still was not told by Bildad what sin Bildad was accusing him of committing (Job 10:2). Because Bildad did not know what sin he was accusing Job of committing, he was unrighteous to charge Job without either knowing the charge or having evidence.

In chapter 18 (cf. vs. 21 etc.), Bildad ignored the evidence that Job gave (Job 12:6 etc.). The ignoring of evidence is another mark of an unrighteous man. Job pointed out that Bildad had neither given a specific charge nor evidence of Job's sin (Job 19:4). Job said: "4 And be it indeed that I have erred, Mine error remaineth with myself." The NKJV reads: "And if indeed I have erred, My error remains with me." The NESB reads: "And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself." To paraphrase Job he is saying: "Suppose (for the sake of argument) that I have erred, you have no evidence of my erring." To make a judgment without evidence is to be unrighteous.

The Unrighteous Judgment of Zopar

Zopar did not understand the righteous nature of God either (Job. 11:6), because he also falsely accused Job of sin. Zopar claimed that God had given Job less than he deserved (Job. 11:6). Note his words:

Job 11:6 And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding. Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.

Zopar did not have any specific charges to make against Job and certainly did not have any evidence of wrong-doing on the part of Job. Therefore, Zopar was an unrighteous man. Job gave an answer to the claims of these men when he said: "The tents of robbers prosper, And they that provoke God are secure; Into whose hand God bringeth *abundantly*." (Job 12:6) Job pointed out that they had the same evidence that Job possessed and they had not drawn the correct conclusions from it (Job. 13:7). They were unrighteous in their speech (Job 13:7-10). They showed partiality (unrighteousness) by not judging Job by the same standard that they judged robbers.

Job accused his friends of neither having a specific charge against him nor having evidence (Job 13:23). Note Job's words: "23 How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin. 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, And holdest me for thine enemy?" (Job 13:23-24) Job properly interpreted their actions of accusing him of sin and neither having a specific charge of sin nor having evidence of sin as holding him as their enemy (cf. 2 Thess. 3:15 also).

The Response of Elihu

I am convinced that Elihu was a prophet and that he probably wrote the book of Job. Second, if he were a prophet, then his words were the revelation of the mind of God. Note the words of Elihu:

Job 32:2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. 3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. 4 Now Elihu had waited to speak unto Job, because they were elder than he. 5 And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled.

Notice that the wrath of Elihu was kindled against Job's three friends because they could not answer Job's arguments, but they still condemned him (Job 32:3, 5, and 12).

Before Elihu addressed Job's three friends he had to rebuke Job (Job 33:8-33.). Job's three friends were rebuked by God (Job 42:7-9). They had taught error concerning the nature of God and falsely accused Job of wrongdoing.

Conclusion

It is important that we not be guilty of accusing anyone without evidence, for this would be an act of unrighteousness. It is important that we be able to answer a person who responds to our charges, otherwise we do not know that they are guilty. It is important that we properly evaluate the evidence both for and against the guilt of a person.

Clearly, the mob condemned Jesus without even knowing the specific charge against Him, but they did not have sufficient evidence to support any charge that might have been made. In doing this, they were certainly unrighteous.

Concluding Remarks

Let us all strive to be righteous in our dealings with everyone. Let us not condemn anyone without sufficient evidence. Let us not ignore evidence against our friends and manufacture evidence against those who are not our friends. Being righteous is not optional, it is mandatory for all Christians. Let us seek to be more like our God, who is righteous in all His dealings.

JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT, PART 6

THE SIN OF EVIL SURMISINGS

This is a sin that is often committed, but it is not even recognized as a sin by many people. Paul wrote of this sin in: 1 Tim. 6:4. This is the only passage where this sin is explicitly mentioned.

1 Tim. 6:4 he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

What is the Sin of Evil Surmisings?

The word that is translated: “surmisings” in 1 Tim. 6:4 is defined as:

ὑπονοια (pronounced: *huponoia*) “a surmising.” (Thayer, p. 644) “*suspicion, conjecture ...*” (BAG, p. 854) “suspicion” (Moulton and Milligan, p. 659) The verb form of the same word ὑπονοεω (pronounced: *huponoēō*) means: “to suppose, surmise.” (Thayer, p. 644); “*suspect, suppose ...*” (BAG, p. 854)

With respect to *huponoēō* TDNT writes: “ὑπονοεω, class. and Hell., with acc. of person or object. acc. and inf., or clause following, means ‘to think in secret.’ Hence in a bad sense ‘to suspect,’ ‘to hold a [or in] suspicion,’ (Vol. IV, p. 1017)

Webster: “to imagine or infer on slight grounds.”

Kittel explains 1 Tim. 6:4 as:

In the list of vices in 1 Tim. 6:4 f., which depicts the terrible effects of the pathological penchant of false teachers for debate and wordy warfare, ὑπονοιαι πονηραι, alongside βλασφημιαι, are wicked intrigues and common insinuations which in the disputes, moving from the material aspect to the personal, they raise against their opponents in an attempt to discredit them in every possible way² and to magnify themselves. (TDNT, Vol. IV, pp. 1018-1019)

When one surmises evil (imagines on slight grounds [without adequate evidence – cf. the first five articles on righteousness]) of another person, he is violating several biblical principles: First, it violates the golden rule (Lk. 6:31 and Mt. 7:12).

Lk. 6:31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. Who would like to have others to condemn them upon slight or even nonexistent evidence?

Second, it is unjust or unrighteous (2 Pet. 2:9), because we are condemning another without proper evidence (two or three witnesses - Mt.8:16, 1 Tim. 5:19, 2 Cor. 13:1, etc.). This was strictly required in the Old Testament. (Num. 35:30, Deut. 17:2-7, etc.). If the lesser

² Kittel is writing about *ad hominem* arguments here.

covenant (the Old Testament) required that we have sufficient evidence to condemn a person, then the greater covenant (the New Testament) requires that we have sufficient evidence to condemn a person. (*a fortiori* principle)

Third, we are judging by a standard we will not live by ourselves (Mt. 7:1-3 and Jn. 7:24). I exhort the reader to read the earlier articles where I discuss these passages in some greater detail.

Fourth, it is a shame and a folly (Pro. 18:13) to surmise evil about someone else without knowing the facts. How will we correct a false assumption, if we act upon our evil surmisings? Remember, we must repent of our sins in order to be forgiven. (How do we repent and correct our sin of surmising evil?) How do we correct our sin if we act (publicly) upon our evil surmising? What if we either say or do things that are incorrectly based upon the presumption of evil on the part of another person? This is where both repentance and a public confession must be made.

How do People Commit This Sin?

Some surmise that others are guilty of sin without evidence (Jn. 7:51) and commit this sin. As my first example of one surmising evil without adequate evidence I set forth Eliab (the brother of David) who surmised evil about David (1 Sam. 17:28).

As my second example of one surmising evil without adequate evidence I set forth Saul, who surmised evil about David (1 Sam. 18:7-9). Saul wrongly assumed (surmised) that David was “out to get him.” Saul was wrong, but he became paranoid because of his surmisings about David.

Some Surmise That Others are Guilty of Evil Motives

Amaziah (the priest of Bethel) surmised that the motives of Amos were evil (Amos 7:10-13). Since one who surmises gets his ideas from the thoughts of his own heart (mind), it is the corruption of the evil heart that causes one to surmise evil in others. Amaziah surmised that Amos was preaching for financial gain, but he was wrong. (It is almost certain that Amaziah was serving as an idolatrous priest for financial gain.) Remember that evil thoughts flow out of an evil heart (Mt. 12:34, 15:18-19, Lk. 6:45, etc.). Amaziah’s heart was evil, therefore he both surmised evil of Amos and he falsely accused Amos of having evil motives.

Let me set forth a couple of modern day examples of this sin. Note that a person may say something to us and we assume that they intended to hurt our feelings. It is possible that they did not intend to hurt our feelings, but that the words were innocently spoken. Remember the words of Solomon: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth; But the righteous are bold as a lion.” (Pro. 28:1)

Some surmise that others know of their secret sins or secret evil motives (Pro. 28:1) and they even flee. Permit me to give some modern day examples of this sin. First, a person is

questioned about some wrongdoing and he breaks down and confesses. Second, I have preached on a sin and had people to come out of the assembly after worship and accuse me of preaching at them. (In many instances I was not aware of their private sin.)

The verb form of the same word ὑπονοεω is found in several passages: Acts 13:25, 25:18, 27:27, and Dan. 7:25 in the LXX. It is plain that the words *huponoia* and *huponoēō* are not always used for sinful actions. We must allow the context to determine if the surmising is evil or good. While the words *huponoia* and *huponoēō* are not used in 1 Cor. 13:7, the thought of assuming good of a person (unless we have evidence to the contrary) is a mark of love. Christians will assume that other people's secret thought, motives, words, and/or actions are good, unless we have solid evidence to the contrary. This is what a righteous person will do.

JUDGING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT, PART 10

Pacifism and Righteousness

One of the claims of pacifism is that there are two laws for mankind. The pacifist is forced to this conclusion by passages that speak of the government having the right to bear the sword (Rom. 13:1-6).

Rom. 13:1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God. 2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: 4 for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6 For this cause *ye* pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

The sword was used by the Roman government by soldiers who functioned both as soldiers and as policemen. In this context, it seems to be the police side that is being emphasized, but this would preclude Christians participating in a rebellion against the constituted government. This same principle is also found in 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

1 Pet. 2:13 Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; 14 or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that by well-doing *ye* should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

It is clear, from this passage, that the civil government has the right (duty) to bear the sword. It follows that if a Christian may not: "... bear the sword" and the civil government has the right to bear the sword, then the Christian must not be amenable to these passages (Rom. 13:1-6 and 1 Pet. 2:13-17). If the prohibition against murder prohibits a Christian serving in the military or serving as a policeman, then either the prohibition against murder must not be binding upon a non-Christian or there are two definitions for the word "murder." If this is true, there must be two laws for mankind: (1) the New Testament must only be for Christians and (2) there must be some other law for non-Christians. James Bales applied this principle to marriage, others have applied it to a Christian serving in the military. Still others have applied it to a Christian serving as a policeman.

Murder is a capital sin (one for which a person is to be put to death [Ex. 20:13, Rom. 13:9, and Jas. 2:11]) because man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27 and 9:6). All non-Christians will be judged by the word of the Lord (Jn. 12:48).

Jn. 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Note in this passage that those who reject the Lord and do not receive His sayings will be

judged by His word (those who reject the Lord and do not receive His sayings are non-Christians).

The Doctrine of Righteousness Disproves the Bales Doctrine

Since God is righteous, He has the same standard of conduct for all mankind (both Christian and non-Christian). This point has been developed in the first five articles. God is not guilty of equivocation (changing the definition of the word “kill”). God does not: (1) define the word “kill” to allow executing a person or killing a person in the line of duty (as either a soldier or as a policeman) for the non-Christian and (2) redefine the word “kill” (not to allow executing a person or killing a person in the line of duty, as either a soldier or as a policeman) for the Christian.

Other Unrighteous Implications of the Bales Doctrine

James Bales applied his false doctrine (that the non-Christian and the Christian are under two different laws) to divorce and remarriage. However, this false doctrine does not just apply to the two areas discussed (above), but it applies to the role of men and women in the spiritual realm.

Certain brethren have made the unsound claim that a non-Christian man has no spiritual authority that a Christian woman could usurp. These brethren are teaching that 1 Tim. 2:12 does not apply to the role of a Christian woman to a non-Christian man. There are two serious implications of this false doctrine: (1) It means that if the teaching of 1 Tim. 2:12 is authoritative teaching, then a woman is not forbidden (by 1 Tim. 2:12) to teach a non-Christian man in the way she is forbidden to teach a Christian man. If this were true, she would teach a Bible class containing non-Christian men or even preach to non-Christian men. (2) It means that no authoritative act that she would be forbidden to practice over a man (1 Tim. 2:12) would be forbidden for her to practice over a non-Christian man. If women leading singing and leading prayer are forbidden because they are authoritative acts, then a Christian woman would be permitted to lead singing and lead prayer with non-Christian men present (as long as no Christian men were present). This false doctrine has split churches already and threatens to split more churches. I have refuted this false doctrine in my two books: *The Role of Women*, Vols. I & II.

Concluding Remarks

The Bales doctrine was soundly defeated in the Bales-Deaver Debate. This false doctrine has other serious implications and sound brethren must oppose this doctrine. God is righteous and has one law for all mankind.

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