

# Righteous Judgment

In the newsletter, *The Christian Response*, I outlined the Christian course of action that the Bible and Christ call us to. Today, I would like to outline what Christ says about judgment for those who are not hypocrites. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:1-2:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

Do these verses teach us not to judge? No. Now I am sure that this may seem heresy to some, but let us ask this question of the Bible: Did the apostles and early church believe there should be no judging?

“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators [those who engage in sexual intercourse with someone to whom they are not married to, with mutual consent, and can refer to both heterosexual and homosexual people]: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous [a strong desire to obtain possessions of another person], or extortioners [those who secure money, favors, etc., by intimidation or violence—a blackmailer], or with idolaters [the practice of worshiping statues (or anything) as gods or in spite of the true God’s will]; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer [one who scolds in harsh, rude, disrespectful, or abusive language], or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” 1 Corinthians 5:9-13.

From these verses, it is clear that the apostles understood Christ to be speaking of judging those outside the faith. If this is true, Jesus will have given some indication of it. And He does:

“And why beholdest thou the mote [a small particle, an insignificant speck] that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam [something large and noticeable] that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hyp-

ocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”—Matthew 7:3-5.

Here Christ plainly states the purpose of getting the beam out of our own eye is so we can see to remove the speck from our brother’s eye. A beam is something so obviously hypocritical that it can be seen by everyone. I have often had these words thrown in my face when seeking to correct a brother. They tell me, “Get the beam out of your eye first.” I always reply what beam? What sin am I openly committing? There is no sin in warning a brother unless it is the sin of hypocrisy or partiality.

Christ is telling us not to judge those in the world and to clean the hypocrisy out of our lives, so we can do the work that love requires. In Romans, Paul gives us more insight:

“Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?”—Romans 2:21-23.

Christ warns us that, with the measure we mete [to give out by measure], it shall be measured again. Don’t we know that we are also judged by the same standard we teach? We know the law; we boast of keeping all ten, but do we secretly or openly dishonor God? We will meet the standard too. It is easy for a man having the knowledge of the law to think he is above it because he keeps it most of the time. Christ is warning us against this danger. Additionally, we are being warned not to accuse people of things we suspect. The Bible tells us that we can be sure our sins will find us out. If there is sin in the camp, it will be revealed.

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Matthew 7:2.

Matthew 7:2 is really a repetition of a law from the ancient Jewish court system, the Sanhedrin, in Deuteronomy, about false witnesses:

“If a false witness rise up against any man to testify

2 against him that which is wrong; then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition [excessive questioning or interrogation]: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.”—Deuteronomy 19:16-19.

The sins we falsely accuse others of are laid to our own account in the records of heaven. We will mete the measure we lay to others, especially if we are false accusers.

God commands us to separate ourselves from brothers and sisters who are in open sin. This requires us to have the ability to judge whether or not one is in open sin. There were those in the early church that did not do this:

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”—1 Corinthians 5:1-5.

Paul tells the Corinthians that they are puffed up. They have the truth but are not acting on it; in fact, they are proud instead of mourning. He tells them to hand this individual over to Satan, to cast him out of the church. God expects us to judge other members in the church in matters of sin, but not in other matters.

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”—Colossians 2:16-17.

(Ceremonial sabbaths mean the various Jewish festivals and holy days rather than the weekly Sabbath observed on the seventh day. According to the Bible, in the old Jewish ceremonial Sabbaths, the “High Sabbaths” refer to the first and last days of the seven major Jewish festivals, which could fall on any day of the week, not necessarily coinciding

with the regular weekly seventh-day Sabbath.

(In the newsletter titled *The Sanctuary and its Outer Court Experience*, I made the mistake of equating the law of shadows with the Ten Commandments. I would like to clarify this: The law of shadows is the ceremonial law of sacrifices—NOT the Ten Commandments. I made this mistake because I was thinking about how Christ exalted the Ten Commandments while on earth, He did this by exhibiting the principle it was based upon: supreme love for God and unselfish love for man. The law is better because through faith in Christ, its exalted principles can be manifest in our lives too. It is not a shadow but the application of a principle, adopted for man in his fallen condition. See *Spirit of Prophecy, Volume 3, 409.*)

We are told to not judge people who do such things; we call sin by its right name, but these things, even if unnecessary, are not sins. If our eyes are centered on Christ, as our sacrifice and we put no trust in the flesh, these things are not a matter worthy of judgment. Paul tells us that being able to judge is a matter of divine wisdom, and it is a shame if members of the church do not possess it.

“I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”—1 Corinthians 6:5.

### **An example of Righteous Judgment**

Christ told the Pharisees:

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”—John 7:24.

What is the righteous judgment that Jesus speaks about? Not judging according to the appearance. But wait, doesn’t that mean that we shouldn’t judge anything that appears evil as evil? No, Jesus tells us:

“He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”—John 12:48.

The righteous judgment that Christ speaks of is judgment based on the Word of God. I will give a rather shocking example of this: Many are familiar with the situation regarding Pastor Conrad Vine. He has been banned from speaking in pulpits because of speaking against the conference for their stance on Covid. This appears bad—rebellion against God’s established leadership, a troubler of Israel. Very recently, the pastor of Conrad Vine’s church, (Pastor Ron Kelly) was essentially fired for not removing Pastor Vine from his position of elder. This is a horribly sad situation that I wish I did not

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need to write about. I write about it because it is critically important—yes, critically important. The Village Church is following the council that is considered the foundation of our faith; it can be found in Hebrews 6:1-2. They have selected Conrad Vine as an elder based on the biblical criteria and have set him apart by the laying on of hands. Church leadership has not approved of his rebukes against their mistakes, so they have sought to remove him from his position without the approval of his church. They cannot biblically do this. This is a matter of open rebellion against God’s appointed structure of leadership. Upon first glance, it appears that Conrad Vine is holding a “Korah’s rebellion”; but, upon inspection, it is actually the conference that is rejecting Christ and His leadership. Do not judge after the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. They are violating the sanctity of a position acquired through the laying on of hands—not because Elder Vine has been unfaithful, but because he has said things that certain church leaders do not appreciate. Regardless of one’s opinion of Conrad Vine’s statements (*I am reminded of Early Writings*, 82) the actions being taken cannot be justified while other leaders and pastors are in open apostasy and sin.

### Why is judging necessary?

There is an honest question that has been asked. Why is it necessary to point out the mistakes of others? It isn’t necessary to point out others’ mistakes. We don’t want to be one of those who condemn a man for a word. But it is most certainly necessary to warn others of their sins.

“Christ never made peace by anything like compromise. The hearts of God’s servants will overflow with love and sympathy for the erring, as represented by the parable of the lost sheep; but they will have no soft words for sin. They show the truest friendship who reprove error and sin without partiality and without hypocrisy. Jesus lived in the midst of a sinful and perverse generation. He could not be at peace with the world unless He left them unwarned, unreproved, and this would not be in accordance with the plan of salvation.”—*Evangelism*, 368.

We are not to pick flaws in each other or seek to ascertain each other’s motives. Open sin is to be openly rebuked. If sin is not rebuked, it will corrupt.

“Have you considered why it was that all who were connected with Achan were also subjects of the punishment of God? It was because they had not been trained and educated according to the directions given them in the great standard

of the law of God. Achan’s parents had educated their son in such a way that he felt free to disobey the word of the Lord. The principles inculcated [taught, impressed on the mind] in his life led him to deal with his children in such a way that they also were corrupted. Mind acts and reacts upon mind, and the punishment, which included the relations of Achan with himself, reveals the fact that all were involved in the transgression.”—*Child Guidance*, 234.

Notice what else Ellen White has to say about Achan.

“There are those among us who will make confessions, as did Achan, too late to save themselves.... They are not in harmony with right. They despise the straight testimony that reaches the heart, and would rejoice to see everyone silenced who gives reproof.”—*3 Testimonies for the Church*, 272.

God has called his church to:

“Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”—2 Timothy 4:2.

In this work, there are many lessons to learn from the story of Achan.

“How often serious difficulties arise from a simple misunderstanding, even among those who are actuated by the worthiest motives; and without the exercise of courtesy and forbearance, what serious and even fatal results may follow. The ten tribes remembered how, in Achan’s case, God had rebuked the lack of vigilance [watchfulness, alertness to these things] to discover the sins existing among them. Now they resolved to act promptly and earnestly; but in seeking to shun their first error, they had gone to the opposite extreme. Instead of making courteous inquiry to learn the facts in the case, they had met their brethren with censure and condemnation. Had the men of Gad and Reuben retorted in the same spirit, war would have been the result. While it is important on the one hand that laxness in dealing with sin be avoided, it is equally important on the other to shun harsh judgment and groundless suspicion.

“While very sensitive to the least blame in regard to their own course, many are too severe in dealing with those whom they suppose to be in error. No one was ever reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many are thus driven further from the right path and led to harden their hearts against conviction. A spirit of kindness, a courteous, forbearing deportment may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins.

The wisdom displayed by the Reubenites and their companions is worthy of imitation. While honestly seeking to promote the cause of

true religion, they were misjudged and severely censured; yet they manifested no resentment. They listened with courtesy and patience to the charges of their brethren before attempting to make their defense, and then fully explained their motives and showed their innocence. Thus the difficulty which had threatened such serious consequences was amicably settled. (Amicably: in a friendly and agreeable manner)

“Even under false accusation, those who are in the right can afford to be calm and considerate. God is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and we can safely leave our case in His hands. He will as surely vindicate [free from blame] the cause of those who put their trust in Him as He searched out the guilt of Achan. Those who are actuated by the spirit of Christ will possess that charity which suffers long and is kind.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets, 519-520.*

“The history of Achan teaches the solemn lesson that for one man’s sin the displeasure of God will rest upon a people or a nation till the transgression is searched out and punished. Sin is corrupting in its nature. One man infected with its deadly leprosy may communicate the taint to thousands. Those who occupy responsible positions as guardians of the people are false to their trust if they do not faithfully search out and reprove sin. Many dare not condemn iniquity, lest they shall thereby sacrifice position or popularity. And by some it is considered uncharitable to rebuke sin. The servant of God should never allow his own spirit to be mingled with the reproof which he is required to give; but he is under the most solemn obligation to present the Word of God, without fear or favor. He must call sin by its right name. Those who, by their carelessness or indifference, permit God’s name to be dishonored by His professed people are numbered with the transgressor—registered in the record of heaven as partakers in their evil deeds.”—*2 Bible Commentary, 996.*

Proverbs 18:13:

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

There are many who are quick to accuse, quick to condemn, and very slow to hear. Those who have such qualities should well take heed to the words of Christ in Matthew 7:2:

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.”

Hastily condemn the innocent, and you will also be hastily condemned, though you may be innocent.

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”—*2 Corinthians 10:12.*

The standard of righteous judgment is the Bible and the Bible only; it will never be what we think is right or what we would do in that situation. God expects us to be our brother’s keeper, and we should not manifest the uncaring spirit of Cain.

### **What about those outside the faith?**

“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.”—*1 Corinthians 5:9-10.*

We are not to build up walls of Pharisaical pride between ourselves and those of the world. We should always treat worldlings with kindness and compassion; it is not our place to judge them. While we should not judge them, we should never seek to hide the words of God. We are to be salt to the earth, imparting the purifying words of Christ to all who are willing to listen. Those who are close to God will find more pleasure in communion with God and conversation with the brethren than in interaction with worldly companionship. Those who we know to be in open sin we should seek, with the grace, tact, and wisdom of God, to point to Jesus. The world needs to see Jesus as a gracious sin pardoning redeemer, not an overbearing, condemning tyrant.

*For a finished work*



**Jonathan Taylor**

*Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35*

*More Food for the Little Flock —*