

RIGHT or WRONG

By

Curtis Dickinson

One word stands out in the Biblical description of God. That word is “righteous.” It means that God is right, absolutely right, and that He is always right.

A Pennsylvania college professor wrote a treatise recently which stated that “student unrest and revolt” stems from the current educational system which, he says, has become “characterless” and “no longer has a focal point or any universal philosophy.” In the words of Larry Asman, “using shirt-sleeve English, this means that our schools don’t believe in anything or anybody, anymore.”

We cannot speak for all schools, but it is obvious that the old teachings, that there is a right and a wrong side to things, are rapidly passing out of vogue. Leaders no longer stand up and say, “This is right; and that is wrong.” To do so would be academic suicide. The scholarly approach is one of relativity, which simply means that nothing is right or wrong within itself, but can be measured only in its relation to other values, acts or circumstances.

A general smear campaign has been going on against anyone who would label a thing as religiously wrong. He is scorned as one who “sees everything as black or white.” Admittedly there are many questions which cannot be answered with a flat “yes” or “no”, like: “Have you stopped beating your wife?” Some problems have no clear-cut answer. They are problems of a sin-darkened race and cannot be eliminated until the entire universe is cleansed in the judgment of God. But there still remains a right and a wrong, and no one should be more aware of it than the Christian whose life is committed to God.

The Psalmist writes: “For the Lord is righteous, he loves *righteous* deeds; the upright shall behold His face” (Psalm 11:7).

“Thou have appointed the testimonies in *righteousness* and in all faithfulness.” (Psalm 119:138).

“The ordinances of the Lord are true and *righteous* altogether” (Psalm 19:9).

“Righteous art thou, O Lord, and *right* are thy judgments” (Psalm 119:137).

James writes that with God “there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17).

This plainly tells us that God’s righteousness is absolute. What He commands is right, and anything that differs from that command is wrong. However much men may vary in the course of life, the pattern which God has given remains the only right one.

It is upon this fact, that God is absolutely right, that there will be a judgment. “Righteous and justice are the foundation of thy throne” (Psalm 89:14). Paul said that God “will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31).

If the modern liberals had their way, if there were no absolute right or wrong, then God would have no right to judge. Indeed, this is really what they are getting at. Beneath the surface of this concept of “relativity” is a core of atheism, and an effort to destroy belief in the Bible as a revelation from God. Man thus becomes his own God and his own judge, with the average mean of society as the standard upon which man bases judgments. The Christian who aspires to the image of God will be somewhat above this average “standard,” and thus the Christian will be judged by society as failing to meet the “standard.” Hence, if society continues in its present course the time will come when the “wicked” person will be one who holds to the old-fashioned standards of right or wrong, who teaches his children the moral commands of God and tells them it is a sin to break them.

Already we see the product of this process in the so-called “new morality.” Having denied the absolutes of right and wrong, each person measures his actions by what appears to him best at the moment. Even certain clergymen tell the unmarried that in some instances sex relations outside of marriage are right and good! We should not be surprised. For many years the religious people have encouraged the idea that “sincerity” is more important than truth. The person who holds firmly to an absolute truth has been labeled “dogmatic,” “fanatic” and “bigot” until a generation has arisen that says, “There is no right and no wrong. No one knows what is actually true and right, therefore my guess is as good as another’s.” We have reached that point of which it was said, “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).

Still, there is God. “For I the Lord do not change” (Malachi 3:6). In the end, it is not society, nor the self-styled clergyman, nor the professor who judges. “I will execute judgments; I am the Lord” (Exodus 12:12). “We know that the judgment of God is according to truth...” (Romans 2:2). God will judge according to the facts. No one will fool Him, and no excuses will avail. And, He will judge on the basis of what is absolutely right. Society may change, but God’s purpose and intention does not. God is still the “image” which man is supposed to reflect, and the word which describes that perfect man has not been changed.

Jesus promised that when He returns He will judge the world and “sever the wicked from the righteous” (Matt. 13:49). Every person that ever lived will fall into one of these two categories: wicked or righteous. In all of Scripture, there is no third choice given.

This being the case, what hope is there? Since all of us have sinned, and failed to measure up to God’s righteousness, how can we escape judgment and destruction?

To one who does not understand the absolute righteousness of God, it seems reasonable to rationalize: “God is love. He knows that none of us are perfect, so He will surely

overlook sin and not be too harsh in judgment.” Some seem to think that when the Bible was written God did not foresee all the difficulties of 20th Century living, and will rectify His mistake in judgment by ignoring the violations of His strict commands. Such an attitude is a denial of God, for if God cannot be trusted to be true to Himself and His word to the end, then He is not God at all. Such rationalization will find, at last, the meaning of Paul’s remark; “Let God be found true but ever man a liar; as it is written, That thou might be justified in thy words, and might prevail when thou comes into judgment” (Romans 3:4).

The only absolutely righteous man was Jesus. Since He was perfect and without sin, He was able to come forth from the grave for it is sin that brings forth death. Since the rest of us do not meet the requirement of righteousness, there is only one course left. That is: to become partakers of the death of Christ through faith, so that He bears our sins, bears our judgment, and our punishment in His death, and we thus become clean of sin through Him. “Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21)... “Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24).

Judgment allows no loopholes for a “relative” wrong. All sin must be accounted for. Such is the absolute justice of God. It can be accounted for through Christ, who died, or one can account for it himself — and die!

God is not a poll taker. He won’t count votes. He will have a new heavens “And a new earth wherein dwells righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13), and He is the one who says what is righteous.

Often we hear those who deny a judgment based on absolute righteousness speak of the Sermon on the Mount as their pattern. But they overlook the premise of that sermon found in its introduction: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled... Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:6, 8).

The right way is still there. It may be counterfeited, confused and obscured by layers of lies, but it is available to all who desire it enough to seek it.

Ultimately, all of God’s people will rejoice in God’s justice. The Revelation pictures the multitudes saying, “Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are his judgments” (Rev. 19:1-2). These are the ones who take God seriously, who aspire to His likeness, and align themselves with Him in the warfare between right and wrong, and desire above all else to please Him.

JUST for YOU–TH

“**BURIED**” A short story submitted by Brent McFarland, Edinboro, Pa.

The blaring of a horn startled Eddie and his thoughts returned to the realm of reality. He threw on his coat and ran down the narrow walk to the car of his co-worker, Jack Long.

Jack was silent this morning, and once again Eddie's thoughts wandered back to religion. Is there really a God? Are my friends right, or are they a bunch of heretics? If there is a God, why have I not heard of him earlier? Why had Jack been the first one to mention God to me? Surely they are all wrong.

As Jack and Eddie were placing the dynamite in the darkest corner of the grim shaft of the mine, they chatted with each other to pass the time. Then it happened! The danger all miners live with — CAVE IN! It had trapped them before they realized what was happening. Eddie saw Jack fall to his knees and bow his head. He yelled for Jack to get down, then lunged down and covered his head.

Getting up, Eddie was shocked at the fate of his co-worker and friend. Jack's left leg had been severed at the knee and blood flowed from his head. What had once been a handsome specimen of manhood was now a mangled mass. Eddie was lucky, for even though he had lacerations on his chest, legs and arms, he was among the living.

Eddie was a courageous man and had little fear, even in the face of so great a peril. He realized a shaft from the surface would be drilled to let in air as soon as the other miners knew about the cave in. He had once been on a rescue party and on that occasion, they had had no difficulty in recovering the four trapped miners.

After what seemed to be an eternity, but in reality was only several hours, the sound of the diamond-tipped drill, pushing its way through the earth, was faintly audible and soon its steady hum reassured Eddie. In fact, he was now sure that his former opinion about religion was correct. Had God helped Jack when he needed him most? Jack might have been alive like me if he had not been on his knees praying to that God of his. All I need to successfully get through this life is an education, respect for my fellow man, and the will to work. It takes machines to rescue men like me. The drill will do its job and I'll soon be on the surface and if those newsmen want a statement I'll tell them what I think of their religion. I can hear the drill now. I've got nothing to worry...

Eddie Daniels drew his last breath of air just seconds before the air pipe surged into the gas-filled chamber.

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